

FREE



# The Campaign For Real Ale HERTFORDSHIRE NEWSLETTER

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## GREENE KING FOLLY

For how much longer are Greene King publicans going to be denied the opportunity to serve their cask-conditioned beer without top-pressure? Brewery officials have always told CAMRA that if any of their publicans wanted to serve unpressurised beer providing the pub was considered suitable there would be no objection whatsoever. Taking the brewery at its word, CAMRA members began visiting local Greene King top pressure pubs hoping to persuade the licensee to serve the beer without gas pressure, we were surprised to find that in many instances the landlord or landlady had beaten us to it, having already applied to the brewery for handpumps, sadly every one of them had been fobbed off with a whole variety of excuses as to why they couldn't serve real ale. One landlord was told that the point of dispense would be too far from the cellar; considering the current gas taps are situated in the same spot as the beer engines which were ripped out nine years ago, and the cellar hasn't moved for over 50 years, one wonders how the pub managed to stay open prior to 1969. Others were told that if their customers insisted on real ale, the area was covered by such and such a pub, in one case up to 8 miles away. Perhaps the most trivial excuse given by the brewery so far was "If you have handpumps, everybody else will want them" (Nothing wrong with that!).

### Customers Want Real Ale

A landlady told me "I may be considered old fashioned but I listen to what my customers say", (nothing wrong with that either!) "As far as I know none of them are members of your organisation, yet a lot of them have asked me to serve non-gassy beer, they have been visiting one or two of the Free Houses in the area which serve your so called real ale and they say they can all tell the difference".

### Out of Touch

When you consider the long and unsocial hours that they work, confronted almost daily with insults and sometimes violence, you may begin to realise the problems which publicans face. The brewery should respect their requests, not hide behind some outdated decision taken in the boardroom ten years ago. During the past few years thousands of public houses have installed handpumps to meet the demand for real ale. Whilst GK maintain that 25% of their pubs meet this demand, in fact it is nearer 20%, the national average has now reached 35%. Their attitude on this matter is similar to that of the First World War Generals, sitting 50 miles behind the front line - totally out of touch.

### Handpump Success

If proof is needed by the brewery as to the success of real ale, I suggest they look to their own Marquis of Lorne, Stevenage, where last summer a handpump was installed in the public bar to serve the ubiquitous Abbot Ale. In no time at all a large proportion of the saloon bar customers, where the Abbot was still on top pressure, began demanding Abbot Ale from the handpump.

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## HERTS.'78 BEER Festival

The 1978 Hertfordshire Beer Festival will once again be held at Hatfield Polytechnic (just off the A1) on Friday 30 June and Saturday 1 July. The list of breweries to be represented so far reads: Fullers, Godsons, Adnams, Greene King, Ringwood (Britain's newest brewery from Hampshire), Eldridge Pope, Marstons, McMullens, Rayment's, Everards and Brakspears. Entertainment will be provided by the New Era Jazz Band, the Tippen Family and the Crusty Sock Ensemble. Apart from over 20 real ales, there will be real draught cider, soft drinks and good food (in the shape of ploughman's lunches). Opening times are 11am to 3pm and 6pm to 11.30 on Friday and 11am to 4pm and 6pm to 11.30 on Saturday. No admittance will be allowed after 10.45pm. Entry is 30 pence and commemorative glasses will be on sale at forty pence. If last year's festival was anything to go by, this year's should be very successful. Why not come along and try some excellent real ales in the enjoyable atmosphere of the festival and help us show Britain's brewers that their future should lie with real ale not gas and keg.

## New Beer

A new beer to the area - Norwich Castle Bitter - is now on sale at the Three Horseshoes in Spellbrook. Brewed in Norwich by Watneys, the beer is served by electric pump alongside hand-pumped Abbot and Rayment's BBA and is worth a try if you are in the area.



# Visit to Henley

I would never have considered Brakspear and Sons as having a 'company image' in the usual sense of the phrase but they certainly have - it's tradition! This is shown in the character of their pubs, in the atmosphere of friendliness in their firmly established pubs and in the way they serve their beer as they always have done (well, in most pubs anyway).

