

**FREE**



The Campaign for Real Ale

# HERTFORDSHIRE NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 1980

*A Happy New Year to you all*

NUMBER 24

## IND COOPE CHANGE THEIR COLOURS

Starting next March, three new subsidiaries of Ind Coope will emerge on the pub scene — Benskins, Friary Meux and Taylor Walker. These, as many will remember, are the names of once famous breweries, long ago swallowed up into the Ind Coope/Allied Breweries empire.

What will this all mean to us, you may ask? The answer would appear to be that most Watford area pubs will (over the next few years) be decorated in Benskin colours and, more important, have a new cask conditioned bitter, brewed at Burton-on-Trent and of around 1040 original gravity. This will replace the existing bitter from Romford and Burton breweries and is said to be similar to the old Benskins bitter flavour. A similar pattern will follow for the other two breweries with Burton Ale being retained.

**As KK mild has not quite given up the struggle to die, this may well be featured. Who knows, maybe the new "policy" will include a good mild that will sell!**

Whilst I applaud Ind Coope's attempt to get back to regional flavour beers, it does seem somewhat of a non-sensical policy to close down small, local breweries producing very distinctive beers only to introduce an imitation a few years later. Ah well that's progress for you.

P.S. Rumour has it that before long some Ind Coope pubs, in the Watford area, will be swapped with Whitbread. To those landlords I send my deepest sympathy.

by JIM AXFORD

## SUCCESS AT LAST

Good news for mild drinkers! Due, at least in part, to the campaign launched by local CAMRA branches 11 months ago, sales of Greene King XX dark mild from Biggleswade are up 20% on the same 6 month period last year. Figures from the brewery show that sales of KK light mild are also on the way up despite the fact that Greene King were afraid that our campaign would make drinkers move over to its darker companion. It would seem that continued price rises are partly to blame since drops in the sales of Abbot Ale and keg Guinness indicate that drinkers are trading down to cheaper drinks. Certainly, at a price of about 35 pence a pint, XX represents much better value for money than many other beers in the area.

Local branches will not be resting on their laurels, though and the campaign will continue until the future of the beer is assured. Beer mats and other advertising material is still available for pubs which sell the beer.

## ANOTHER INCREASE

Another brewery has slipped in a pre-Christmas price rise. This time its independents Greene King who have slapped — what is now becoming a standard increase — 3 pence on a pint for all their beers. P.S. One of the brewery's two plants — the one at Bury St Edmunds — suffered damage from a fire in early December, but supplies of beers were not affected. The Bury brewery supplies Rayment's pubs with Abbot Ale.

## VISIT TO MAC'S



On December 5th of last year South Herts branch was treated to its second trip around McMullen's Brewery. And a treat was too. Since the first one earlier in the year the company appear to have put a great deal of effort into organising their visits which seem to be increasing in number all the time. Mr. Tiggy Firmin and his wife now look after all the brewery's visitors, doing the guided tour and the excellent spread of food respectively. Tony Skipper, then head brewer but now moved as Production Director, as well as Roy Shadbolt from the free trade department and Morris Beasley from the wine and spirits side of the business were there to answer our questions. We were also able to try a little of Mac's new Christmas Ale which, by now, will have been polished off in the fifty or so pubs stocking it over the festive season. On behalf of the branch I would like to thank Macs for a very enjoyable trip. We are hoping to run another in the new year for those who were unable to get a place on this one.

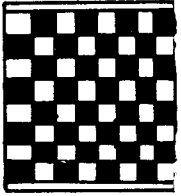
Dave Burns



## MAKE A NOTE

The 1980 edition of the CAMRA Calendar is now available from CAMRA HQ, 34 Alma Road, St. Albans. It is full of fine brewery sketches and costs only £1.50.

