

FREE



THE HERTFORDSHIRE NEWSLETTER

The bi-monthly publication for the discerning real ale drinker

August/September 1999

Circulation 4,000

No.176



Just some of the 170 different real ales you can enjoy at
this year's

ST ALBANS BEER FESTIVAL

29 September-2 October. St Albans Arena

Ticket Hotline: 01727 852258

News on Watford's Beer Festival, page 6

CAMRA Pub Prices Survey 1999

Key Results

- ◆ The average price of real ale has risen to £1.76 per pint, up 2.84% on last year (less than inflation).
- ◆ Lager is a rip off at 17 pence per pint more than real ale but is not significantly more expensive to produce. You pay for the huge marketing costs of lagers.
- ◆ Nitro Keg (Smooth Flow) costs 8 pence per pint more than real ale.
- ◆ The cheapest place to drink real ale is in an independent brewers pub where the average price is £1.68p per pint. Pub chains come second at £1.72p per pint, with the Nationals last at £1.76.
- ◆ Guest Real Ales are cheaper than Nitro Kegs.
- ◆ Only 9% of the pubs surveyed gave full pints. CAMRA's "Full Pints Week of Action" will run from Sat 4th to Sat 11th September.
- ◆ The North West is the cheapest area of the country to drink.
- ◆ Only 24.2% of pubs have No Smoking areas.

If you, the consumer, are having problems with licensed premises that fail to give **full measure**, do not **display price lists**, and **strength lists** (Alcohol by volume) or **Business names**, you are entitled to contact the Trading Standards Office.
The Hertfordshire Office address is:
45 Grosvenor Road, St Albans, Herts AL1 3AW. Tel: 01727 813880

The Hertfordshire Newsletter is produced by the Hertfordshire South, Watford & District, Herts Essex Borders and Mid Chilterns Branches of the Campaign for Real Ale. The views expressed are not necessarily those of the editor, CAMRA Ltd or its branches. Any articles or letters for publication should be typewritten and sent to Steve Bury, 14 New Road, Shenley, Herts WD7 9EA.

Subscriptions: £4 for 6 issues send to John Lightfoot, 66 Dryfield Road, Edgware, Middx, HA8 9JT cheques made payable to CAMRA South Herts Branch.

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Correspondence on cask ale quality

I have received a letter from Peter. P. Rook of Welwyn Garden City who after praising the newsletter (we can be bribed) raises the issue of quality not wide choice. He supports David Thompson of Wolverhampton & Dudley Brewery who was quoted as saying that "Some pubs in the South East are doing just two to three firkins a week and are offering five cask ales" he also stated that "The drinker is paying top dollar £2.40, for beer that has been standing in pipes for hours. Drinkers shouldn't be expected to take part in a lottery when they buy a pint." Peter says "We should not be made to feel embarrassed about complaining or subjected to the landlord thoroughly scrutinizing the returned pint in a manner that suggests that:-

- ◆ nobody else has complained
- ◆ cloudy beer doesn't necessarily mean bad tasting beer.

Editors comment:

Quality is the biggest issue as far as real ale is concerned although cask conditioned beer still accounts for a third of the draught beer sales in the licensed trade the market has shrunk. Unless there is an improvement in the standard of cask ale, service, and the prices pegged, the decline will continue. Peter also comments on the good quality and variety of beer plus excellent food served at the "Crooked Billet" Colney Heath. I concur with his comments and congratulate Julie and Wally Kasprac, the owners of this Free house, on their continual entry to the *Good Beer Guide* for the last five years.

Mr Punch beats Colonel Whitbread

3,500 pub estate sold

For those of us who live in the southern half of the county it was obvious that Allied Domecq dominated pub ownership in the area. But nothing stands still in the world of brewing and pub swaps in the eighties, tied houses taken over by Greenalls, then Nomura bank, and now the whole Allied 3,500 pub estate has been sold to Punch Taverns. There were only two bidders, Whitbread, who offered £2.8 billion partly in shares and Punch Taverns £2.9 billion cash. At this price there are very few with enough collateral to get into the bidding. The business section of the broadsheets have seen Punch Taverns taking regular full page advertisements (you can imagine what this costs) telling Allied shareholders not to accept Whitbread's offer. They highlight the downward trend of Whitbread shares which have fluctuated some 49p since the first offer was made.

