

FREE



The Campaign for Real Ale *HERTFORDSHIRE NEWSLETTER*

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NUMBER 36

**Real Draught Beer
in Hertfordshire**

GUIDE- SHOCK HORROR

The big story to start 1981 is the mysterious appearance of copies of Real Draught Beer in Hertfordshire in pubs and bookshops around the county. This publication, which many had begun to think was merely a figment of their imagination, sneaked onto bookshelves on Christmas Eve. Since then copies have been turning up all over the county.

SERIOUSLY THOUGH FOLKS, despite many delays the Hertfordshire County Guide is now a reality and should be available in a pub or bookshop somewhere near you. Cover price is 60 pence and the 87-page book lists over 500 pubs in and around the county. There are maps of the county and of major towns, photographs and reproductions of beer mats and labels, and a history of brewing in the area written by your very own Martyn Cornell. If you have difficulty in obtaining a copy contact your nearest branch representative (see back page). The cover of the new guide is reproduced on the left.



THE MAGIC FIGURE of 100 real ale pubs has finally been reached by Hertfordshire North CAMRA branch.

The century was reached when a branch member visited the Fold in Stevenage New Town, currently undergoing renovation, and discovered that brewers Ind Coope had installed handpumps for Burton and bitter.

Now a celebration, with a special presentation to the landlord, has been organised at the pub for Wednesday January 28th. Ind Coope executives at Watford have been invited, as have other landlords and CAMRA members who have dealings with Ind Coope.

The Fold is one of the pubs that is keeping itself Ind Coope, and not going Benskins. Branch members are particularly pleased to get another real ale pub in the New Town, as it redresses the balance with Old Stevenage. The Old Town has 11 real pubs out of 17 – the New just five out of 18.

M.C.



APOLOGIES for the erratic publication dates of the last two newsletters which was caused by the seasonal holidays. We should return to 'normality' next month.

REAL ALE IN U.S.A.?

(well perhaps palatable)

by Chris Storey

A RECENT ARTICLE in a publication called Business Traveller outlined the revelation of the only drinkable American beer. Among such 'revered' supposedly Germanic brews were Schaefer, Pabst, Miller, Budweiser, Busch, Schlitz, Michelob, Rheingold and Gablinger. Some even purporting to be brewed to traditional German recipes. American beer not only doesn't taste Germanic but bears little resemblance to beer brewed anywhere else in the world.

IN ORDER TO obtain an independent opinion of American brews a panel of foreign beer drinkers temporarily resident in the United States were recruited, representing Algeria, Belgium, Brazil, Britain and France (the German and Japanese delegations failed to turn up - I wonder why?). They were given, in anonymously numbered glasses, nineteen different major brands of American brewed 'beer' and the best selling import. This tasting session (or perhaps non-tasting) was conducted in the editorial offices of the Daily newspaper of Dartmouth College, and the tasters drawn from that institution's post graduate ranks.

THEY WERE ASKED which American brands of 'beer' they had taken to drinking since their arrival in the U.S.A. The top three favourites were Budweiser, Michelob and Miller, and a preference for imported Heineken above all three, given the choice. They were briefed to mark the twenty brews from 0-5 in quality and then were issued with notebooks and access to Perrier water (to refresh jaded palates, not to confuse them). They applied themselves seriously to the task but from their facial contortions and colourful cosmopolitan expletives, with increasing regret.

FORTY OR SO minutes later they handed in their notebooks and scores were assessed. Zero was the lowest mark at the outset, but by mutual agreement soon after the tasting started, a lower mark of double zero was allowed. This double score was unanimously awarded to Schaefer and by a narrow majority to Pabst Blue Ribbon. Ballantine Ales, US brewed Lowenbrau and Rheingold were unanimously awarded single zero's. Schlitz, Naranganzett and Gablinger averaged one mark each. Natural Lite was reckoned to be as good as, if not better, to the rival reduced calorie entries from Schlitz and Michelob.