## The Site

It's easy to see the reason for this when visiting this family controlled brewery. Located just a few yards from the Thames at Henley-on-Thames, it blends with the surroundings and must be a classic example of how to fit a brewery into what basically is a residential area. The tour of the brewery is usually undertaken by the recently retired assistant head brewer. I could not do justice to the depth and detail of his explanations of how the brewing process is undertaken at Brakspear's, so I'll just highlight a few of the more unusual items.

## Distinctive Taste

The liquor (water for brewing) is taken from an artesian well some 250 feet below and it is responsible for part of the distinctive taste of the beers. By reason of their small size, Brakspear are able to use only the best of raw materials, without having to worry about economies of production and amount of storage space. Their sugar is cane and comes in invert form (easily dissolved) in white or brown for colouring. The fuggle and golding hops are loose in pockets (170-200lb sacks) and brought via a London distribution centre, from the fields of Kent, Herefordshire and Worcestershire. Brakspear no longer malt their own grain on the premises (due to the problems of getting staff for the unusual hours) and were using, at the time of the visit, grain from ABM at Newark and Poole's of Ipswich. Both roasted and pale malt are used to give the beers their colour. The current yeast strain is 15 years old, with the normal surplus after fermentation going off for other yeast products, such as 'Marmite'.

## Brews

The beers produced are: Special Bitter (OG 1043) Pale Ale (1035), XXX - a dark mild (1031) and XXXX or Old (1043) - a winter ale. Bottled beers are derived from one of the mashec for the draught beers except for their strong pale ale (1046) which is a special brew. Additionally, they make on the premises minerals and other soft drinks for their tied houses and Free Trade, as well as bottling Guinness and distributing certain Whitbread products who, incidentally, have a 27% holding in the company and two directors on the board. Keg? Yes they have one, but as our guide pointed out, this is only for some managers who know nothing about beer or how to keep it.

## Fish Room

The sampling room is worth a visit, obviously, but also to see the fish caught in the Thames by a local angler at the start of the century, now housed in glass cases around the room (now looking pretty dead). The tour itself is highly recommended and it only remains to be said that Brakspear's is a 'real' brewery in every sense of the word.

by Jim Axford.

# What is AK?

Hands up those who have noticed that the name given by both our Hertfordshire brewers, Rayment's and McMullen's, to their draught light mild is AK - and hands up those who have any idea of what AK means.

## Asquith's Knockout

The most commonly heard explanation is that early this century, the then Liberal Prime Minister, Herbert Asquith, caused the tax on beer to be so increased that your average drinker could only afford to drink the cheapest ale, which became known as Asquith's Knockout. However, the term AK was in use before the turn of the century, so a better explanation is needed.

## All the Ks

Well, it is well known that the strength of beer was (and is) often recorded by combinations of the letter X (eg Wadworth's 6X). Sometimes the letter K was substituted (eg Greene King or Ind Coope KK light mild) and AK could be somewhere on the ascending scale of Ks - All the Ks, even?

The solutions offered by our local breweries also seem less than convincing. Rayment's suggest Ale for Keeping and Mac's retiring head brewer, Mr Edwards, recently came up with All Kinds - a reference perhaps to the legendary dubious origin of all that goes into a cask of mild. AK is not always mild beer, however. Hole's the Newark brewers, used to produce an AK bitter until they were swallowed by the Courage/Imperial Tobacco organisation. Another brewery known to have brewed an AK draught beer, incidentally, was Fremlin's of Maidstone.

## Arthur King

It has been suggested, to return to the point, that AK was dreamed up by one Arthur King, who at some time in the past introduced a revolutionary new brewing process.

According to our sister newsletter "Mersey Drinker" graffitologists from as far away as Kent have noted that our two mysterious letters have fallen into colloquial use, viz 'Rayment's rule AK'. Prime Minister Asquith - or for that matter - Arthur King, would be proud to know that.

by Peter Lerner

## MORE RAYMENT'S

Furneux Pelham, the home of Rayment's, now has two real ale outlets. The Star has now been followed by the Brewery Tap which is selling handpumped Rayment's BBA. This change lifts Rayment's real ale outlets to 15 out of their 25 tied houses. Just 18 months ago there were 8.

