



# The Campaign For Real Ale **HERTFORDSHIRE NEWSLETTER**

March 1978 . . . . Number 2

## Big Brewers Collar Market

There's one thing for certain that you can say about the big brewers - when it suits them they will follow any trend that is to their immediate advantage. And so when Allied put up their prices, it's predictably not long before the rest follow. In a snowball effect it's not long before the Independents begin to take note (with a few famous exceptions of course). The trouble is, today, the big brewers have so many irons in the fire that it's difficult to stop your money from ending up in their fattening pockets. Take Whitbread for instance, who are charging exorbitant prices for their Wethered's Bitter in Hertfordshire - they own or have large holdings in the following: Stowells of Chelsea (vintners), Heineken, R.White (soft drinks), Rawlings (soft drinks), Threshers (off licenses), Whitley Inns, Flowers, Fremlins, Wethereds, Brickwoods - to name a few.

### Grasping Hands

Allied Breweries own or have large holdings in Ind Coope, Ansell's, Tetleys, Grants of St.James (vintners), Showerings (eg Babycham), Britvic, Coates Cider, Gaymers Cider, Whiteways Cider, Harveys Sherry, Victoria Wines (off licenses), Curtis Distillery, Minster (soft drinks), Glen Rossie Distillery, Trust House Forte and Skol. The other big brewers have similar interests.

Whichever way you look at it, your money is almost in their grasping hands the moment you walk through the door.

### New Cooler

Young's have lent The White Horse in Hertford a new cooling device for the pub's Bitter and Special. Briefly, a stainless steel tube, filled with cooled water, is inserted through the chive hole into the beer thus lowering the temperature of the beer. The actual temperature can be controlled and there is no contact between the water and the beer. Projecting from the top of the barrel is a steering wheel like contraption which controls the venting of the cask - a sort of elaborate spile. Perhaps this is the answer to the problem of keeping beer cool in the summer. Marston's Pedigree and Everard's O.O. are now on sale.

### Herts Guide

This year's edition of 'Real Draught Beer in Hertfordshire' will be on sale at the end of the month. The guide, which has been enlarged to 56 pages, to incorporate a gatefold map of Hertfordshire, town maps, pub drawings and the extra 100 pubs selling real ale since the last guide was published. Also included are articles on McMullen's and Rayment's and information on the breweries represented in the County and the brews available, plus many other interesting facts about real ale and the pubs of Hertfordshire. Guides will be available in many of the County's real ale pubs at 30 pence each.

### Borehamwood

Borehamwood comes up trumps this month with Charles Wells beers now available in the town - at The Suffolk Punch in Howard Drive. Until recently the pub belonged to Bass-Charrington. Charles Wells now have a long lease on the pub and in a similar arrangement Bass get a pub in Bedford. The Suffolk Punch is selling a full range of Well's beers including handpumped bitter and Fargo. According to the landlord trade is already doing well. This is the second pub in Hertfordshire gained by Charles Wells under this type of arrangement - the first of course being The Jolly Sailor in St.Albans - in recent years, and it is certainly a boost to choice in Borehamwood, which is in an area with a predominance of Ind Coope houses. Well done Charles Wells!

# Drinking in Hitchin

by Denis Robertson

Hitchin has seen many changes over the past few years. Some fine old buildings have been demolished to make way for supermarkets and the like. Narrow streets, never intended to carry heavy traffic, are now subjected to the almost continuous rumble usually associated with a motorway. For all that, Hitchin remains very much a town of character and charm.

## Charlton

Two years ago every one of the 32 pubs in the town served their beer on top-pressure. The nearest outlet for real ale drinkers was fifteen minutes walk from the town to the Windmill, Charlton. This popular local, in the most pleasant of surroundings, continues to serve excellent pints of Charles Wells Fargo and Bitter; it is always well worth a visit.

## Highlander

Early in 1976 The Highlander, previously a Whitbread pub, re-opened as a free house and handpumps were installed. The range of beers currently available are Greene King Abbot and IPA Bitter, Adnam's Bitter and Theakston's Bitter.

## Two For Walsworth

During the Autumn of that year, the Walsworth area witnessed the Sailor Boy and the Ship convert to real ale - the former serving Wethered's Bitter, the latter McMullen's Country Bitter. A tip for anyone visiting the Ship is to ask for Bitter from the handpump, otherwise you will end up with the extremely gassy version.