THE NEXT GROUP up, averaging 1.5 points, included Genesee, Busch and both the Canadian entrants, Molson and Labatt. Near the top came Budweiser, Miller and Michelob together with Busch, U.S. brewed Tuborg Gold and imported Heineken. The unquestioned winner, to the American observers' astonishment, was Old Milwaukee. Apparently Old Milwaukee, made by Schlitz, is for 'little old men' and its principle market is rumoured to be geriatric homes, but, with a score of 3.5 out of a possible 5, it easily beat the rest. The reason being that unlike all the other American brews it has some flavour: and unlike the others what taste it has is of beer and not roasted maize and sugar. Through pure disbelief another bottle or two was opened to ensure that the sample glasses hadn't been mixed up (impossible!) and an American brew was hailed as the only one to have any flavour, and apparently agreeable at that, but unfortunately judging by the 'competition' what made Milwaukee famous gave them the Schlitz.

LETTERS

From Dave Bundy, Stevenage

The price of Greene King beers rose by 7d a pint in November making the price of Abbot in some bars 12/-, and making milo in some bars go above 8/- for the first time. Price rises, like wage rises, are the result of inflation and it is inflation which has become the third tax on beer. Other taxes are the excise duty levied on the original gravity of each brew, and value added tax which is added to the excise duty and to the price rises caused by inflation.

This third tax is paid to financiers through the system of interest rates which are held artificially high by governments who have the monopoly of the money supply.

So next time beer prices go up don't blame the breweries or the draymen or the landlord, write to your Member of Parliament and insist that governments reduce the money supply and relinquish their control over interest rates.

Our Financial Editor replies: As Mr Bundy appears to hanker after nostalgia for historical monetary values, he will doubtless be interested to learn that in 1960 a male manual worker on average earnings had to work for 23 minutes to earn the price of an average pint of beer. In 1980 the equivalent figure is 12 minutes.

As a further point, Mr Bundy doesn't appear to have got his macro economic cause and effect relationships quite right.

From Mr M.A. Holder, manager of the Red Lion Hotel, Radlett in reply to Steve Bury's letter in last month's newsletter.

Thank you for the invitation to reply to Mr Bury's comments in the December Issue.

I appreciate the obvious frustrations of the writer at the changes which have recently taken place. Anybody would obviously be against the closure of their regular bar, however the Red Lion is after all an hotel and has to consider its hotel guests and restaurant patronage. Accordingly the public bar was re-organised to accommodate those needs. As for the lounge bar, it was obvious, upon my arrival in September, that the conditioning of the existing real ales had been allowed to deteriorate. Very positive steps have since been taken to rectify this situation, including re-insulating the now close-by cellar.

The changes of brands was as a result of direct market research which has been substantiated by the excellent sales of Courage Directors. I can confidently say that with the very rare exception (due to brewery disputes, etc) each beer is always on offer in prime condition, and that after a short period of consolidation business is beginning to flourish. May I also add that the "general consensus of opinion" is that management attitude toward market appreciation will be of future credit to the Hotel.

DEUTSCHLAND ÜBER ALES

5-Bock



Bock beer originated in the North German town of Einbeck (Bock is a corruption of the town's name) and, in its time was almost the equivalent of Bass in Britain. Bass was brewed for strength and quality to enable it to travel well. So it was with Bock, and the strong, dark, malty beer was once available over much of Europe. Bock is now more closely associated with Bavaria, an area which took the beer to its heart, so much so that Bavarians started to brew it themselves.

In the 18th century monks started to brew an even stronger version, Doppelbock (Double Bock) and this beer is still with us today, alongside ordinary Bock beer.

A good place to try these beers is at the March springtime beer festival in Munich. Each brewery in the town runs its own 'do' selling only Bock, or Doppelbock beer. In huge halls thousands of people quaff many times more litres of the stuff from steins bearing the name of the brew. Everyone sits at rough wooden benches in long rows; frauleins in traditional south German pinafore dresses serve you (some of them even begin to look quite good after a couple of steins!). Oompah bands play loud, incomprehensible music; people are singing and shouting. In short, everyone, but everyone, gets legless. The simple reason for this is the beer. The brew which I sampled, Salvator, a Doppelbock produced by the Paulaner-Salvator-Thomasbrau, is very strong. After drinking what is the equivalent to a couple of litres of Mac's Christmas Ale, anyone can be excused for becoming a little tired and emotional. Bocks are available in bottled form throughout Germany and the beer is also brewed in one or two other countries such as Holland and Denmark. The most celebrated Doppelbock is Kulminator (Doppelbocks only may use the -ator suffix), brewed in Kulmbach, in northern Bavaria. This is the strongest beer in the world - and has a price tag to match! It's alcoholic strength is 13.2% - four times as strong as an average bitter!