## DERBY DRAW

CAMRA's Derby Draw, worth £1,000 to the winner, has been won by Doug Tyler, landlord of The White Horse in Burnham Green which in May was the venue of a CAMRA Mild Social.

Herts North branch, after a superb effort, walked away with the branch prize for the most tickets sold, selling 450 books of tickets. Branch member Barry Males managed to sell 97 books himself! for which special congratulations are due. Herts North win a barrel of ale. Herts. South branch win a pin of ale for selling 140 books. Overall the draw has succeeded beyond expectations to amass a £16,000 profit for the Campaign.



## Sounds Familiar?

The nation's big five brewers shared between them 68% of the total beer market in 1976 - by 1980, experts forecast that this figure will reach 90%. In 1965 there were 118 active breweries - in 1977 only 47 were still brewing. The big five are engaged in a cut-throat advertising battle, with athletic young people and well known stars proclaiming on television, the virtues of clear, sparkling, light-coloured beers. The fastest growing of the big five is a tobacco company, who are currently test marketing a new beer called, believe it or not, Player's.

## Weak Lager

The big brewers are marketing their own imitations of well-known foreign lagers, and low calorie 'lite' beers are the latest craze, so weak that they would have been legal in the prohibition era.

## Keg Tipped

Sounds familiar? Well, you're wrong! The unenviable country described above is not the Heineken-swilling, Arctic Lite, British world of Courage and Keg Embassy Tipped, but of course the good old USA, world leaders in consumerism and whose every lead, it is well known, we follow.

## Trend

And in the early part of this decade, it is obvious that this is the trend which our own big brewers were falling over themselves to follow. However, the real ale revival has proved that, at least in this country good sense and good taste can overcome the dictates of the brewery accountants and media men, who insist on telling us what we ought to like. Let's hope that, for the sake of the Americans, some enterprising brewer over there will start to give American drinkers the choice that we now enjoy, by brewing some real ale. They won't need to advertise it - it'll sell itself! by Peter Lerner.

# Pub Swaps Bring In Courage

Regular readers will know that within the Ind Coope (Watford) trading area, 25 pubs are currently being swapped by Ind Coope to either Bass Charrington or Courage, as part of a nationwide pub swap exercise. Although I would suggest that this is nothing more than a token gesture to the Monopolies Commission, it is at least a step in the right direction.

## Cheers

During the last couple of weeks, a small band of intrepid investigators have been going round these pubs to find out what beers the pubs will be having and the method of dispense. May I thank the landlords for their help in the survey - even the one or two who objected to being asked anything - and a big 'cheers' to the investigators for their work.

## Disaster Area

Of the results so far, the Bass-Charrington scene looks like being a disaster area. There are no gains so far and The Hammer in Hand and the Hare at Leavesden both look like being switched back to fizz. Considering that Bass Charrington are taking over eight pubs from Ind Coope it is disappointing that the beers they

## 18 Years at Mac's

This month sees the retirement of Mr Weston Edwards, Head Brewer of McMullens for the past 18 years, and with the company for a further seven.

Mr Edwards attended the April branch meeting of Herts South branch where he was presented with a plaque expressing the branch's best wishes. He went on to reminisce about his career in brewing. He started at a small brewery in Somerset, moving on as a second brewer with Marstons, Wethereds (before Whitbread) and several other small companies, until he took his post at McMullens twenty five years ago.

## Regrets

Although he very much regrets the passing of many of the local brewing firms he considered that there had been many improvements over the years - especially the introduction of metal casks. He saw Mac's future as an independent brewery as secure, not in the least because of the determination of the McMullen family to remain that way. Mr Edwards concluded a very interesting talk by taking questions from the floor. The branch would again like to wish Mr Edwards all the best for the future. by Dave Burns.

## GREENE KING (continued)

Obviously a great inconvenience for all concerned but so great was the demand that another handpump had to be installed in the saloon bar. This incidentally was the first Greene King pub in Hertfordshire to have handpumps fitted for years - everybody is still getting over the shock. So, come on Greene King, move with the times, quite a few of your landlords would like the opportunity to serve real ale, certainly most of your customers would prefer to drink real ale - your beers when served without gas are among the best. So how about giving your publicans the handpumps which you are constantly giving away to the Free Trade, who do serve your beer properly. by Denis Robertson

are so loudly acclaiming in the national press will, at best, be top pressure or totally unavailable in their pubs - and we thought that you supported real ale!