Office of Fair Trading

CAMRA approached the Office of Fair Trading stating that if Whitbread were successful they would have a 7,000 pub tied estate. Punch supported the O.F.T. challenge highlighting that Whitbread would effectively control 12% of the market share.

Consumer choice reduced

But what of Punch Taverns. They are part of Bass or at least have a trading agreement with them for the supply of beer. Punch's bid of £2.9 billion equates to over £800,000 per pub and they don't even know what they have bought. The prediction is that the choice of beers will be drastically reduced whoever bought the pubs. Will large numbers of pubs be put on the market when they are seen as not being profitable enough. Those that are in direct competition will no doubt be sold on unlicensed rather than let others own them.

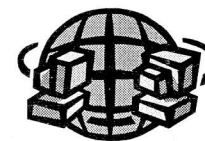
Non-brewing pub chains

Mike Benner CAMRA Campaigns Manager

said: "If this merger is allowed, a third of the UK's pubs will be owned by only seven companies." For Japanese Nomura bank controls 5,000 pubs. Punch Taverns paid £69 million for Inn Business in July acquiring 688 pubs to add to their 1,483 estate. If you now add in the 3,500 Allied houses their estate totals 5,671 (they are now bigger than Whitbread). Pubmaster are about to acquire the 660 Vaux tenancies discarded by the Swallow Group and Enterprise Inns has taken over Century Inns and bought 200 pubs from Bass. None of the above brews a single pint of beer and analysts say that if Whitbread's bid had been successful they may also have made an exit from the brewing industry finishing a tradition going back to 1742.

Pub brawl

The battle between Punch and Whitbread has been described as a pub brawl. It certainly became very personal with the Whitbread board and their advisers Greenhill & Co receiving a great deal of criticism. The fight is now over: Punch is the winner, but I fear that we the consumer will be the loser.



**South Herts CAMRA's
web site is now up and running and can
be found at**

<http://hertsale.org.uk>

Add it to your favourites today.

**It will keep you in up to date with what is
happening in and around the county and
is regularly updated.**

**For E Mail enquiries concerning the
St Albans Beer Festival contact
realales@yahoo.com**




Beer Prices Outrageous

The Daily Telegraph recently reported on research that has been carried out for the Encyclopedia Britannica on the difference in the cost of living between 1899 and 1999. The conclusions may surprise you. Everything has gone down in price with three exceptions, Beer, Public Transport and attending football matches.

So let's forget about football for a moment (especially Arsenal). Public transport is important but rarely provides routes that suit the country pub goer. So let's discuss the beer prices. Obviously taxation has had a devastating effect. VAT had not been invented in 1899 (makes you want to invent a time machine) and excise duty was less at the turn of the century. In previous editions of the *Hertfordshire Newsletter* the effect of crippling taxation has been discussed at length, but this does not explain why we are paying more than a pound a pint. Beer prices are being set at a level that the brewers believe we, the customer, will pay and have little relation to production costs. Advertising and transporting beer around the country as local breweries are closed has to be paid for but the cost is not always directly passed on. Pubs have to subsidise reduced prices to supermarkets and brewers charge pubs a wide range of different prices for beer and all other products. I have picked one example, Greene King Abbot Ale, and have undertaken my own price survey. Greene King have recently increased their prices and recommended that this 5 %

- ABV premium beer is sold at a staggering £2.25p. So how much is it being sold for around South Hertfordshire.
- Cock, St Albans, £1.85p. Pub Company Managed
 - Cross Keys, St Albans, £1.85p. Wetherspoons
 - White Horse, Shenley, £1.90p. Big Steak Allied
 - Woodman, Wildhill, £1.95p. Free House
 - Crooked Billet, Colney Heath, £2.13p. Free House (Guest Beer)
 - Black Horse, South Mimms, £2.15p. Greene King tenancy
 - Maypole, North Mimms, £2.15p. Greene King tenancy
 - Woodman, North Mimms, £2.25p. Free House

Survey completed in mid June.
N.B. The Woodman, Wildhill, have guaranteed that the price of Abbot will not rise for a year.
Any other lists of price anomalies will be gratefully received.