Next month - A new series on Belgian beers

THE BARLEY MOW

VARIETY IS
THE SPICE
OF LIFE



TRY OUR
14 REAL
ALES

TYTTENHANGER GREEN

In addition to our normal range there will always be a cask on the bar from our range of guest beers which could be one of the following: Eldridge Pope, Bourne Valley, Donnington, Arkell, Archers, St Austell or Brakspear's 6X.

Our new 'facilities' are now open. The indoor toilets will save many a chilly walk during the coming months and our new, enlarged 'super-cellar' will enable us to keep our range of ales in the very best condition.

Our aim is to sell the best beer in the county - if ever you are dissatisfied with it we will change it without question.

BOG STANDARD – IN-SITU

One for the lads – I can't speak for the ladies.



A TOUCH OF DEJA-VU?

I know it's happened to me – and I'm sure it's happened to most of us – at least once. Picture this:-

You're there, in the Ball-Cock and Chain (or wherever), enjoying the convivial atmosphere, the good ale, the pleasant company, the blinding wit of your fellow drinkers, and perhaps, just about to pitch your third dart at the triple-twenty, when the unspeakable occurs to you – you realise you're pretty well-nigh busting for a pony – not a Jimmy – a pony!

Mortified and perplexed beyond reason you sheepishly disappear, muttering something like "... take my go John if I'm not back" and uncomfortably shuffle towards the Gentlemen sign.

PUTTING ON THE AGONY

What happens next can either be euphoric or can ruin your day:-

You wonder, en route, and not necessarily in any order

- (a) Will there be any toilet paper
- (b) Will the light work
- (c) Will the bolt on the door work
- (d) Will there be a toilet seat and
- (e) – this is the big one lads – is there a toilet (as opposed to urinal) – at all. Grit your teeth.

If it's (e) you're by now surreptitiously rounding-up your friends with some feeble excuse such as "... it's a bit smokey here, let's nip down the Good Samaritan" knowing damn well that relief will be at hand. You sly old beggar!

GOOD AND BAD

Pub toilets vary as much as pubs themselves – some are immaculately kept, some are shoddy, some are filthy, many are amusing and I suppose most, at least, enable you to complete the matter at hand – even if the very last resort is Thursday's Daily Mirror. And isn't it funny how the best kept pub often has toilets which leave much to be desired. Or vice-versa.

KEEPING IT CLEAN

There are many brilliant pubs where Gents WCs (as opposed to urinals) are not provided, and if it meant changing the pub too much, I'd be the first to do without the WC (and sweat it out) but my main contention is that some pubs with the facilities just do not bother to upkeep them to a reasonable standard. OK, it's not one of life's great pleasures cleaning loos etc, and yes, some customers may not be the cleanest people on earth, but I do feel that the standard of pub toilets often falls short of 'reasonable'. Other complaints might be: no soap, no towels, hot water taps which don't work (very common), no wash-basin, ten years worth of cob-webs etc.

WATCH OUT FOR TRICK-CYCLISTS

Generally – I'd like to say congratulations to all those pubs whose toilet facilities are good (and they will know who they are), and pull your socks up (or provide bicycle clips) to those who could do better – and I think they will also know who they are.

Mr B. Hind, Hertford.



SPORTS SHORTS

by Eric Sim

The Abbot John's sporting encounter with the Herts South Branch continued at the beginning of December in the pub's sports hall in Wheathampstead. This time it was table tennis and the home team leapt into a 4-0 lead before the visitors had mastered the vicious slope on the table that made Yeovil and Barnet's football pitches look like billiard tables. The Branch took the next two matches, including the scalp of the pub's player-manager Eric Allen, and would obviously have thrashed them had it not been for the cry of 'Time Gentlemen Please'.

The balance of sporting power was redressed to a certain extent when your sports writer delivered the newsletter there later in the month, and refusing to be conned on the Space Invader machine by the landlord, opted for shove-ha'penny. This time the halfpennies were found and after much application of polish the board was made ready. Superior top bed play by the Branch representative secured him victory with two shots to spare. The branch now await the cricket season as they have no wish to spoil the pub's football team's run of wins in the league and cup, although they would accept a challenge at Devil-among-the-Tailors. That is, if the Editor will lend us his skittle table. (A gallon of Greene King XX and it's yours – Ed)

The above article is a perfect example of the balanced, unbiased reporting for which this newsletter has become famous – Ed.