# THE ORIGIN OF INN SIGNS



The first known reference to tradesmen's signs occurs with respect to Ancient Egypt, but the practice does not appear to have been common until the Romans. Excavations among the ruins of Pompeii and Herculaneum have brought to light tradesmen's signs of various kinds, some made of stone, some terra-cotta, and some painted. The sign of a goat indicated a dairy, two slaves carrying an amphora marked the door of a wine merchant, rather like our 'Jolly Brewers' carrying a barrel slung on a long pole. Another wine merchant had a picture of Bacchus pressing a bunch of grapes. A common inn sign of today which can probably claim greater antiquity than any other is the 'Chequers'. Wine shops in Pompeii and Herculaneum were commonly distinguished by this sign, which was said to

indicate that chess, draughts or backgammon was played, or that the innkeeper was a money changer or merchant, the chequers representing an abacus. Probably the Romans brought this sign with them when they invaded Britain, as it may be assumed that the Romans introduced the signboard system to this country. (Some people say that the Earls of Warenne and Surrey, who had the privilege of licensing alehouses, had the Chequers on their coat of arms).

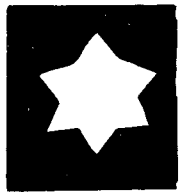
## Ale-stake

However, among the Romans the general sign for a tavern was a bush, a clump of ivy or vine leaves being symbolic of Baccus, the god of wine. This later became a bunch of evergreens that was attached to the top of a projecting pole known as an ale-stake. These served their purpose well until the increase in the travel business saw a growth in the number of inns, two or more often located in the same street or vicinity. This meant that each proprietor endeavoured to have his own distinctive sign, by which he could be distinguished from his neighbours.

In the past all traders used signs since few people could read or write. Most of these have now disappeared, although the barber's pole, the pawnbroker's three golden balls, the shears for a tailor or a mortar and pestle for a chemist may still be seen. But generally there are only inn signs left to carry on the tradition, and these have prospered, with some breweries spending considerable skill and expense on their signboards.



## Conned



During the Middle Ages there was more control over trading in this country than at any other time. By the end of the twelfth century retail establishments were required by law to brew and sell their own ale at controlled prices from correctly stamped measures. It is not certain when the use of an inn sign became compulsory, but as early as 1393 a publican was 'presented' before Richard II for not putting up the usual sign. It was not compulsory for other trade or professions to use a sign. At this stage most publicans brewed their own beer, and the exhibition of a sign enabled the government's ale tester to keep an eye on all brewing establishments and brewsters, brewster being the female term as traditionally it was always the women who undertook the responsibility of brewing the ale. At this time an ale-garland was hung outside when a new brew was ready for sale. Usually it took the form of a wreath or ball of flowers or foliage with the innkeeper's own sign as the central figure. This was to draw the attention of the official ale taster or ale 'conner' to the fact that a brew was ready for examination. The ceremony of raising an ale-garland is still used by some brewers, on the opening of a new house.

If the ale conner decided that the ale was adulterated or below standard the vendor was taken before the magistrate. Punishment might be by fining, a ducking in the river, or by an injunction for the culprit to drink as much of the bad ale as he could hold! The remainder was then poured over him. (Should this method be used today?)

## Heading for trouble

Competition was fierce and throughout the years signs became bigger and more and more elaborate, often right across streets as gallows signs. These cumbersome and creaking signboards proved so dangerous, and often they were so low that they endangered the heads of passing riders, that they were forbidden in the reign of Charles II, although some still exist even now. e.g. The Fox and Hounds at Barley, showing five hounds and two horsemen chasing after the fox.

Some of the earliest inns were meant to accommodate pilgrims, who were the largest group of travellers in medieval times. These were hostels provided by monasteries or abbeys, and were distinguished by religious signs such as the Cross Keys, Angel, Star and the Catherine Wheel, the badge of the Knights of St. Catherine of Mount Sinai, created in the eleventh century for the protection of pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem. At the time of the Crusaders such names as the Saracens Head and the Lamb and Flag, as the coat of arms of the Knights Templar, became popular.

