

THE CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE

THE HERTFORDSHIRE NEWSLETTER

FREE



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TOO MUCH BAD BEER?

Is there too much bad beer being served in our pubs under the name of real ale? Are too many people jumping on the real ale bandwagon, who know and care little or nothing about how to keep good beer?

Writing in "What's Doing", our sister newsletter for Manchester beer drinkers, Roger Hall says that 20 years ago, pretty well all the draught beer available in that area was real ale, but too much of it was pretty awful. Beer was vinegary, pipes were not cleaned, slops were poured back into casks. The keg beer revolution was a godsend for lazy licensees and disinterested breweries, making universally available beer which was bland and characterless, but never out of condition. So 10 years ago real ale was hard to find, and kept only by people who cared about it: small, traditional breweries and painstaking landlords.

Roger continues:

"It is now 1982 and the big brewers have jumped on the real ale bandwagon — Allied, Grand Met, Whitbread are all at it, pushing traditional beer in their pubs. But they don't really care about real ale — they're into whatever is all the rage at the time. You've now got something like an 80/20 chance of getting real ale, but your chances of finding a decent pint have dropped alarmingly. Landlords forced to sell cask beer by the brewery aren't going to be terribly bothered about keeping it in excellent condition.

One of the major objectives of CAMRA is the availability of cask beer in all outlets. The wisdom of this aim is questionable. Is it progress when, in the furtherance of this objective, the average quality of cask conditioned beer deteriorates? It was, after all, the appalling condition of beer in the early 1960's which led to the keg revolution. Unless you were possessed of intimate local knowledge, the best bet was a pint of universal keg. Traditional beer served badly is likely to turn people off cask beer — even in establishments where it is, and always has been, in excellent condition. Perhaps we should be making a greater effort to ensure that quality is maintained in all existing real ale outlets rather than attempting to increase the absolute number indiscriminately."

From my own recent experience I cannot but agree with Roger Hall. Having travelled many miles in north-east England, where real ale is still rare, to sample a certain brew, and having been given something which tasted like stale cider, I had to sympathise with the local lads who had tried the same beer and said "This is real ale. Well, you can keep it. Let's go down to the club and get a decent pint", naming a well-known keg beer.

And here in Hertfordshire, one evening I had a pint of Webster's Bitter in a free house, recently re-furbished at enormous expense and with handpumps sprouting from the bar; followed by a pint of Benskin's in a brewery-owned house whose landlord has been keeping good real ale for many years. As a northerner, and with all respect to Benskins who are doing a grand job, I would have expected the Webster's to be a far superior pint. But no, it was tepid, acid and out of condition. On the other hand, the Benskins was as good as it could possibly be.

Bad real ale will drive the customers back to keg beer and lager quicker than any big brewers' advertising campaign. CAMRA must urge all breweries to ensure that all their real ale pub licensees, whether tied or free trade, are given adequate training in the handling and conditioning of proper beer, and are told that their supplies will be taken away if the beer is not kept and served in good condition. And CAMRA members and sympathisers can do more to help themselves, too, by complaining to landlords and breweries about bad beer. A plus mark here for Rayment's, who stopped supplying cask beer to one Hertfordshire free house, a few years ago, after finding that the beer pipes were not being cleaned for months at a time.

Peter Lerner

The winner of June's crossword was Mr J P Heekin of Hemel Hempstead. The solution was as follows:

Across: Trouble (brewing), Debutante, Suede, Water-barrel, Ennui, Normally, Bung, Eros, Heady, Malt, Pine, Eldridge (Pope), Rivet, Cheesecloth, Argon, Waterless, Essence.

Down: Tusker, Ocean, Brewing, Editor, Snore, Wells, Barmaid, Trail, Yeti, Pope, Bran, Note, Earache, Laser, Drowse, Stance, Scowl, Berth, Vegan.