THE CORNELL COLUMN

by Martyn Cornell

Not blinded by the Lite

For once the British beer drinker is refusing to be conned into buying a weak, nasty, expensive product he doesn't need or want.

The big brewers had confidently expected the so-called "lite" lagers, like Arctic Lite and Hemeling to capture a big share of the market. Masses of money has gone into their promotion – Allied Breweries, who own Ind Coope, have spent £2 million on Arctic Lite advertising in the past 18 months. But lite beers still account for only one pint in 25, while the ad men had confidently predicted a share of the market totalling nearly one pint in seven by 1984.

Lite beers, of course, are sold with the implicit suggestion that they are not as fattening as "ordinary" beers, and that they will help you slim. This is simply not so. They contain less carbohydrate, but just as many calories. Arctic light, for example, contains 83 calories per half pint – draught mild contains just 73 calories per half. Mild also costs 15 or 20 pence a pint less, as well. Drink KK – you'll put on less weight, and save money.

More Strength to your Grandfather

All those stories about beer being stronger in grandad's day are absolutely 100 per cent true. The big brewers like to point to figures over the last thirty years, which show a slight rise in average beer strengths. Go back to Victorian times, though, and the picture is entirely different.

Ordinary Burton bitter, for example, in 1881, had an original gravity of 1062, stronger than Theakston's Old Peculiar. The weakest sort of dark mild had an OG of 1055, more than Fuller's ESB. AK weighed in with an OG of 1045, about the same as Courage Director's. McMullen's AK today has an OG of 1033. Beers with the kind of strengths we are used to today – up to 1039 OG – were called table beer, the sort you gave the kids to wash down dinner.

The reason why strengths have fallen so much in the past 100 years is the way beer is taxed now. Weaker beer pays, proportionally, less tax than strong beer compared with the amount of malt used – a beer twice as strong has more than twice as much tax on it. The result is that brewers make more profit brewing weaker beers than they do strong ones – and grandfather moans.

Through the past – darkly

Coming forward a generation, the news that the new Taylor Walker wing of Ind Coope is due to bring out a dark beer called Mainline will revive memories in most men over 40, and quite a few younger.

Mainline was the dark milk from Taylor Walker's old Limehouse brewery in London, and mere mention of its name in almost any public bar, brings instant reminiscence on what a fine pint it was.

The successful CAMRA campaign to save Greene King XX dark mild two years ago shows there is a market for dark beers, and we all wish the revived Mainline every success. But I have to wonder if the stars are entirely with it.

In 1960 there were a dozen dark milds available in Hertfordshire. McMullens brewed one, so did Benskins, Rayment's, Courage, Simpsons, Wells and Winch – almost everybody. All gone, almost every one. If Ind Coope do bring back Mainline, they deserve a medal for bravery, if nothing else.

Pricing people out of the market

You may have thought that the high prices charged by some establishments for drink was simply to make money.

Not however, according to the owner of a wine bar that will have to remain anonymous, in A Well-Known Hertfordshire Town.

I was discussing with him the chances of getting real ale in his establishment, and he said that he drank and enjoyed real beer himself, and he'd like to have it in. But it would be no good, he said – he would have to charge too much for it.

Was this due to high overheads on the premises, I wondered? Staff on £20,000 a year? Not at all. The wine bar boss told me: "I have to charge high prices to keep out the sort of customers I don't want. That's why I charge 80p a pint for my Younger's lager."



IN THIS TIME of economic hardship most brewers, especially the larger ones, are suffering financially. Many are trading at low profit levels, or even making losses: some, such as Courage, have been forced to take desperate measures, closing down a major brewery and selling beer at half price in an effort to lure customers back into their pubs.

So it is heartening to see that in the six months up to December 1980, the trading profit of Greene King, the East Anglian independent brewers, showed an increase of three per cent over the same period in 1979, with turnover up 12 per cent. While Greene King's overall draught beer trade was level, it is understood that one of the company's draught ales, Rayment's BBA, increased its share of the market significantly.