## The George

About the same time The George, Bucklersbury, started serving Ind Coope Burton Ale from a handpump, following this up several months later with the same means of dispense for the Bitter. Conveniently situated in the town centre, The George has become a favourite meeting place for local real ale drinkers and the friendly atmosphere generated from behind the bar ensures all are made to feel welcome.

## More Ind Coope

By October 1977 The Cricketers and The Sir John Barleycorn, both Ind Coope pubs, were serving bitter from handpumps and since then The Sir John Barleycorn has also added Burton Ale. These are very good locals where the beer is always in top class condition.

## Orange Tree

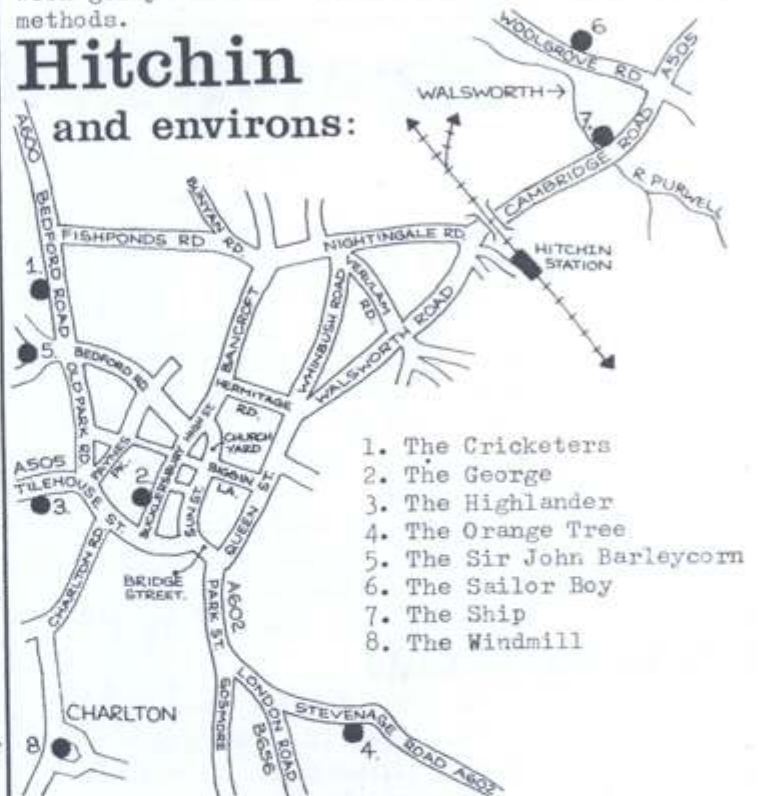
December saw The Orange Tree re-open, having been completely re-built over the previous 18 months and for once a happy result. The new Orange Tree has been modernised in a way which has produced a pub of character, also one to cater for all tastes. I almost forgot, there is a handpump in each bar serving McMullen's Country Bitter.

## A Pub Crawl?

So two years ago a real ale pub crawl would certainly have been out of the question in Hitchin but last October the Hertfordshire North branch of CAMRA, supported by three well known characters from the Hertfordshire South branch, were able to sample real ale in seven pubs.

This was an evening remembered not so much for the amount of beer consumed or, for that matter, the large number who finished the course, but for the opportunity to sample a variety of real ale in a town which hitherto was drowning in a sea of fizz. Who knows? perhaps Greene King who are currently renovating the Anchor in Walsworth, will break their duck in the town, where they own eight pubs and in each one deny the customer an opportunity to choose between gassy beers or those served by traditional methods.

## Hitchin and environs:



1. The Cricketers
2. The George
3. The Highlander
4. The Orange Tree
5. The Sir John Barleycorn
6. The Sailor Boy
7. The Ship
8. The Windmill

## We Want Real Ale

Customers of The Kings Arms, Bucklersbury, Hitchin, supported by landlord, Mr Peter Augustus, have petitioned Whitbread (Luton) for real ale, which means, of course, the tasty Wethered's Bitter from Marlow.

Commenting on the petition, Mr Nigel Robson, Whitbread's Tied-Trade manager at Luton, said "The Kings Arms should not give up hope, we have a list of pubs which have asked for traditional ale, and we will do our best to meet the demand when container supplies have been improved."