But whether ancient or modern, decorative or crude, much of interest and humour can be found in a pub sign.

by Sandie Lerner



## PRICELESS ALE

One piece of consumer legislation which seems to have been conveniently forgotten in some pubs, now that the initial furore of its introduction is over, is that one that requires pubs to display price lists. Most brewers and publicans are quite good in this respect, but one or two pubs — especially the more expensive ones — have now removed the lists from walls or relegated them to an inaccessible position as possible. Unfortunately the practice seems to be on the increase so, if you see a pub which is not displaying its prices in a reasonable position first ask over the bar, and if you do not receive a satisfactory answer, contact your local Consumer Protection Office.

## BRANCH CONTACTS

**Hertfordshire North Branch**  
Peter Lerner ☎ Ware 830616  
**Hertfordshire South Branch**  
Dave Burns ☎ Welwyn 7805  
**Herts—Essex Borders Branch**  
John Hurrell ☎ 01-529 7495



# DEAR NICK...

With reference to your article in the November issue of Camra Newsletter, the heading should have read "Big Nick Aggro".

Being an Ind Coope tenant and a member of CAMRA, I was not amused by your stunning attack. You headed your article "Big Six Aggro" with two logos, one of Allied Breweries and one of Courage's. Then you only went on to attack Courage about price increases, but by using the Allied logo you gave the impression to all your readers that Allied has increased as well. In fact Allied's recent price increase only affected its foreign beers e.g Guinness, Holstein and Orangeboom.

You then went on about how small independent breweries have kept their prices stable. I would like you to ask Mr McMullen to explain their three price increases this year compared with Allied's two price rises, or do you not class McMullen's as a small independent brewery.

By writing this letter I do not agree with all that the 'Big Six' do but I do implore you not to attack them until you have all the right facts as this does not help in relations with them nor with tenents who are trying to help the cause.

Yours Sincerely A Parker  
The Old Bulls Head, Ware.

*Firstly, thanks Alan for taking the trouble to write in — if no one did then we could go on churning out any amount of crap ad-infinitum. The November article to which you refer, unfortunately suffered from poor graphical, rather than factual, presentation. Of course there is a bias with such editorial, as there is with any campaigning literature, but in this particular article a fair balance was maintained between CAMRA and publicans, by the printed statements made by leaders of the respective parties.*

*The Allied logo did and still does apply to the Title of the article but, its position should have been more accurately located within the editorial ie alongside the last four lines — which although at the end, were still important and relative to the headline. The shortages of Allied beer, as reported together with the unnecessarily large price increases made by other big brewers, ARE UPSETTING LANDLORDS, as well as their customers, throughout the country. (I can give plenty of examples). An attempt, in fact, was made to side WITH the publican in an attack on inefficiency and poor worker-management relations of the big breweries. Writing punchy headlines is not my favourite pastime (drinking fair priced quality real ale is), but every attempt is made to get the facts in, which includes ALL price rises (even Mac's — see July edition), but if more articles were supplied to me the job would be made much easier. I appreciate that your particular pub represents good value for money traditional beer (when its actually delivered) and just to prove that I do slag 'independant' breweries and don't really hate Ind Coope, this month has a special front page just for you and Keith Showering. Ed.*

## THIS EDITION

The Hertfordshire Newsletter is produced monthly by the Herts North, Herts South and Herts/Essex Borders branches of CAMRA. The editors would gratefully receive any item of news for future editions, but due to the improvement in type layout of late, may we ask for typed articles if possible to help shorten production time. We are now considering applications for ¼ page advertisements (current newsletter distribution is 3000).

In an attempt to start the new year on a sound footing, we have decided to set a deadline for Newsletter copy, so that, hopefully, each future edition will be produced punctually and free from error (Typographically or factual). The date fixed is the 20th of the preceeding month. We hope this does not deter all you budding journalists. Nick Page, 28 Inkerman Road, St. Albans ☎ 33810.

## DON'T GET CANNED

I can't remember where I first saw a can of beer. It could have been floating gently on the shore of Lake Windermere, or wedged behind a rock halfway up Snowdon.... or possibly at the bottom of the ornamental pond in Stevenage Town Centre, Discarded beer cans add so much to our British scenery, don't you agree?