	<i>Actual 1899</i>	<i>Cost Equivalent should be in 1999</i>	<i>Actual 1999</i>
 Arsenal F.C. Season Ticket	£1	£57.50	£868.50
 B.R. Return ticket Crystal Palace- Central London	6d	£1.44	£4.60
 Pint of Beer	1d	24p	£1.90

Bottle job at Brakspears

Brakspear's Brewers of Henley Upon Thames are to take over bottling McMullens' beers after they closed their bottling plant earlier this year. Regular faults and the high cost of repair due to a shortage of parts and maintenance contractors made the plant unviable. The brewers did not want to purchase a replacement and twenty five jobs were lost.

Mac's win award

Congratulations to Peter and Janet Johnson, tenants of McMullen's White Horse, Kimpton, who have won the "East of England Community Pub of the Year 1999". Peter and Janet have run the pub for the last seven years and with the help of their customers have raised a staggering £12,500 for charitable causes in the last twelve months. The White Horse will now be in competition with the other ten regional winners for the National Community Pub Award.

Oversight at the Overdraught

We have been contacted by Mark & Anita who took over as tenants at The Overdraught, Park Street, in April this year. They are concerned that the comments in "Down Your Way" edition 175, have damaged their trade by giving the impression that their beer range had been drastically reduced. The correct information is that the pub was owned by Inn Business (now taken over by

Punch Taverns (see page 3). The beers on sale are Wadworths 6X, Marstons Pedigree, Tetley Bitter and Ansells Bitter with one alternating guest. We apologise for the inaccuracy of our report and hope that the licensees can accept that it was a genuine mistake.
Steve Bury Editor.

Drinking Quotes

Hopefully you will find the following quotes from famous drinkers as amusing as I did

Ambrose Bierce
Abstainer: a weak person who yields to the temptation of denying himself pleasure.

David Moulton
"Why is American beer served so cold? So you can tell it from urine".

Henny Youngman
"When I read about the evils of drinking I give up reading."

Tom Waites
"I'd rather have a bottle in front of me than a frontal lobotomy."

Lady Astor and Sir Winston Churchill had many a set to over his excessive drinking. Two of the most famous are:

Lady Astor:
"Sir, if you were my husband I would poison your drink."

Churchill:
"If you were my wife I would drink it."

Lady Astor:
"Sir you are dreadfully drunk."

Churchill:
"Madam you are ugly. In the morning I will be sober, but you will still be ugly."

... DOWN YOUR WAY... DOWN YOUR WAY...

☐ **ALBURY:** The **Catherine Wheel** has a new licensee.

☐ **ASTON:** The **Crown** has had an auto stillage installed and two guest beers are planned.

☐ **BOREHAMWOOD:** The **Directors Arms** previously the **Bull & Tiger** (closed since Oct 1997) has re opened after a £250,000 refurbishment. The new landlord is Nick Kemp from The Arkley, Barnet.

☐ **BRAUGHING:** The **Golden Fleece** Free House at Green End will open late summer.

☐ **BRICKET WOOD:** The **Moor Mill** has reopened.

☐ **CHARLTON:** The **Windmill** has new landlords.

☐ **ELSTREE:** We are pleased to welcome Phil & Shelley Berryman to the "Good Beer Guide" listed **Waggon & Horses**, Medburn. They previously ran the Norway Inn, near Truro, and have been in the trade for 21 years.

☐ **GREAT OFFLEY:** The **Red Lion** has new landlords, Mick & Evette Collins.

☐ **HARPENDEN:** The **Parisa**, a new cafe bar, claims to have a micro brewery. More details to follow. John Tibbles of **The Carpenters Arms** is now the town's longest serving licensee.

☐ **HITCHIN:** The **Sunrunner** has a new landlord.

☐ **PARK STREET:** The **Overdraught** (see page 5).

☐ **KIMPTON:** The **White Horse** is Community Pub of the Year (see page 5).