It is good to know that Greene King's only Hertfordshire product is helping to keep the company profitable. Hopefully, it won't have escaped the notice of the Greene King board that, of all the company's beers, Rayment's BBA is the one that is proportionally the most available on handpump, rather than gas pressure dispenser. We can only guess at how profitable this otherwise go-ahead company might be, against all the trends, if they were to pursue a vigorous real ale policy, as CAMRA has been recommending them to do for years.

P.L.

AROUND THE PUBS

The **Woodman**, Water End, North Mymms, has recently reopened after being closed many months for alterations. The refurbished pub now sells Wethered's and Watney's London bitter on handpumps. Yet another Whitbread landlord has succeeded after years of badgering to install real ale. Regulars at the **Kings Arms**, Hitchin, organised a petition 3 years ago asking Whitbread if their pub could have real beer. Just before Christmas workmen finally arrived to install a handpump for Wethered's bitter in the public bar. The story has a moral for other Whitbread licensees who want to serve traditional draught ale. Keep up the pestering and there's a good chance you'll get what you want – eventually. It may take three years but . . .

A belated mention should be made of the introduction of Ind Coope KK at the **Old Bull's Head**, Ware. Landlord Alan Parker has decided to give the beer a chance, and is selling it at a very reasonable price to encourage sales. If it proves popular it will stay, otherwise it's out for good. Give it a try next time you're there.

A beer that will be making occasional guest appearances at the **Cracked Billet**, Colney Heath, is Morlands of Oxfordshire. A regular of the pub moved out to take a pub of his own last year and is now supplying the Billet with small quantities of his beer now and again. Landlord David Hughes wasn't around to provide further details when I dropped in recently as he was at a choirboy's party. I shall make no comment.

Both the **Mitre** in Barnet and the **Waggon and Horses** in Ware have started serving Ind Coope on handpumps over the last month or two.

COMPETITION TIME

Last month's competition crossword brought in a staggering 6 entries, 4 of which were correct. As many of the people who do enter do so every month they are having an easy time of it almost guaranteeing themselves a prize. What we need are more entrants! Don't let them have it so easy. The two seasonal winners this time are John Green of Hertford (again!) and Dave Sarson of Maidenhead, Berks – a prominent local member that lad. Their prizes will be on the way shortly.

The answer to last month's crossword is:

Across: 1 Beer and skittles, 4 Ruddles County, 8 Vie, 9 Tea up, 11 Nose, 14 Puss, 15 Rung, 16 Digging, 17 Ever, 18 Twins, 20 Tot, 21 Overproducing, 22 Trick of the light.

Down: 1 Burton upon Trent, 2 Tenet, 3 Sleeping draught, 5 Diversion, 6 Everards, 7 and 13a Campaign for Real Ale, 10 Energetic, 12 Resisted, 19 Speck.

This month's competition runs as follows and was set by Bruce Ward of North Herts Branch.

There are five different ales on sale at the Farmer's Armpit freehouse. Each beer has been brewed by different brewers and have different gravities. Each beer has a different name and all have different prices. Work out which brewer brews which beer, from the clues below, and their respective gravities and prices.

The gravities are 1030, 1036, 1042, 1048 and 1054.

The prices are 40p, 42p, 54p, 58p and 60p (per pint).

The brewers are Twitbreads, Drains (keg only), Sling & Darns, Grotneys, Rudley's (keg only).

The brews are XXX, Bung Hole Bitter (BHB), Old Sludge, Gutter Ale, Prize Murk.

The Clues:

- 1 The lowest gravity beer is not the cheapest and the highest gravity not the most expensive
- 2 The XX is a keg beer
- 3 The Rudley's beer has a gravity of 1048
- 4 The three highest gravity beers cost more than 48p per pint
- 5 Old Sludge retails at 60p per pint and is real ale.
- 6 Gutter Ale is dearer than beer from Sling & Darns but less expensive than the 1054 beer.
- 7 Drain's ale does not have a gravity of 1030.
- 8 Grotney's beer is on special offer 58p per pint.
- 9 Sling & Darns ale costs less than 56p per pint.

There is only one correct answer!