And the taste of canned beer. Hops, malt, gas, and that extra hint of tin. No wonder we all love it.

And the price? Well, its more expensive than bottled beer, and much more expensive than draught — but you do get a nice noisy can to kick around after youv'e finished drinking. Canned beer — loaded by housewives on to trolleys in supermarkets alongside baked beans and fish fingers. To be drunk while watching Crossroads or Blankety-Blank.

If this doesn't sound like bliss, but you still want to drink beer at home, why not go round to your local pub with a clean bottle or jug and ask the landlord to fill it with draught beer? Or ask at the off-licence for a polypin — a plastic container filled with 4½ gallons of draught beer, which you can wash out and use again and again, even for home brewing. Real draught beer at home is cheaper than canned beer, tastes much better — and you don't have to find somewhere to hide the evidence after you've drunk it. Try some next time you have a party.

Peter Lerner



## CAMRA — WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU?

Basically, the chance to keep drinking the real ale you obviously enjoy! CAMRA is the organisation that kept real ale available — and a powerful voice in demanding that it stays available too.

Okay, CAMRA membership costs £4 a year. But what's £4 for adding your voice and safeguarding your favourite brew? You know the alternative! In addition, you receive your member's handbook, CAMRA'S lively monthly newspaper 'What's Brewing', discounts on many brewing books and products, and the chance to partake in brewery trips, get involved with Beer Festivals and mix in the company of Real Ale drinkers like you!

Join CAMRA'S ranks now by filling in the coupon below.....try three months trial CAMRA membership FREE — with no obligation to join! You will receive your handbook, What's Brewing etc, but if you decide not to join, simply cancel your standing order (at any time during the next three months and your money will be refunded).

Please enrol me as a member of CAMRA I understand I am under no obligation: if I do not wish to remain a member after three months FREE trial, I can cancel my order and my money will be refunded. If I wish to stay a member I need do nothing and I will automatically retain my membership until I cancel my order

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# AROUND THE PUBS

Contrary to what was published in the December Newsletter, the **Old Punch House at Ware** re-opened in mid-December after having been closed for more than a year. Previously known as a small, quiet and exclusive drinking-place, little remains of the original pub other than its facade and some internal timber panelling. A large new lounge and eating area has been built, with an intricate timber roof, and the adjoining premises, once the Bell and Sun pub and latterly an Oxfam shop, have also been incorporated. Good news is that Abbot, IPA and KK Mild are served on handpump, and I am sure that the Old Punch House will prove to be extremely popular, not only with beer drinkers but with local office workers and shoppers seeking lunchtime food and refreshments...but will its opening mean the closure of the **Brewery Tap** down the road?

The history of the inn's name is obscure, but it is known that punch was a drink favoured by the Whig party, and inns named the Punch Bowl were often political gathering-places for Whigs. Odd, therefore, that the official re-opening ceremony at the Punch House was performed by the local Tory MP.

Two further real ale outlets in **Ware** are the **Royal Oak** in London Road which has Ind Coope Bitter and Burton Ale on handpump, and the **Hertford Rugby Club** Hoe Lane, which has Mac's AK available on handpump to members. An even stranger name for a pub is the **Archer's Dart**, chosen by Greene King for a brand new pub they have recently opened just over the border in **Harlow, Essex**. Pubs in Harlow new town are named after butterflies and moths (does anyone know why?) and archer's dart is a small brown moth. Greene King are once again to be congratulated on providing a pleasant drinking environment and more real ale, the Abbot, IPA and KK Mild this time being served by gravity, from a first-floor "cellar" down to the bar via glass tubing.