☐ **PIRTON:** The **Cat & Fiddle** which closed on 29th May is to be converted into a private house.

☐ **ROYSTON:** The **White Bear** has applied for planning permission to install a micro brewery.

☐ **SHENLEY:** The **Black Lion** is one of the first pubs in the county to have a menu accepted by the British Heart Foundation. This has meant changes to cooking practices and ingredients. Pop in and I am sure that Steve White, the landlord, will explain it all much better than I can. Alexandra Walpole, licensee of **The William IV** left the pub on 20th July to take over an Unwins Off License. We wish her the best with this move.

☐ **ST ALBANS:** The **Blacksmiths Arms** has had an interior refurbishment. **The Goat**, Sopwell Lane, is closed for major building works to re open as a "Red Rose Inn". **The Blue Anchor** has been redecorated, prices have risen, AK by 8 pence per pint. The menu has also been extended. **The Mile House** has had several staff changes including the licensee. **The Baton**, Marshalswick, has been refurbished. Sadly the public bar has been knocked through into the saloon. It is now a Mr Q's Pool Pub. Real beer is still

...DOWN YOUR WAY...DOWN YOUR WAY...

available. The **White Hart Tap** has been redecorated and has a light welcoming feel to it. Two real ales are on sale: one alternates as a guest.

☐ **STEVENAGE:** The **White Hart**, High Street, Old Town, has been acquired by the "Hooden Horse" chain. It appears that the pub has not been badged with some stupid Hooden name (good news). They have a Mexican menu and guest beers from Micro Brewers.

☐ **STONYHILLS:** It is sad to report that the **Three Harts** closed in May, the intention is to sell it as a private house.

☐ **TROWLEY BOTTOM:** It is rumoured that the **Rose & Crown**, an outstanding country pub, will be under threat of closure when the landlady retires.

☐ **WHEATHAMPSTEAD:** Update on the **Nelson**, Marford Road. The new licensees, Gareth Taylor and his girlfriend Karen, have taken a ten-year lease on the pub. Gareth has previously managed the **Farmers Boy** at Langley. Beers are from Fullers with guests hopefully from micro brewers.

☐ **WIDFORD:** The **Green Man** may now re open under a local consortium.

☐ **WOOLMER GREEN:** The **Chequers**, **Fox** and **Red Lion**, have all had recent changes of landlord.

Our information comes from a wide variety of sources and it is inevitable that some errors will occur. Please inform us of any mistakes and the appropriate correction, apology or retraction will be published. Ed.

Pub Names Worsearch Competition

C	A	T	A	N	D	F	I	D	D	L	E	G	K	L
D	R	E	D	C	O	W	C	R	O	W	N	O	N	O
S	T	I	N	K	R	Y	E	K	C	O	J	O	S	W
W	I	L	L	I	A	M	I	V	T	S	I	D	U	E
A	F	X	C	M	T	B	U	G	M	L	H	I	N	R
N	A	O	B	S	A	P	N	R	N	G	O	N	H	R
S	L	F	P	E	R	I	A	E	U	Y	T	T	E	E
Y	C	O	T	X	L	M	D	O	A	W	A	E	D	D
N	O	I	B	L	A	L	L	E	R	G	L	N	G	L
H	N	D	E	L	O	P	S	A	N	E	L	T	E	I
V	A	W	U	G	A	T	E	M	T	S	Y	E	H	O
W	O	R	P	E	L	L	I	O	N	C	H	V	O	N
G	E	O	R	G	E	E	R	T	K	A	O	E	G	S
V	A	N	S	H	A	R	E	W	O	L	F	Y	A	M
T	O	R	C	H	A	R	R	O	W	O	C	N	U	D

Pub Name: ALBION, CAT AND FIDDLE, CROWN, DUN COW, EAGLE, FALCON, FOX, GATE, GEORGE, GOLDEN LION, GOOD INTENT, HARE, HARROW, HEDGE-HOG, HOOPS, JOCKEY, LION, LOWER RED LION, MAIDENS HEAD, MAYFLOWER,

OAK TREE, PLOUGH, RED COW, SIX BELLS, SWAN, TALLY HO, VERULAM ARMS, WELLINGTON, WILLIAM IV, WORPELL.