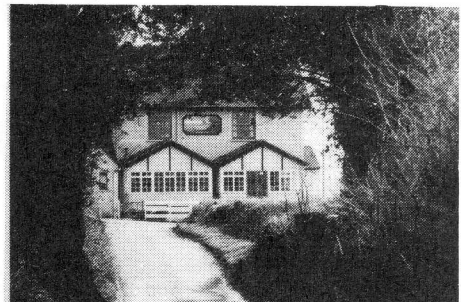
THE ROYAL OAK, BUSHEY

Free House

* 6 Real Ales * Food *
* Guest Beers *

* Our beer garden and children's playground are now open *

THE BARLEY MOW



TYTTENHANGER GREEN

TRY OUR 15 REAL ALES

YOU CAN STILL BUY A PINT FOR ONLY 57p

We now have ample car parking space available to make it easier to use our garden facilities. Barbecues most evenings from 8.30 on — weather permitting.

**PLEASE NOTE NO COACHES
INCLUDING MINI BUSES**

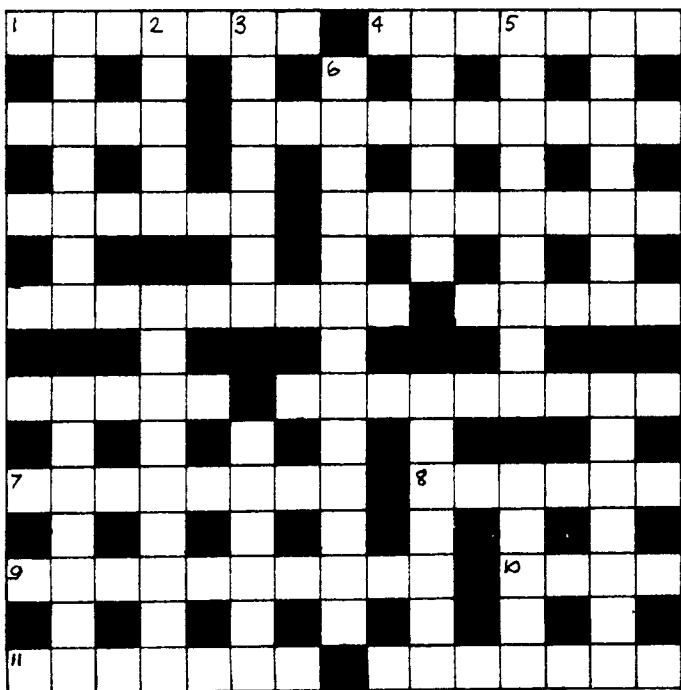
COMPETITION

Because of the obvious hash made of last month's crossword it is being repeated this month — complete with corrections. The entry date is now extended to September 17th. *Mark entries AUGUST COMPETITION — JULY entries will still be valid. Back to sanity next month.*

“PUBS AND PLACES”

Each of the numbered clues contains a mixture of the letters of a place in the local guide “Real Draught Beer in Hertfordshire”. The mixture always starts at the beginning of a word in the clue. The answer to be entered at the appropriate number in the grid is the name of the pub, or one of the pubs, listed under that place in the guide. Lengths in brackets after the clue refer to the place-name and the pub in that order.

Other clues are normal and are in alphabetic sequence of their answers. They should be fitted into the diagram wherever they will go.



Pubs and Places

Across

- 1 Ripe egg Penny cooked perfectly (6,5) (7)
- 4 & 8 Flood warning, yet Clwyd escaped undamaged (6,6,4) (7,6)
- 7 Something for the drinker (8) (8)
- 8 see 4
- 9 For safety he locked firing mechanism (9) (10)
- 10 One has to die to occupy a grave (8) (4)
- 11 Scotland has cold and wet regions (5,3) (3,4)

Down

- 2 Please don't answer any questions (7) (5)
- 3 Go faster to draw further ahead (7) (7)
- 5 We should share Glenlivet whisky (5,5) (6,3)
- 6 Milk the moo-cow on Mondays and Thursdays (10) (4,3,6)

Other clues

- What's on it might take a long time and trouble (6)
- A publication for a child (2,5)
- Glass etchings contain something valuable (5)
- Doesn't like being two sets adrift after end of round (7)
- Abandon desire after a half of DD (5)
- Rely on rent revision second half of next month (7)
- Where the exhaust goes if petrol, say, contains double dose of nitrogen (6)
- For this purpose the ore is dug up (6)
- Fierce 'e maybe — but cold it isn't (3-4)
- Suffering raids on raids (7)
- Desire Harp, stupidly — a small one means bad circulation (10)
- What is said if men attest wrongly (9)
- Gentleman imbibing drop of Teacher's in jail (4)
- Extremely cultural teach-in might be (9)
- First of darts in set is thrown: best of order! (8)
- Economise to no avail (7)
- Service centre starts to inlay gems in ladies' watch (5)
- Hunt one down for murder in this? (9)

Winner and solution to June crossword on page one.

