

FREE



The Campaign for Real Ale

HERTFORDSHIRE NEWSLETTER

JULY 1979

NUMBER 18

HOWE CAN YOU AFFORD IT?

Prices Commission out, it's round two of the beer price increase! After the whacking rises in the price of your pint early this year, the new Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Geoffrey Howe, has now dealt a further blow to the real ale drinker. The rises are due, of course, to the increase in the rate of VAT — from 8% to 15%. So what is the result in real terms for the drinker.

Reality

The new rate puts two pence on a pint previously retailing at 30 pence, but for higher priced ales, the increase is from three pence upwards. With Hertfordshire not being renowned for cheap beer (mainly due to the lack of mild), the 50 pence pint now becomes a distinct reality. In fact, Ind Coope Burton Ale now sells at this figure in some lounge bars.

Value for money

As with other price rises in the past, it is the smaller breweries who appear to have some concern for the customer. Take McMullens for example. Their revised prices for managed houses are 33 pence for AK, and 36 pence for Country. The latter, with a gravity of 1041, now represents far and away the best value-for-money brew found in the county. Perhaps Ind Coope and the like could have followed the move made by Ipswich based Tolly Cobbold, who have absorbed part of the VAT rise, making maximum increases on their real ales only two pence.

GREAT BRITISH BEER FESTIVAL

Organisation of the 1979 Great British Beer Festival, to be held at Alexandra Palace again, is now well under way. During the opening days, Sept. 3—8, a quarter of a million pints will be available, and the range of breweries represented will be the largest ever. Ales from the Isle of Man are expected, while on a more local note, a special draught version of Ridley's 'Bishop Ale' makes an appearance.

As with all CAMRA beer exhibitions, all helpers are voluntary, and the GBBF still needs staff. If you are interested in giving a hand, your local branch contact is on the back page — he will give you details.



Alexandra Palace
Sept 3-8

MARKET LAGERING

So who says lager will have 80% of the British beer market by the year 2000. Certainly not Martyn van Mesdag, a well regarded market analyst from the big city. In his recently published 'British Drinks Profile' he predicts that a threshold of 33% will be reached, and this not until 1985 at the earliest. (The 1978 figure looks likely to be around 28%). All predictions need sound backing, and his following arguments look impressively simple:—

- Lagers early rapid growth was due to large-scale installation of dispensing equipment in pubs (compare with Guinness for example). With a limit on the number of taps a bar can accommodate, lager may well have reached saturation point in this respect.

- This same early growth can be attributed to the younger generation beer drinkers looking to demonstrate their individuality by ordering a different type of beer to that normally found. Today's new drinkers made this gesture by demanding real ale.

- Lager grew at a time when the trend was towards bland tastes, both for drink and food. In the case of food particularly, this trend appears to be reversing, with for example, the growing popularity of wholefoods.

- Although the majority of the national brewers have readily conceded to the swing towards regional beer production with 'decentralisation' plans, lager is a foreign brew having no genuine local brands in Britain, and does not therefore fit in with such plans, (could be why Courage are trying to grin and bear it with Worton Grange and Hofmeister).

One obvious solution is to increase the strength of lagers already available (the putrid Skol has already had a shot in the arm). But can lager get any more expensive?!

WIN SOME FREE ALE AT THE HERTS BEER FESTIVAL

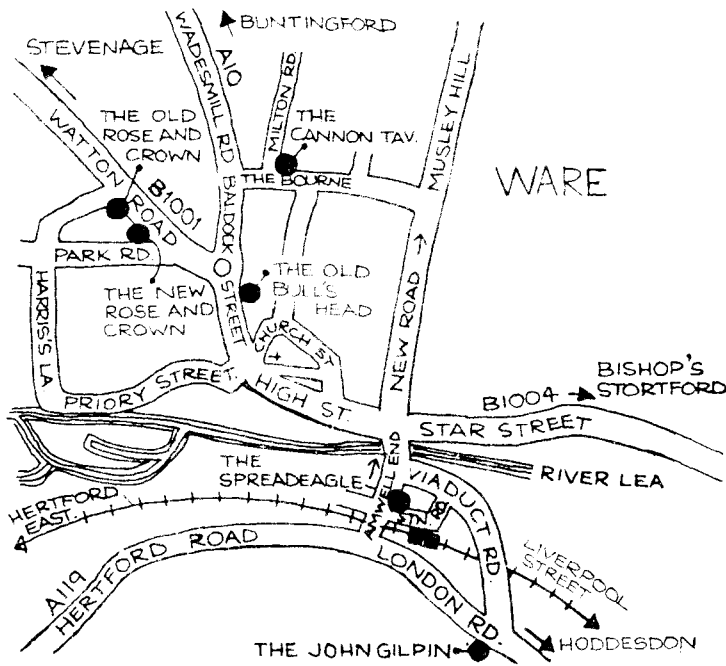


SEE PAGE THREE FOR DETAILS



WARE YOU GOING NEXT THEN!

