

FREE



The Campaign for Real Ale

HERTFORDSHIRE NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 1980

NUMBER 32

ANOTHER COURAGE -UP

Courage – the company that should have chosen an ostrich as its emblem rather than a cockerel – have announced their intention to close the 200-year-old Horselydown brewery in London, founded by John Courage himself. The move, which shows that the Courage cockerel really is chicken-brained, comes after assurances that the opening of the Worton Grange fizz-factory on the M4 near Reading would not mean the closure of any of their real ale breweries in the south. When Horselydown closes in the next 12 months, with the loss of 690 jobs, it will mean that the company will have only two real breweries left – Plymouth and Bristol. After previous “promises” from Courage about the future of, first, Reading brewery (now closed) and now London, no one can be sure about the future of these remaining two.

Bright Ideas

The Company say that cask-conditioned Director's bitter will be shipped up from Bristol – sheer lunacy as the drays will drive right past Reading on their way to London. Worton Grange, however, cannot produce real beer, according to Courage. The move will almost certainly mean the end of traditional Best Bitter in the south-east since bright bitter will probably be supplied from the Reading Megakegery. Worse still, it is likely that this bright beer will be served by handpumps in the Company's houses, something which is already being done in some pubs in the London area. Moves such as this make the old Watney empire look desirable by comparison.

Overcapacity

The major reasons for closure are probably overcapacity at Worton Grange and the Company's poor financial record. It is probable, however, that since the new factory has enough capacity to absorb production from all their “real” breweries in the south, and with its ideal placing on the M4, that it has been the intention all along to close all these down. Needless to say, Courage have been insisting that this is not the case. By next year, however, if the closure of Horselydown goes ahead, they will be half way there. This would leave them with just the two “real” breweries, Worton Grange in the south and John Smiths, Tadcaster, brewing only processed “beers”.

Regional Brews

At a time when more successful members of the Big Six, Ind Coope and Watneys, are decentralising their structure and producing a more varied range of beers for different regions, Courage's move appears to not only be totally daft but also commercially unsound. With any other company the exhortations or drinkers, publicans and shareholders would be expected to register, and perhaps make them reconsider their policies. Watneys did. It seems as though Courage are determined to take their place as Public Bar Enemy Number One by blindly blundering on into a fizz-only future. It seems that they've not yet heard of the consumer revolt which has changed the face of the British brewing industry. If that's the case then CAMRA will soon be doing plenty to change all that.

Russian Roll Out – the Cornell Column, inside.



RAYMENTS TIES

Hertfordshire North branch are selling smart blue ties featuring the Rayments “jolly brewer” insignia in red and blue, on a white background. A strictly limited number are available at £2.75 each; they are on sale at any Branch event, or by post (include large stamped addressed envelope) from Peter Lerner, * 14 Hazeldell, Watton-at-Stone, Hertford. Don't miss this chance to show your pride in Hertfordshire's smallest brewery.

OPENING ARGUMENT

by Dave Burns

After returning from a recent holiday in Germany I am once again struck by the fact that the licensing hours in this country are, to put it mildly, a pain in the neck. Although it is CAMRA policy to support the proposed liberalisation of opening times, I would go further and suggest that they should be completely abolished. Whenever this is mooted by parliament, though, the same old, predictable objections arise from the same old, predictable quarters. These objections are, I believe, nearly all based on ignorance of the true facts, prejudice or just plain self-interest. They can usually be summarised as follows:

The Temperance Movement – “*Liberalisation will only increase drunkenness and drink-related crime. Everyone will be in the pub instead of working.*” I suspect that these people would object to anything concerned with drink on principle, irrespective of the facts. Indications are that their objections are totally unfounded. Recent changes in the law in Scotland, resulting in some pubs being open nearly all day, have, in fact, reduced drunkenness and drink-induced offences. Scandinavian countries, with very strict drink laws, also have far worse alcohol problems than we have. I suspect that there is no simple cause-and-effect relationship as the Teetotalers of this world may suggest. Certainly countries such as Germany and Belgium, with bars open all day and night, are not full of drunks and their industrial record indicates that people are not in the pub all the time. What is most distasteful about the Temperance argument is the implied condescension which suggests that the populace needs to be looked after – by them.