In addition to the above there are two other pubs listed, one is in Northaw, or is it Lemsford. The other is very near Wembley Stadium. Find them for fun.

Completed entries should be sent to Paul Ruane, 15 Turpins Close, Hertford, Herts SG14 2EH.

The first correct entry opened 5th October will receive a 1999 St Albans Beer Festival Polo Shirt.



Protect your pint, join CAMRA today
Membership is only a
phone call away.

Tel: 01727 867201



5TH WATFORD BEER FESTIVAL



FRIDAY - SUNDAY
22ND- 24TH OCTOBER

WEST HERTS SPORTS
CLUB, PARK AVENUE,
WATFORD

36 REAL ALES
CIDER & PERRY
ENTRY £1. CAMRA MEMBERS FREE

BRANCH DIARY

Hertfordshire South branch

■ *Tues 10th August*, Branch meeting, White Horse, Hertford. 8pm.

■ *Wed 25th August*, Branch outing to Peterborough Beer Festival, coach arranged through Branch Contact.

■ *Tues 14th September*, Branch meeting at Lower Red Lion, St Albans. 8pm.

Contact John Bishop
01582 768478 (h) 0171 477 7700 (w)

Watford & District branch

■ *Fri 6th August*, Great British Beer Festival Social, meet at membership stand. 7pm.

■ *Fri 20th August*, Good Beer Guide Social, Land of Liberty, Heronsgate. 8.30pm.

■ *Wed 25th August*, Good Beer Guide Social. Swan, Bushey, 8.30pm.

■ *Sun 29th August*, Branch Committee Meeting, West Herts Sports Club. 8pm.

■ *Mon 30th August*, Branch Cricket match

vs S.W. London, West Herts Sports Club.
Contact Tony Smith. 01923 221155 (w/h)

Herts-Essex Borders branch

■ *Mon 16th August*, Branch Meeting, Cock Inn, Hatfield Broad Oak, Essex. 8.30pm.

■ *Sat 28th August*, Annual branch grade cook out, Harlow.

■ *Mon 27th August*, Branch Meeting, Cock Tavern, Chipping Ongar, Essex. 8.30pm.

Branch Contact Graham Darby,
01279 415895(h) 01279 680233 (w)
or e-mail: grmdarby@easynet.co.uk

Mid-Chilterns branch

Contact Chris Pontin (h) 01442-834899

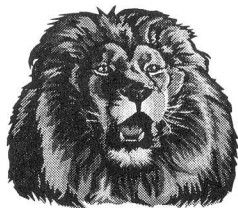
North Hertfordshire Branch

Contact Colleen Holiday 01462 731058 (H)

Herts Liaison Meeting

Thursday 19th August. 8.00pm.
Wenlock Arms, 26 Wenlock Road
Hoxton, London N1
0171 608 3406

Enjoy a pint at
St Albans' oldest Freehouse



Lower Red Lion
Fishpool Street

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and unusual guest beers

Beer Festival, Aug Bank Holiday

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CASTLE STREET
HERTFORD
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CLUB MEETINGS CATERED FOR.

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CIVIC CENTRE, ST. PETER'S STREET, ST. ALBANS

29 SEPTEMBER - 2 OCTOBER

No one under the age of 18 can be admitted to the Festival

OPENING TIMES:

Wed. 29 September 5 - 10.30pm
 Thurs. 30 September 11am - 3pm & 5 - 10.30pm
 Fri. 1 October 11am - 3pm & 5 - 10.30pm
 Sat. 2 October 11am - 10.30pm

CAMRA MEMBERS £1.50 REDUCTION ON ALL SESSIONS AND £2 REDUCTION SATURDAY

ADMISSION PRICES:

Wednesday (Evening) Free Entry
 Thursday (Lunch) £1.50 (Evening) £2.50
 Friday (Lunch) £1.50 (Evening) £2.50
 Saturday (All day) £3.00

TICKET HOTLINE: 01727 852258 E-MAIL: REALALES@YAHOO.COM

Managed by St Albans Leisure Limited on behalf of the City & District of St. Albans



ST ALBANS
LEISURE