## Courage Colours

To date, the following pubs are now flying Courage colours and selling real ale on handpump:

1. The Horns, Watford - now selling Directors (not previously selling real ale)
2. The Red House, Croxley Green - Directors and Best Bitter.
3. The White Bear, Rickmansworth - Best Bitter and Directors.
4. The Three Crowns, Bushey Heath - Directors and Best Bitter.
5. The Sun, Lemsford - Directors & Best Bitter
6. The Hope and Anchor, Welham Green - Best Bitter and Directors.
7. The Rifle Volunteer, Oxhey - Directors.

Other pubs are still to be confirmed and it is by no means certain that we will not lose some pubs currently selling real ale to the dreaded top pressure. We would be grateful to hear of any further changes in the coming weeks.

by Jim Axford

# Pub News

Apart from the pub swaps listed on page three there have been quite a few changes recently:

**Barkway** The Tally Ho will not be selling gravity served Abbot during the summer months.

**Barnet** At The Salisbury, handpumped Courage bitter is now on sale alongside the Directors. The Windmill, Hadley Highstone, now has Ind Coope Bitter and Burton Ale.

**Bishops Stortford** The Three Tuns now has Abbot and Rayment's BBA on handpumps.

**Chorleywood** The White Horse has reactivated its redundant handpumps to dispense Abbot Ale.

**Hemel Hempstead** The White Hart, Old Town now has handpumps for Ind Coope draught beers. In the guide delete the Old King's Arms - pressure!

**Letchworth** A new bar has been opened at The Letchworth Garden City Hotel with Adnams, Burton Ale, Everard's Tiger Bitter & Old Original.

**Potters Bar** A new 'real ale' bar at Willyotts Manor is selling handpumped Bass, Charrington's IPA, McMullen's Country & Ruddle's County.

**Sherley** Handpumps at the White Horse are now working after problems with piping for Ind Coope beers.

**St. Albans** The Jolly Sailor is once again serving real draught cider.

**Stevenage** The Longship in the town centre is now selling Watney's Fined Bitter (elec. pump)

**Tytenhanger** The Barley Mow. Plus Bass (h'pump)

**Watford** The Oddfellows Arms + I.Coope KK Mild.

## BRANCH CONTACTS:

Herts North: Denis Robertson, Tel: Stevenage 782779 (Home); Herts South: Dave Burns, Tel: Welwyn 7805 (Home); Herts/Essex Borders: Rob Candlish, Tel: Waltham Cross 32045 (Home).

**MEMBERSHIP:** Details are available from CAMRA, 34 Alma Road, St. Albans, Herts, AL1 3BW.

# What's On

## HERTFORDSHIRE SOUTH BRANCH

- 20 Jun June Branch Meeting  
The Red Lion, Radlett (Greene King and Bass) 8pm.
- 17 Jul July Branch Meeting and Social  
The Robin Hood, High Street, Potters Bar (Ind Coope) 8pm. Extension applied for.
- 26 Jul Darts Match v West Herts Sports and Social Club at the club, Park Avenue, Watford. 8pm. Range of real ales on sale.

## HERTFORDSHIRE NORTH BRANCH

- 21 Jun Social at The Plough, Wallington (Greene King) 8pm.
- 28 Jun Social at The Cricketers, Ickleford (Paines) 8pm.
- 12 Jul July Branch Meeting  
The George, Bucklersbury, Hitchin (Ind Coope) 8pm. The meeting will feature a talk from Fiona McNish of Paines plus a film of brewing.

## HERTS/ESSEX BORDERS BRANCH

- 10 Jul Social at The Fox and Hounds, Hunsdon. (McMullen's) 8pm.
- 15 Jul The branch is running a Beer Tent at the Cheshunt Carnival.
- 17 Jul July Branch Meeting  
The Bell, Ongar (Bass and Charrington) 8pm

## NEWSLETTER:

The Hertfordshire Newsletter is produced by the Herts South, Herts North and Herts/Essex Borders branches of the Campaign for Real Ale. Editor: Les Middlewood, 81a Linden Way, Southgate, London, N14 4NG.