The Police – “*Liberalisation would make policing difficult.*” Any variation of the present system would inevitably cause some confusion, at least at first, and make the police's job more difficult. Abolition altogether would make policing unnecessary and would allow the police to get on with their real job – that of catching real criminals.

The Publican – “*We are not prepared to work more hours than we do already. Longer opening would mean more staff, higher overheads and higher prices.*” Here we have the most vocal opposition, and understandably so. I think that the reluctance of some landlords, managers and trades unions is based not only on the British People's inherent dislike of change but also on complete misunderstanding of the facts. Most landlords already complain of working for maybe 14-16 hours a day – perhaps 8am to 12pm with a short afternoon break. If this is so then they may already be putting in longer hours than many of their continental colleagues. Although the law in Belgium and Germany may allow bars to stay open for 24 hours a day, most of them will probably only open from, say, 11am until midnight or a little later. No longer than a British publican works now. In addition, most pubs here are more, not less, heavily staffed than their continental counterparts. This is because most of the trade in pubs is concentrated into short periods within opening hours. Over the Channel, bars have a much more even spread of trade

cont on P4 col 2.

THE REAL ALE GHOST TOWN OF HERTFORDSHIRE

Twenty miles to the north of Kings Cross, on the main railway line from London to Edinburgh lies the town of Welwyn Garden City. With a population of 40,000, the town is beautifully laid out with wide grass verges, well kept flower beds and plentiful trees. It boasts sailing and boating lakes, a council run golf course, leisure centre, sports centre and a fine swimming pool. An idyllic place to live one might think. Unfortunately for the real ale drinker this is not the case, the town having only 11 pubs of which just four sell real ale.

Taking the real pubs first, in the north west corner of the town in Shoplands we find a typical large, modern estate pub, the **HEDGEHOG**. The pub possesses both public and saloon bars, the latter very well appointed. This is the only pub in town which offers a choice of real ales, Ind Coope Bitter and Burton being currently on sale, though I am given to understand Benskins will replace the Bitter in the near future.

In the middle of the previously mentioned municipal golf course, we find the **FAIRWAY TAVERN**, a very convenient 19th hole for thirsty golfers. Although the pub itself looks more like an airport departure lounge, the Burton Ale is well kept and the large picture windows afford a splendid view across the Mimram river valley. The pub also boasts a separate snack bar where children may be taken, and which serves reasonably priced basket meals.

In the town centre we find the **CHERRY TREE**, which is more easily recognized as a Beefeater Steak House. Until its recent conversion to an eating emporium, this pub had a large dance hall at the rear which one evening in the late '60s was packed to the gills to hear an up and coming new blues band, Led Zeppelin! Nowadays the entertainment is on a lower key. Much has been written on the decor of this pub yet on entering the front door all would appear quite normal, if a little garish. A walk through to the old dance hall however will take you into third rate recreation of a street scene from a Dickens novel. The pub itself sells Wethereds Bitter. Perhaps the pubs greatest asset is the large saloon bar at the front which now lies redundant. Surely it would not be too much to ask of the brewers to restore this to use as a basic public bar, something which the town centre, which nly possesses two pubs, badly needs.

The final real ale pub in the town, the **BEEHIVE**, is around 200 yards from the QEII hospital. It's a very handsome timber beamed pub which has been tastefully renovated by Whitbreads, its owners. Eric Nicholls, the manager, keeps a very consistent pint of Wethereds Bitter and in my opinion the pub is by far the best in town.

Briefly, the other pubs are the **HOLLYBUSH**, also near the hospital which until quite recently sold handpumped Bass and prior to that Charringtons IPA. The handpumps were ripped out, however, with the arrival of the latest manager. Near the Woodhall shopping parade are the **PEARTREE** and the **CHIEFTAIN**, both vast pubs. The former would almost certainly be selling handpumped beer now were it not for the change of ownership from Ind Coope to Whitbreads shortly before the Burton Ale revolution. The handpumps were still visible on the bar until quite recently, in fact. The Chieftain was quite recently extensively renovated at considerable expense by McMullens and the public bar is more comfortable than most saloons. Unfortunately the improvements stopped short at the taste of the beer, which is all fizz. Just up the road, on the eastern edge of the town is the **LUDWICK**, an uninspiring pub jointly run by Mac's and Whitbread. The town centres other pub, the **FOUNTAIN** in Parkway, is a completely faceless one bar Courage fizz house, while on the Haldens estate we find the **MAYFLOWER**, a Whitbread House, a friendly but equally uninspiring pub. Finally we have the town's newest pub, the **OAK TAVERN** on the vast Panshanger Estate. The brewers, Bass, were quick to point out when it opened that it featured a 'public bar'. What this actually means is that part of the single large bar is covered in lino instead of carpet, and standing on the lino won't get you your pint 2p cheaper either.