For a company who closed (and are still closing down) several local breweries in order to put all their Kegs (sic) into the Luton Basket, then spent a fortune advertising 'Stanley's Tankard' and 'Big Head Bitter' and whose policy throughout was to ignore the growing demand for cask conditioned beer, it must have come as an awful shock that their customers will no longer be told what they must drink.

Herts.South branch have a few tickets left for the branch brewery trip to Brakspear's of Henley-on-Thames on Tuesday 11 April at 2.30pm, priced 50 pence. For details and tickets etc. write to Jim Axford, 117 Queens Road, Watford.

# Shining Star

It's a fair bet that the East Hertfordshire village of Furneux Pelham has a greater number of visitors than most villages of its size. The attraction for visiting beer drinkers is, of course, the tiny country brewery of Rayment and Co. Yet it's also a fair bet that, until recently, most of those same drinkers have left the village disappointed, for although there are two Rayment's pubs there, there was not a drop of real ale to be had, all the beer being of the gassy variety.

## Drunk Dry

Last year the licensee of The Star at Furneux Pelham decided to give his customers a treat, and started to serve the occasional cask of Abbot Ale on gravity. Then, in November, the licensee (whose name is, coincidentally, Jim Abbott) was the host for a CAMRA social. For the occasion, available straight from the cask were Rayment's AK Mild and BBA Bitter, as well as Jim's Abbot. On the evening of the social, all the casks were drunk dry and beer had to be fetched from the cellar by the bucketful.

## Sales Up

Now Jim has taken the plunge and installed a pair of handpumps in the friendly village pub, serving Rayment's BBA and Abbot Ale. Beer sales at The Star are, according to the brewery, booming, as could be expected.

## And The Tap?

Rayment's other pub at Furneux Pelham is The Brewery Tap, just across the road from the brewery. Rumour persists that beer is supplied direct to the pub from the brewery by underground pipes. Now that such an excellent pint of real ale can be enjoyed at The Star, how long will it be before the Brewery Tap's pipes are re-routed to avoid the gas cylinder?

by Pete Lerner

# Foreign Beer

The recent attempt to introduce 'foreign' beers into pubs, instigated by CAMRA and supported by the NULV in the Avon area where Courage hold a monopoly, is actually not a new idea. During the 1960s at least two major brewers - Ind Coope and Watney, had 'foreign' beers in their pubs.

Albeit, these were premium price beers and called Red Barrel and Double Diamond (remember them?). The system operated along the following lines: Example - Ind Coope would buy Watney's Red from Watney's brewery and then sell it in their own tied houses at 1d or 2d above the price for DD. Watney operated a reciprocal agreement. This system extended to some bottled beers such as Double Diamond, Mann's Brown, Whitbread Mackeson, Charrington's Worthington'E' and White Shield.

Alas, although some of these bottled beers still appear in the 'rival' houses and prove that the trading arrangements still exist, the choice of draught beers has been dropped - even if it was only keg! So, how about it brewers - get those so-called 'foreign' beers back in your pubs to increase choice - or couldn't your products stand the competition.

by Jim Axford



# McMullen's

Good news from McMullen's is that the new head brewer has no intentions of changing the recipe for Country and AK when he takes over from the retiring Mr Edwards in April. Mr Skipper, who is coming from Bass (Runcorn) to take over the brewing side of things, has in fact worked for Mac's before - some fifteen years ago. Meantime McMullen's have installed two handpumps in The Hilltop in Hatfield (one for the public bar and one for the saloon) which will serve Country Bitter. The Herts/Essex Borders branch brewery visit to Mac's (due for mid-March) was cancelled by the brewery due to current building work. All those involved were extremely disappointed and it is hoped that an alternative date can be arranged as soon as possible.

# Wicked Lady

The Wicked Lady at Wheathampstead can voice a unique claim in the county - it is the first pub to sell Everard's Old Original (OG.1050) on a permanent basis - at 38p a pint. The Wicked Lady, which more precisely is situated at Nomansland Common, is a Free House that in the past has just kept to selling Ind Coope hand-pumped beers. Now customers are also offered Theakston's Bitter and Old Peculier, and Adnam's Bitter (which when I tasted it, at the beginning of the month, was easily the best Adnam's I'd had outside of Suffolk - Editor) alongside those already mentioned.