On Friday July 27th, Hertfordshire South have a mini pub-crawl of Ware



An Ind Coope representative I once spoke to, described Hertford and Ware as a brewer's nightmare. With so many pubs and so few customers, he shrugged off comments that the choice of pubs was impressive with the rather defeatist remark of 'Yes, but it doesn't make life very easy'. Competition is a fine thing, but in this case there were too many competitors. Today Ware has 26 pubs, remarkable these days for a town of its size, yet if one casts ones eyes back to pre World War II days, Ware then had the highest proportion of pubs to heads of population, in the entire British Isles! (Good Lord!)

Strategic position

Ware owes its former importance to one thing: communications, firstly it is situated on the Old London to Cambridge road (made famous in William Cowper's poem 'John Gilpin'), making it a popular stopping point with its pleasant coaching inns, and secondly to its strategic position on the River Lea. This fact was a leading reason as to why Ware grew to be the most important brewing centre in Europe. An old inhabitant in 1880 speaks of 'about eighty maltings' in Ware. Ware's decline as a malting centre happened rapidly, London brewers perhaps going elsewhere for their malt or even setting up their own maltings. Today just one maltings is working — the Victoria maltings, with its enormous extension built in 1966 (to be seen opposite the Spreadeagle).

Lively

The Spreadeagle in Amwell End, near the railway station is perhaps an ideal starting point for a real ale pub crawl of the town and handpumped McMullen's Country Bitter and AK are on sale — a drawing of the pub is featured in the 1978 Hertfordshire Guide. A lively public bar contrasts the quiet and cosy saloon bar, and the Spreadeagle, as far as we know is one of the few pubs in the county which never stopped selling real ale, even outwitting the bulldozing fizz pedlars of the late 1950s and 1960s.

Characterless

A slight detour south to the John Gilpin (no prizes for where it gets its name from). A friendly enough pub is the Gilpin, but the pub will never have the charisma of say, the Old Bull's Head. It remains a typical example of a new McMullen's pub, rather characterless. Mac's have never been noted for their vehement support of real ale — as defined by CAMRA, but the Gilpin was one of six Mac's pubs to have a handpump installed in the early seventies as an experiment to see if real ale was as popular as we were saying. The handpump has remained ever since and now dispenses Country.

Rarity

A brisk walk through the town is rewarded with a visit to the Old Bull's Head, a charming 16th century brick and half timbered coaching inn, which recently installed hand-pumps for Ind Coope Bitter and Burton Ale. The pub is decked with old coaching, farming and industrial implements and has a splendid inglenook fireplace. A rarity in East Hertfordshire is the bar billiards table which is in a separate room. Nip up Baldock Street, turn right into the Bourne and you'll stumble across one of Ware's better back-street locals, the Cannon Tavern, which is always friendly, The Cannon, again, has always sold real ale, in the form of Mac's AK Mild.

Handpumps coming

Retrace your steps into Baldock Street and zig-zag into Watton Road where the New Rose and Crown is clearly visible, when sober. Greene King Abbot Ale is on sale straight from the barrel — but the landlord is soon hoping to have handpumps installed for Abbot and IPA (what about XX?)

Last but not least is the Old Rose and Crown, home of many a good CAMRA social in recent years. The pub has a smashing garden and the popular public bar offers darts, dominoes and crib. If you are feeling a little more subdued, you can slouch in the small saloon/snug. Mac's Country and AK Mild are on sale.

The starting point for the crawl around Ware is the Old Bulls Head, at around 8.00 pm., and other scheduled stops are the New Rose & Crown and the Old Rose & Crown (where food has been laid on). You can't beat a few pints on a summer's evening, so lets see you there!

Les Middlewood

DERBY DRAW

The Hertfordshire branches of CAMRA have again topped the 'best sellers charts' in the Campaign's major annual fund raiser — the Derby Draw.

Herts North, by selling 448 books, finished way ahead of the field and therefore collected a barrel of beer of their choice for the branch members. Herts South sneaked second place from the Portsmouth branch and the 267 books sold ensured them of the second prize — a kil of ale. The draw took place at the White Horse, Burnham Green, where host and last years winner Doug Tyler, conducted the proceedings and laid on an excellent lunchtime spread for those present. The £1000 winner was a CAMRA member from Finchely and there were four other winners from Hertfordshire. Congratulations to them, and many thanks to all those who both bought and sold draw tickets.

MORRIS ON

In the second of our series on 'real entertainment', we take a look at bells, handkerchiefs and sticks....