So there we have it, a pretty depressing scene for the Real Ale imbibing inhabitant of the town, with only one real ale pub for every 10,000 people, more than the entire population of nearby Welwyn village, which also boasts four real ale pubs.

If you live in the town and would like to see more real ale flowing, don't just sit in the local moaning over your pint of Tankard, Tavern or Stones, tell the landlord what you want and tell him often. At the moment, with most of the county well served for Real ale, the beer drinking scene in Welwyn-Garden is an embarrassment to all concerned.

Steve Ellis

BAR BILLIARDS TABLES

obtainable from

ALFRED SAMS & SONS

4 Briscoe Road, Hoddesdon, Herts.

Write or telephone
Hoddesdon 62415
for further details

COMPOST CORNER

by S. Stirrer

Fastest Indigestion in Town

I normally read the brewing industry trade press in the same way that I would pick up a copy of the Beano or the Daily Star. Not very enlightening but sometimes pretty amusing – although not always intentionally so. A recent issue of the *Publican*, a sort of jazzed-up glossy Morning Advertiser – but with more advertising, gave a few good examples why. In an article headed "Kraft claims 'fastest sandwiches in town'" which was nothing to do with a new pub sport similar to flea racing, but about exciting developments in "cheese slice technology". The pack contains 40 slices of processed "cheese" each of which measures 4½" square to fit exactly the standard sliced loaf. You English are so clever. What shows the author's, or Kraft's, complete ignorance is the statement that these slices have many advantages over the "traditional 10lb cheese block". 10lb cheese blocks are about as traditional as Space Invaders is a pub game. Other interesting facts to be gleaned include the information that with just 12 ring-pulls from large cans of Holsten Export or Pils you can get a free golf ball. Wow! However the funniest item is an advertisement which appeared in the classified section:

FOR SALE

Beer and vomit proof carpet that looks like Wilton. Almost impossible to stain. Heavy duty. Ideal hotels, bars, offices, receptions, bedrooms. 60 colours. NO STAINING FROM BEER, SPIRITS, VOMIT, ORANGE JUICE. £3.99 per sq yd plus vat. Samples 24p. postage. OLLERTON HALL PUB, Knutsford, Cheshire.

Graffiti Corner

As yet I've not received any entries for this but I did look through the Graffiti Wall from the last Hertfordshire Beer Festival. Sad to say, however, the quality was pretty low and there was a fair amount of repetition. One, printable, bit of scrawl was quite amusing, and not without an element of truth:

A boring person is someone who talks about himself, while you want to talk about yourself.

Bar Billiards

As promised last month I will print a list of all known (to me that is) pubs with bar billiards tables. Sadly I have received few replies even though there are still quite a number of tables in the county. First a little of the history of the game.

Although the game developed from much earlier versions of billiards, the form we know now was first seen as *Billiards Russe* (Russian Billiards) in Belgium in the late 1920s. When the game was brought over to England in the 30s the name was changed because of the unpopularity of the Russians at that time. Things change very little it seems. Since Bar Billiards Ltd registered the name as their own, other manufacturers had to choose others and so the terms Skittle Billiards and Snookerette came into use. Although there are slight variations in the rules from area to area, such as in the positioning of the 'skittles', the rules remain essentially the same.

Pubs in Hertfordshire with tables include the Cheques and the Red Lion at Woolmer Green, the Robin Hood and Little John at Rabley Heath near Welwyn; The Rose and Crown, Aston near Stevenage; the Sele Arms and the Dimsdale Arms, both in Hertford; the Prince of Wales, Hertingfordbury; the King William, Hoddesdon; the North Star, Welwyn; and the Acom, St. Albans. A number of clubs also have them, in particular the Thomas Mercer Sports and Social Club, St. Albans, who are not only interested in joining a league but also sell real ale to boot!