# HANDPUMP ON LOAN

Herts.South branch will shortly be the proud owners of a clip-on handpump which landlords (who are still in two minds on putting real ale in their pub) will be able to borrow on a short term basis of say, one month, free of charge. If you've had endless debates with your landlord and been unable to prove your point, this could be the answer - that is, of course, if he is willing to experiment with real ale. If anyone is interested, please contact Dave Burns at 11 Turpins Chase, Oaklands, Welwyn. Tel: Welwyn 7805 (Home).

The Herts Mercury, which covers East Herts, included a massive two-page feature on real ale earlier this month with information on CAMRA.

## It's new . . . it's better!



— the haircream with the bay rum base 2/6°

After seeing this, how can you ever look a pint of Keg in the eye again?

Mind you, if your hair is standing on end just thinking about it, there's always Keg.

'KEG! The pint that slides down like greased lightning!'

This advert was found in 'Flight' Aug. 1954 issue.

# Yard of Ale

Last month's Herts/Essex Borders Branch AGM held at High Wych Village Hall, saw the resignation of Dave Ward and Steve Marlow from the Committee. The rest of the committee were re-elected and Isabelle Langridge was elected. The proceedings were helped along by a firkin each of Courage Mild and Bitter. At a recent Yard of Ale drinking competition between the branch and The Bishop's Stortford Estate Agents held at The Bakers Dozen, branch member, George Rumsey, sank two yards with an average of 23 secs. Even this was not enough to beat the Estate Agents who proved to be formidable opponents.

Pub changes this month include:

**Bulls Cross** The Pied Bull is now serving Wethered's Bitter on handpumps at 36pence a pint (yikes!)

**Chipping** The Countryman has added Everards Bitter to its range of real ales.

**Gustardwood** The Cross Keys, add Burton Ale

**Ickleford** The Cricketers will shortly be selling Paine's EG and Bitter.

**Ware** The New Rose and Crown now has Abbot on gravity.

## Newsletter & Membership

The Hertfordshire Newsletter is produced by the Herts South, Herts North, and Herts/Essex Borders branches of CAMRA. Any contributions/information should reach the editor by the first day of the month: Les Middlewood, 81a Linden Way, Southgate, London, N.14 4NG. Branch Contacts:

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Details of membership (£4.00) can be obtained from The Membership Secretary, CAMRA, 34 Alma Road, St.Albans, Herts.



# What's On

## HERTFORDSHIRE SOUTH BRANCH

### Mar 21 March Branch Meeting

The Sportsman, Croxley Green 8pm. (Ind Coope). With guest speakers Mike Hardman (former editor of What's Brewing and The Good Beer Guide) and Dave McKercher, a current National Executive member and Regional Organiser.

Apr 4 Darts match v West Herts Sports and Social Club at The Club's bar in Park Avenue, Watford (beers include Brakspear, Abbot and Mac's) Starting 8pm.

Apr 11 Brewery Visit to Brakspear's of Henley-on-Thames. 2.30pm. Tickets from Jim Axford, 117 Queens Road, Watford.

### Apr 10 April Branch Meeting

The Dimsdale Arms, Fore Street, Hertford (Mac's) 8pm. Casks of AK and Country will be in the meeting room. 8pm.

## HERTFORDSHIRE NORTH BRANCH

### Apr 12 April Branch Meeting

The George, Bucklersbury, Hitchin (Ind Coope) 8pm. Guest Speaker: James Lynch, Chairman of CAMRA's National Executive.

Apr 19 Social at The Boar's Head, Royston, with Cambridge Branch. 8pm (Bass & Greene King)

Apr 26 Social at The Orange Tree, Hitchin. (McMullen's) 8pm.

## HERTS/ESSEX BORDERS BRANCH

Mar 21 Social at The Old English Gentleman, Waltham Abbey (McMullen's) 8pm.

### Apr 24 April Branch Meeting

The Merry Fiddlers, Fiddlers Hamlet Nr.Epping (Ind Coope) 8pm.

Apr 17 Social at The Old Maltings in Bishop's Stortford (Free House)

WATCH OUT FOR MILD SOCIALS THROUGHOUT MAY AROUND THE COUNTY.