Morris Dancing — like traditional ale — is a timeless part of this country's heritage. How often, when watching the teams of six men, with their bells, handkerchiefs and sticks, dancing to ancient and beautiful melodies, do we realise that we are participating in what is probably a pre-Christian fertility rite?! Whether morris dancing inspires in us deep thoughts about the mystery of the seasons, or simply provides us with an excuse to sit outside with a pint on a summer's evening, there is no doubt that there are few sights more representative of our best English traditions than a team of morris men dancing outside a country pub.

50 Years On

Luckily, in Hertfordshire, we have a better chance than most of enjoying such entertainment, as there are at least four teams of men who dance regularly outside some of our country's most attractive real ale pubs during the summer months. Established for almost 50 years are the St. Albans Morris Men, proudly sporting the blue and gold of their home city. The reader is particularly recommended to see them in the peaceful agricultural setting of the Woodman, Chapmore End — an excellent Greene King pub — on July 30th at 8.15pm.

Be Prepared

The Standon Morris Men are a jovial and hearty bunch from the east of the county, and where better to see them than at their home pub, the Star, in the lovely village of Standon (also Greene King), on July 26th at 9.15pm. Be prepared to join in with some traditional songs once the dancing has finished and the men have been refreshed with a pint or two.

Fine Tradition

In the west, the Woodside men perform in the Watford area, and can be seen at an Ind Coope house, the Artichoke on Croxley Green, on the evening of July 18th. Moving north, another club with a fine tradition are the Offley men, who can be seen in the beautiful setting of the Plough, Ley Green, on August 3rd at 8pm. Greene King beers on handpump.

Nomadic

Finally, not to forget the Greensleeves Morris Men, a nomadic gathering who make periodic tours to various parts of the Home Counties. They will be touring the west of the county, together with some guest clubs, on the weekend of July 14/15th, and can be seen at two good Ind Coope pubs, the Swan at Ley Hill Common (14th, 6.45pm) and the Windmill at Chipperfield (15th, 12.30pm).

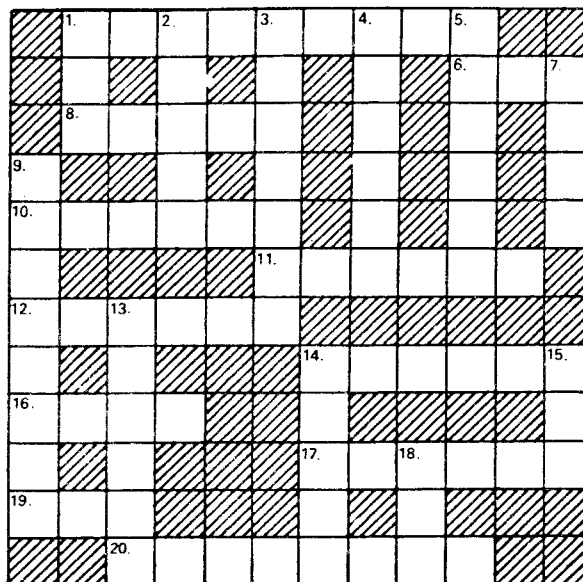
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Peter Lerner

SHUTTING THE GATES

CAMRA investments, the sister company to CAMRA, are to sell off the first-ever pub that they purchased. It is the White Gates Inn, Hyde, Greater Manchester, where the manager and his wife are to retire due to ill-health after running the pub since 1974. The money from the sale is to be invested in the purchase of a pub in an area that has less real ale available than Greater Manchester. Among the 'high priority' areas is Luton. Meanwhile, one of the company's latest acquisitions — the Village Blacksmith, in Woolwich, London — is now open.

CAMRA-WORD



ACROSS

- 1) I drew bath (anagram) (9)
- 6) An Imperial brew (3)
- 8) This form of dispense can be remet (5)
- 10) Disloyal (6)
- 11) Part of the Ruddles motto (6)
- 12) Happy expressions in Bristol (6)
- 14) A type of brewing sugar (6)
- 16) No tea for every pupil in this class (4)
- 17) For two pins I'd give you one! (6)
- 19) A grant to a tenant (3)
- 20) Larry's favourite drink? (8)

DOWN

- 1) A cats cry confused in Shropshire (3)
- 2) A playwright that gets the p taken out of him (5)
- 3) Sometimes seen behind the bar (7)
- 4) To leave out (6)
- 5) A gloomy MD ails and is muddled (6)
- 7) A beer drinkers glass is partly open (4)
- 9) The kernel removed in the smallest pub (8)
- 13) To goad (6)
- 14) Below, beneath (5)
- 15) A heavy cask (3)
- 18) Part of a local brewery (3)

BEER FESTIVAL READERS — There will be a prize of a free pint for each of the first five correct entries received on each day of the Herts Beer Festival. Please hand completed efforts to the Products Stall, NOT the bar. Good luck!