Anyone who would like to try the game can do no better than to come along to the South herts – Mid Chilterns branches joint social and join in (see What's On). If anyone is interested in joining a league I already have a number of interested people.

If you know of a table somewhere get some friends together and form a team. Contact me via the newsletter and we'll see if we can form the first Hertfordshire Bar Billiards League – certainly the first for many years.

HOME BREW — 1850's STYLE

An amusing and interesting book came my way recently. Entitled "A Plain Cookery Book for the Working Classes", it was written by Charles Elmé Francatelli, late Maître d'Hôtel and Chief Cook to Her Majesty the Queen, in 1852.

Amongst recipes for a "Pudding made out of Small Birds" and "How to prepare a large Quantity of Good Soup for the Poor", is one which tells the pre-Boot's kit brewer how to make his (or her) own beer. After cleaning one's plant which consists of "...a thirty gallon copper, two cooling tubs

capable of holding each about thirty gallons, a mash tub of sufficient size to contain fifty-four gallons, and another tub of smaller size, called an underback..." and various other items, our latter day Tom Caxton is advised to collect a quantity of rain or brook water for its suitability for brewing. Using two bushels of malt and two pounds of hops will produce a very reasonable three keils (54 gallons) of beer after two month's maturation. Quite sufficient for the average home brewer one would have thought. I presume that, in those days, home brewers had even more friends than they have today willing to help them test their wares — either that or very large, thirsty families!

CAMRA TAKES OVER THE HIGH STREET

In February this year Neil Grundy took over the Red Lion in Stevenage High Street. Neil came from a pub in Cambridgeshire where he had won the local CAMRA branch's 'Pub of the Year' competition. Since arriving Neil has added XX mild and Abbot to the IPA, all served by handpump. Last month Ian Miller moved to the White Hart, a former Ind Coope keg and top pressure house. Now there are six handpumps serving Benskins and Burton. KK mild should be available from the end of August. Ian, a CAMRA member, offers 'service with a smile' and a wide range of foods. (*His wife's nice too - Ed*)

In mid-August former Chairman of Herts North Branch, Bob Else, took over the Marquis of Lorne. At present Abbot is served on handpump but we are all hoping that the brewery will install pumps for IPA and mild so that Bob may have the chance to compete on equal term with the other real ale pubs in the street. Bob, a chef by profession, will be offering a range of foods without the use of microwaves.

The two other High Street pubs which sell real ale are the Two Diamonds (Mac's Country and AK) and the Yorkshire Grey (Greene King Abbot and IPA). Only 'Whitbread for Choice' are conspicuous by their absence.

Dave Bundy

DEUTSCHLAND UBER ALES

This month we start a series on the beers of Europe. It's not often realised that there are many different types of beers produced on the continent, particularly in Belgium and Germany. Apart from the ubiquitous Pils, which is what British lager purports to be, there are wheat beers, wild yeast beers, strong ales, stouts and even cherry beers. In the next few months we will be looking at Germany and in the first article **Martyn Cornell** samples a South German *Weizenbier*.

A LONG, LONG WHEAT



It's a curious fact that a practice rigorously avoided by all self-respecting British real ale brewers — adding wheat to the mash tun — should be an ancient and much-celebrated tradition in Germany, home of the strictest beer purity laws in the world.

But while real ale fanatics here might turn up their noses at the idea, the Germans have a great deal to be proud of with their wheat beers. Earlier this summer I found myself in Stuttgart, seated at a table in an open-air cafe, on a hot afternoon. I employed my best O-level German in ordering a *weizenbier* from the Sanwald brewery, which specialises in the brew.

The drink was served refreshingly cold in an outrageously tall, thin half-litre glass — slightly less than a pint — with the traditional slice of lemon on top. The whole affair was delicious, and every dry, sultry afternoon since has made me long for a cool *weizen*.

For the technically-minded, *weizens* are one of two wheat beer styles brewed in Germany, the other being the Berliner *weisses*, or white beers. They contain a third to two-thirds wheat malts to barley, and are top-fermented, like British ale and unlike lager.