After having seen the effect that this type of puzzle can have on people this newsletter cannot be held responsible for loss (or change in colour) of hair, loss of teeth (due to gnashing), or committal to a mental institution. I can't even guarantee that the problem is soluble since (despite rumours to the contrary) I value my sanity too much to try it (I've also seen the answer). Consequently, any complaints should be sent direct to Bruce – address available on request – Ed.

There'll be the usual prize for the first correct answer out of the hat sent in by 16th February

BRANCH DIARY

HERTFORDSHIRE SOUTH BRANCH

Thursday February 12th

Darts match versus the Old Barge, the Folly, Hertford. 8.00pm start. (Benskins)

Wednesday February 18th

BRANCH MEETING at the Old Bull's Head, Ware. 8.00pm prompt. (Benskins)

Thursday February 26th

Ladies versus Gents games at the Rose and Crown, St. Michaels, St Albans. 8.00pm. (Benskins)

The Hertfordshire South annual branch trip will this year be to Jennings Brewery in Cockermouth, on the weekend of March 20-22. For details and bookings contact Steve Ellis on Welwyn Garden 27630. Details will be given out at forthcoming branch meetings.

HERTFORDSHIRE NORTH BRANCH

Wednesday January 14th

BRANCH MEETING at the Marquis of Lorne, Stevenage High Street. Voting for Pub of the Year. 8.00pm. (Greene King)

Wednesday January 21st

Social at the Two Diamonds, Stevenage High Street. Welcome to the new landlord at one of the few unchanged pubs left. 8.00pm (McMullen)

Wednesday January 28th

Special 100th Real Ale Pub social at the Fold, Shephall Way, Stevenage. 8.00pm (Ind Coope)

Wednesday February 11th

BRANCH MEETING at the Bull, Watton at Stone. Another new venue for meetings. 8.00pm (Benskins)

HERTS-ESSEX BORDERS BRANCH

Wednesday February 11th

Inter-branch Darts Match versus South East Essex at Butchers Arms, North End (near Great Dunmow). 8.00pm (Ridleys)

Monday February 16th

BRANCH AGM at The Bull, Theydon Bois. 8.00pm. (Ind Coope)

Tuesday February 24th

Joint darts match and social with Chelmsford Branch at Maltsters Arms, Willingale. 8.00pm. (Freehouse)

ALL CHANGE

Recent Annual General Meetings of both North and South Herts branches have brought changes to their respective committees. Herts South's Chairman remains as Eric Sim (not *the remains* of Eric Sim) with Wendy Casey taking over as Secretary. John Blackwell, landlord of the Barley Mow in Tyttenhanger, and Chairman of the St Albans area LVA, has also taken a committee post. The rest of the committee is made up from Keith Fenwick, Steve Ellis, Nigel Meadows and Jim Axford, with new faces Jamie Hooper, Ian Wilbrahams and Dave Andrews.

In the North of the county the new Chairman is Martyn Cornell, star of Newsletter, Guide and Welwyn and Hatfield Times. Previous Chairman, Peter Lerner, has gone on to become a member of CAMRA's National Executive.

Following the untimely death of Joe Goodwin, CAMRA's national Chairman, Tim Amsden has now taken over as the Campaign's chief executive. Tim, a prominent member of Mid-Chilterns branch and, until recently, editor of their newsletter, is renowned for his acid wit and smooth oratory. The newsletter wishes him well in his new post. Best wishes also to the new committees of North and South Herts.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY CAMRA!

CAMRA is ten years old this year. Hertfordshire South Branch intends to mark the event with a week of celebrations in July, centred on St Albans. Competitions, concerts, a disco, a small beer festival and much more is planned. All proceeds are to go to charities and it is hoped that all the real ale pubs in the City will participate. More details will be given in the next newsletter. In the meantime, anyone who would like more information, would like to participate, or has ideas for fund-raising events, should contact the organiser, Steve Bury, on Radlett 3106 (eves).

BRANCH CONTACTS

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The Hertfordshire Newsletter is produced by the Hertfordshire South, Hertfordshire North and Herts-Essex Borders Branches of the Campaign for Real Ale Limited. The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of CAMRA or its branches. The Editor gratefully receives articles or letters for publication. These should preferably be typewritten and double spaced, handwritten items as legible as possible please. Send to D. Burns, 11 Turpins Chase, Oaklands, Welwyn, Herts.

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