For other readers, there will be a similar competition in the near future (provided this one's not too easy!)

LAST ORDERS

One of the motions passed at this year's CAMRA A.G.M. was to oppose pub closures, regardless of availability of real ale.

In Hertfordshire it seems that Ind Coope are the biggest offenders concerning the closures. Recently, the Woodman at Water End ceased to be a licensed premises and the Red Lion at Kings Langley met the same fate about a year ago. If you think you know of a pub that may have the symptoms of dying a quick death (small turnover, deterioration of the building itself, landlords whose age is catching up with them and elderly widows who are finding it too much) get in touch with your local branch contact.

PUB NEWS

Barkway — The Chaise & Pair has substituted Everard's Tiger with Old Original.

Barley — Abbot Ale on handpump is a recent addition at the Fox & Hounds.

Barnet — The White Lion is now serving Ind Coope Burton Ale on handpump.

Buntingford — Everard's Tiger and Adnam's bitter replace the former handpumped beers.

Elstree — The Plough now has real ale Ind Coope beers.

Hatfield — The Wrestlers has Ind Coope Burton Ale.

Hertford (Bengeo) — Handpumped Ind Coope bitter now on sale at the White Lion.

Letchworth — The unusual electric handpumps in the Letchworth Hall Hotel now dispense Everard's Tiger instead of Ruddles beers. (Don't forget your tie).

St. Albans — The Goat is now selling Adnam's bitter, and the Black Lion Hotel, Greene King XX is the 'Beer of the Month'. Providing sales are bouyant the beer will be a permanent fixture.

Standon — Everard's Old Original and Tiger, plus Adnam's bitter, are available at the Chequers.

Stevenage — Why not apply for a job with British Aerospace, where Greene King XX is now available in the Dynamics Club bar?!

Watford — The Southern Cross Hotel has added Sam Smiths OBB to its existing range of ales, and a 'happy hour' between 12pm and 1pm on Sundays means 10p off the price of a pint (mind you, Ruddles County is normally 50p or so). West Herts Sports and Social Club now has Young's Mild (temporary membership available).

Wheathampstead — The Wicked Lady now has Adnam's Mild (its gravity has recently been upped slightly, giving a marked improvement in taste).

West Hyde — With the news that Wethered's are to brew their strong Winter Royal all year round, their only local tied-house, the Royal Oak, should have the ale on sale in the future.

Ind Coope Mild Pubs — Continuing disruption to supplies of KK mild by the brewery, mean that pubs normally selling the beer may be without it, perhaps for good.

BRANCH CONTACTS

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THIS EDITION

The Hertfordshire Newsletter is produced monthly by the Herts South, Herts North and Herts/Essex Borders branches of CAMRA. After last months break, during which Dave Burns handled production admirably, Val and Nick Page are back in the driving seat, and would therefore gratefully receive any contributions for further editions. We can be contacted at 28 Inkerman Road, St. Albans. ☎ 33810.

Printed and Typeset by D & S Graphics, ☎ Hertford 57613

WHAT'S ON

HERTFORDSHIRE SOUTH BRANCH

July 3rd Tuesday Darts practice and social at the White Horse, Potters Bar, 8.00 (Ind Coope).

July 17th Tuesday BRANCH MEETING at the Robin Hood, Hatfield, 8.00 (Ind Coope).

July 22nd Sunday Inter-branch cricket vs North Herts, at Verulamium Park, St. Albans. 2.30. Meet at Farriers Arms at opening time.

July 25th Wednesday Social and Ladies Darts vs Farriers Arms, St. Albans, 8.00 (McMullen).

July 27th Friday Pub crawl around Ware, starting at the Old Bulls Head, 8.00 (see page 2 for details).

August 5th Sunday Inter-branch cricket at Verulamium Park, St. Albans. Opposition to be announced later.

August 21st Tuesday BRANCH MEETING at the Peahen Hotel, St. Albans, 8.00 (McMullen).

HERTFORDSHIRE NORTH BRANCH

July 11th Wednesday BRANCH MEETING at the Rising Sun Halls Green, 8.00 (McMullen).

July 18th Wednesday Social at the Chequers, Standon, 8.00 (Free House).

July 24th Tuesday Social at the George IV, Baldock, 8.00 (Greene King, inc. XX).

August 8th Wednesday BRANCH MEETING at the Plough, Great Munden, 8.00 (Greene King/Rayment).

HERTS/ESSEX BORDERS BRANCH

July 12th Tuesday BRANCH MEETING at the Rose & Crown, Cheshunt, 8.00 (Ind Coope).

July 17th Thursday Social at the King William IV, Sawbridgeworth, 8.00 (Ind Coope).

July 19th-21st ESSEX BEER EXHIBITION at the Lion & Lamb Hotel, Chelmsford.

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.