Unfortunately I was there at the wrong time to try any *Bocks*, the strong South German festival ales, but I did my fair share of consumer sampling from various local breweries.

South Germany is the most brewed area in the world — there are around 150 brewing towns in Baden-Württemberg alone, many with two, three or more breweries each, while Bavaria is reckoned to have over 1,000 breweries, so this report covers only a miniscule fraction of what is available.

But I am disappointed to say that I only really liked one of the lagers I tried, and that, I discovered later, was the only one that had not been filtered. Few German beers are ever pasteurised, unlike British so-called "lagers", but unfiltered beer from the cask is so rare it is actually advertised as a speciality. A pity.

Next Month — Berliner Weisse.

THE CORNELL COLUMN

by Martyn Cornell

RUSSIAN ROLL-OUT

Courage Imperial Russian Stout lives — despite the many reports announcing its demise.

The latest brew of the strongest real ale produced by any of the Big Six took place just four months ago. And even though the eventual closure of the Horsleydown brewery in London, where it comes from, has been announced, another two brews of Russian Stout are planned as usual for next year.

Imperial Russian Stout is a bottled, naturally conditioned, real ale with an original gravity of a powerful 1101.8. It is normally kept in storage while it conditions for at least a year, and the most recent vintage on sale in pubs right now is the 1978.

The brew is the only survivor from the Barclay Perkins brewery in Southwark, taken over by Courage in the 1950s, and it still bears the Barclay name on the bottle caps. The recipe dates back almost 200 years, and the brew was originally exported to Russia to tickle the palates of the imperial court.

Beer connoisseurs regard Russian Stout as one of the classic beers. The '78 is now in almost top condition, rich thick and warming. The '77, still to be found on some pubs' shelves, is perhaps a little past its prime. Your columnist recently had a '74, which tasted more like gravy than beer, but which was still very palatable.

Courage admit that they lose money on the beer, and many drinkers thought the company had stopped brewing it. But Courage brewer John McAllister told me: "We brew it at the same time we make Velvet Stout. 300 barrels of the stronger wort goes into Russian Stout, and 500 barrels of the weaker wort into Velvet Stout." The only difference in the way the brew is handled now is that it is stored for longer before being bottled — unfiltered, and unpasteurised — so that it does not have to be conditioned for so long in the bottle itself.

Courage have said that when Horsleydown closes around the end of next year Russian Stout will be brewed at Bristol instead. Let's hope so — it would be a terrible shame to lose for ever the brew that kept Catherine the Great happy.

ALE AND HERTY

People in Hertfordshire suffer less from drink problems than any other county in the country, according to the National Council on Alcoholism. Hertfordshire has the best drink driving record in England, and has fewer drink-associated social and health problems than almost anywhere else. Over the whole country there is an average of 371 drink driving cases per 100,000 people. In Hertfordshire the figure drops to just 109 cases. The county also has fewer deaths from cirrhosis of the liver than most other English counties. These statistics have not, alas, prevented the Hertfordshire Area Health Authority from calling for the price of drink to be increased and increased until alcohol consumption finally starts falling, on the grounds that an estimated 1.5 per cent of the population suffers from a drink problem.

Don't worry, Area Health Authority — any more price rises, and the only drink problem any of us suffers from really will be how to pay for the stuff.

BOOZE-UP IN BALDOCK

The first ever real beer festival in Baldock is taking place next month — on the site of the town's last brewery.

The festival is being run by the North Herts CAMRA branch on Saturday October 25 in the Baldock Community Centre, Simpson Drive, off Baldock High Street. Simpson Drive covers the old Simpson's brewery, taken over by Greene King and closed in 1965.

More than 15 different real beers will be available, as well as real food and entertainment. The festival will be ticket only, maximum 22 people, and tickets can be obtained from Martin Connolly on Stevenage 61332.