Many local CAMRA members consider it strange that the Archer's Dart is being supplied by Greene King Biggleswade, rather than by Rayments, as Harlow is right in the centre of the traditional Rayments trading area and Rayments already have a popular pub in Harlow, the Willow Beauty. I understand that many people at Rayments brewery are also somewhat perturbed by this

One reason which I have been given to explain this is that Rayments do not have sufficient spare brewing capacity to supply another pub. I find this odd, as Rayments have in fact recently started to supply two free houses, the **Old Park Heights Hotel** in **Enfield** and the **Sportsman** in **Hertford**. The BBA available on handpump at the Sportsman (why did they change the name from the Blue Coat Boy?) must be the first draught Rayments beer to be sold in a pub in our county town for very many years.

The **Salisbury Arms** in **Hertford** is soon to receive 2 handpumps for Mac's County.

Young's Winter Warmer currently on sale at **Lytton Arms, Knebworth** and **Inn on the Green, Datchworth**. Adnams Tally Ho is currently available at **Crusty Loaf, Great Offley** and the **Cricketers, Ikleford**. The Cricketers has also replaced Everards Beacon Bitter with Wethered's Marlow Bitter.

**The New Found Out, Hitchin**, is a former Greene King pub which closed down many years ago, and opened again in December after very extensive alterations, serving Tolly Cobbold Mild, Bitter and Original on handpumps.

After years of lying in the middle of a real ale desert, at long last traditionally brewed beer has come to **Carpenters Park, Watford** thanks to Grand Met's jump on the band wagon,

— perseverance (listen Grand Met — either you give me a handpump for the Tap Bitter or get it out) of **Mein Host** (he also sells lager) **Phil Eley** of the **Partridge**.

Phil says that it will be a long hard struggle to convince a predominantly lager drinking public about real ale, but with his forcefulness and tenacity I am sure he will win through.

Since Phil took over the Partridge, not many moons ago, it has turned from a normal Grand Met type facade into a good, though very modern, friendly local.

Good luck to Phil and his wife Lyn and many gallons of "Tap" flow through their handpump.

*Special thanks for this month's news go to Peter Lerner and Bill Plasted.*

## WHAT'S ON

### HERTFORDSHIRE SOUTH BRANCH

#### Friday 4th January

Branch New Year Party at Bramfield Village Hall. Tickets are £3.50 each from your branch contact.

#### Wednesday January 16th

BRANCH MEETING at the Wheatsheaf, Lower High Street, Watford. 8.00pm (Ind Coope).

#### Monday 21st January

Social and Shove Ha'penny match against Herts./Essex Borders at the Welsh Harp, Waltham Abbey. 8.00pm (McMullen).

#### Tuesday 29th January

Social and Darts Match at the White Lion, Sopwell Lane, St. Albans. 8.00pm (Ind Coope).

#### Advance Notice

This year's Branch Weekend Trip will be to Belhaven's in Scotland. Please contact Tony King on 01-952 6080 if you want to come along. The dates are Feb. 22nd-24th.

The February Branch Meeting will be on Tuesday 19th and Joe Goodwin CAMRA Chairman, will probably be the speaker.

### HERTFORDSHIRE NORTH BRANCH

#### Sunday 13th January

Sunday lunchtime informal social at Strathmore Arms, St Pauls Walden (Free House).

#### Wednesday 16th January

BRANCH MEETING at Three Horseshoes, Norton, Letchworth. 8.00pm (Charrington).

#### Wednesday 23rd January

Campaigning Social at Bird in Hand, Gosmore, Hitchin. 8.00pm (Greene King).

#### Wednesday 30th January

Social at Prince of Wales, Stevenage 8.00pm (McMullen)

### HERTS/ESSEX BORDERS BRANCH

#### Monday 7th January

Campaigning Social and darts at the Black Swan, Broadley Common. 8.00pm (Ind Coope inc. KK)

#### Saturday 12th January

Lunchtime Pub crawl around Bishops Stortford, starting at the Three Tuns at 11.45 am

#### Monday 14th January

BRANCH MEETING at the Bull, Theydon Bois. 8.00pm (Ind Coope).

#### Monday 21st January

Social with Herts South branch at the Welsh Harp, Waltham Abbey.

#### Monday 18th February

AGM at the Rose & Crown, Cheshunt. 8.00pm (Ind Coope).