TIMES DON'T CHANGE

"The Justices, and oddly enough especially the teetotal justices seemed to believe that there was some special virtue in large and commodious bars, catering for cars and charabancs, and some special wickedness in small cosy bars where old friends get together for their evening drink. But for my part I always regretted the passing of the little pubs. I'd rather sit round the fire with half a dozen good fellows and drink beer from the wood, than part myself on a high stool on a long bar in a roadhouse and be served with stuff which comes sizzling out of a tap after being pumped through miles of chromium-plated pipes by hundreds of pounds worth of machinery . . . But a pub is primary a meeting place for friends, where friends as well as drinking may talk, argue, play games, or just sit and think according to mood . . . I would rather that my host was the landlord of a little pub, a poor man drinking with his fellows, than a "manager" who has no more in common with his customers than the manager of a chain store, which is exactly what he is."

Thanks to Mary White for finding this quotation, which is **not** an extract from a diatribe about the newer pubs of our friendly local brewery, but comes from "Portrait of Elmbury" by John Moore . . . published about 1946!

Peter Lerner

ADVERTISE IN THE HERTFORDSHIRE NEWSLETTER!

Circulation 4000 for details see bottom of back page.

AROUND THE PUBS

Two free houses in the northern part of the county have added the popular Benskins Bitter to their range of beers. They are the **Coach and Horses** at Royston, and the **Lytton Arms** at Knebworth.

A newcomer to real ale, proudly displaying its Benskins Bitter handpump, is the **Boot** at Dane End, near Watton at Stone. An annual event which packs the **Bell** at Therfield (Greene King) to capacity is the Harvest Festival. The highlight of the day is the auction, held in the evening, where anything and everything goes for ridiculous prices. This year's Festival will be on October 4th – come early! Finally it's time to say farewell to Jack and Elsie Smith, whose **Chequers** at Wood End finally closes its doors as a Greene King pub on 3rd September. Many words have already been written in the newsletter about the closure of the Chequers: all that remains is to thank the Smiths, on behalf of a generation of Hertfordshire beer-drinkers, for the warmth of their welcome and the excellence of their beer at The Chequers – never was a bad pint ever served there – and to wish them well in their new home in Walkern. Meanwhile, Greene King are selling the old pub by tender, with or without licence, so if you fancy running a country pub and have £60,000 odd to spare, make Greene King an offer they can't refuse.

Next a welcome to two new couples: First the new managers, Ken and Julie Osborne at the **Chequers**, Woolmer Green. Ken got off to a fine start by joining CAMRA. He is continuing the full range of Benskins bitter. Ind Coope KK and Burton. Next we welcome Mike and Sue Farquhar at the **Greyhounse**, St. Ippollitts, who can serve you Benskins bitter or Burton Ale from the pump.

The **Bull** at Gosmore now sells Wethereds bitter – next door is the **Bird in Hand**, where a cask of Abbot Ale has been a regular feature on the bar. The second phase of Benskins introduction has brought with it another spate of pubs installing handpumps. Pubs which have come to our notice are the **Half Moon** and the **Falcon** in Bishop's Stortford; the **Bedford Arms**, the **Load of Hay** and the **One Crown** in Watford; the **Saracen's Head** in Kings Langley; the **Firefly** in Bourne End; the **Old Shepherd** in Chorleywood; the **Queen's Arms** and the **White Hart** in Bushey; the **Fish and Eels**, Dobbs Weir; the **Half Moon**, High Wych; and the **Windsor Castle**, Ware. The **Black Lion Hotel** in St Albans is also selling the beer. As we have said before our lists are probably incomplete and new outlets for the brew are springing up all over the county.

McMullens are on the move again. At least two managed houses have recently had handpumps installed, or are promised. The **Cock o' the North** at Bell Bar, near Brookmans Park, has had a handpump installed for, you guessed it, Country Bitter only. Pumps are also promised at the **Cowper Arms**, Digswell, by Welwyn North station.

The **Grandison Arms**, Bramfield has installed a handpump to serve Ind Coope bitter.

ANOTHER POINT OF VIEW

Guest speaker at Hertfordshire North's October branch meeting (see diary) will be Mr Harry Shindler, national Secretary of the National Association of Licensed House Managers. Mr. Shindler makes no secret of the fact that he does not share CAMRA's views on many aspects of the pub trade. So there should be an extremely lively exchange of views and an opportunity to learn more about life the other side of the bar. Local licensees will be particularly welcome at this meeting.

Peter Lerner

JOIN CAMRA NOW!



I/we wish to become members of the Campaign for Real Ale (Limited).
I/we agree to abide by the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Campaign.
(Please use BLOCK CAPITALS)

Name _____

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Send to the Membership Secretary, CAMRA, 34 Alma Road, St Albans, Hertfordshire.

FULL MEMBERSHIP £5 A YEAR. JOINT MEMBERSHIP £6 A YEAR.
(One copy of What's Brewing only)

WHAT'S ON

HERTFORDSHIRE SOUTH BRANCH

Wednesday September 17th

Bar billiards match versus Mid Chilterns Branch at the Red Lion, Little Missenden. 8.00pm prompt start.

Tuesday September 23rd

BRANCH MEETING at the Red Lion, Radlett, 8.00pm (Greene King and Bass)

HERTFORDSHIRE NORTH BRANCH

Tuesday September 9th

Joint social with North Bedfordshire Branch at the Wheatsheaf, Dunton, near Biggleswade. 8.00pm (Wethered)

Thursday September 11th

BRANCH MEETING at the Red Lion, Stevenage Old Town. 8.00pm start (Greene King)

Saturday September 13th

Coach trip to Oxford and Aylesbury – for places contact John Law on Stevenage 721015.

Monday September 15th

Brewery visit to McMullens, Hertford, meeting 10.15am. For places contact Steve Done on Stevenage 721960.

Tuesday September 16th

Campaigning social at the Hen and Chickens in Baldock. Starts 8.00pm. (Greene King)

Wednesday September 24th

Social at the Bull, Watton-at-Stone, 8.00pm. (Benskins).

Tuesday October 7th

BRANCH MEETING at the Chequers, Woolmer Green. Guest Speaker Mr Harry Shindler, National Secretary of the National Association of Licensed House Managers. 8.00pm prompt. (Benskins).

Wednesday October 15th

Campaigning Social at the Green Man, Great Wymondley. 8.00pm. (Greene King)

HERTS/ESSEX BORDERS BRANCH

Wednesday September 10th

Brewery visit to Ridleys (15 places). Meet at brewery 2.15pm

Monday September 15th

BRANCH MEETING at the Bull, Much Hadham. 8.00pm start (Benskins)

Monday September 22nd

Darts social at the Good Intent, Upshire. 8.00pm (Ind Coope)

Monday October 20th

Brewery visit to McMullens. Details later.

BRANCH CONTACTS

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Herts-Essex Borders Branch

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and hence often required fewer staff. Those that are continually busy do employ extra staff, on a shift basis if they're open for long hours, but make extra money to compensate. No doubt about it, European bars do make money, but – and this is not usually appreciated – they are not, in general, particularly expensive. If the earnings of the country are taken into consideration then beer in a German or Belgian bar is actually cheaper than here! In addition, service is often better over there, with table service the norm and the unhurried atmosphere allowing more time and effort to be spent on each customer.

The Traditionalist – "A change in the licensing laws would alter the essential character of the English pub, fill it with machines and spoil the atmosphere." I used to think that too. But closer thought shows it to be groundless. The British pub has developed over hundreds of years and is a product of the people of this country, not the relatively recent opening restrictions. In fact many traditional pubs are already being converted to tasteless, characterless amusement arcades without any alteration in the licensing laws. We don't have a monopoly on good places to drink and a nice refreshing beer outside a cafe in Berlin or Brussels at four o'clock on a summer's afternoon is a lot better than sitting in a dusty pub carpark with nothing to wet your whistle.

Well, those are some of the arguments, and what I think of them. There are obviously more, for and against, good and bad. I merely think that with our pubs and more reasonable licensing laws we really would be the envy of the beer drinking world. As it is a totally outdated concept, intended to keep munitions workers at their benches in 1914, every day steps in to curtail the enjoyment of millions. It's about time we called time on calling time.

The Hertfordshire Newsletter is produced by the Hertfordshire South, the Hertfordshire North and the Herts-Essex Borders branches of CAMRA. The editor gratefully receives any articles or letters for publication. Articles should preferably be typewritten and double spaced, handwritten items as legible as possible please. Send to D. Burns, 11 Turpins Chase, Oaklands, Welwyn, Herts. tel. 7805.

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