QUICK ONES

Rayments news

Congratulations to the management at Furneux Pelham for insisting upon, and getting, the name of Rayments on the head-board of the company's delivery drays. Where there were previously advertisements for Kronenbourg, Abbot Ale or Cider, Rayments lories now proudly advertise “BBA—a pint worth seeking out”. Are Greene King seeing the light at last?

Belated welcomes are in order for new licencees Peter and Lesley Reynolds at the Star in Furneux Pelham, which has had the reputation in recent years of being one of the most relaxed and welcoming pubs in the area. Peter and Lesley look set to maintain that tradition.

Those who followed Dennis Robertson's pub crawl of Stevenage Old Town in the June 1981 Newsletter can now add another welcome new brew to the list. Yes, of course it's Rayments BBA, on handpump at what used to be the Cromwell Hotel. Rayments only other pub outlet in Stevenage is of course the Roebuck Hotel, although BBA can be found in various clubs in the area. Look out for the smart blue Rayment's signs at the Cromwell.

P.L.

When landlords get together...

When landlords get together nowadays, you can't help sympathising with them. They are normally comparing notes about now bad trade is, and looking for ways to attract people into their pubs with new ideas.

So I was rather surprised to overhear the following conversation in a pub in a town near Hertford, between the manager and his cronies:

FIRST LANDLORD: This geezer came into my pub the other day and asked for a cup of coffee for his missus. I told him to get stuffed. I told him that we serve the best beer in town, not bleedin' coffee.

SECOND LANDLORD: Yeah, the brewery say that I'm to serve coffee too, but I won't. I'm not having my staff running around making coffee when they should be serving drinks.

THIRD LANDLORD: I had a bloke come into my pub and ask for a glass of water. I told him, yes he could have one, that would be 60p. He asked me why it was so expensive. I told him that someone would have to wash his bleedin' glass, wouldn't they? He soon cleared off.

No wonder some pubs are emptier than others, when landlords make such efforts to make people welcome. And as for “the best beer in town”? Needless to say, it was like engine oil. (And needless to say, that particular pub won't be in next year's “Good Beer Guide”!)

P.L.

SOP PRESS...

KK TO BE WITHDRAWN

Benskins will be withdrawing KK mild by the end of this month. Sales have dropped to a very low level despite recent promotions. Landlords are being encouraged to take stocks of their new keg mild Pale. More news next month.

Labelling the past

In the second look at Hertfordshire brewing collectables, the Cornell Column considers beer bottle labels.

If the county lacks variety in its beermats, the most easily collected breweriana, then it more than makes up for it with beer labels. Despite their fragility, examples from at least 25 different Hertfordshire breweries are known to have survived, and many are extremely attractive.

Getting hold of labels from past brewers is not easy, and the best way is to join the Labologist's Society, the international society for bottle label collectors, and watch the small ads in the society's journal for members selling off unwanted items, or go along to a society auction.

You can still stumble across rare finds, however—a recent letter to a member of the Liddington family, which brewed in Tring until around 1895, seeking information, unearthed the existence of a Liddington's label at least a century old. This is the oldest known surviving example from Hertfordshire, and previously unknown to collectors.



Former workers in vanished breweries also sometimes turn out to have collections of labels, and the odd one 80 or 90 years old sometimes turns up, still attached to an old bottle, that has remained hidden away in a cellar.

Generally speaking labels can be found from almost all the Hertfordshire breweries that survived the First World War, but some have never been seen. Nothing is known from Page's of Ashwell, for example, closed 1921 though there are still plenty of the company's embossed beer bottles around. Similarly with William Baker's Hope brewery in Hertford, closed 1920, which is now (ironically) the site of McMullen's bottling factory.

Others are very rare—only one example of a label from Pryor Reid of Hatfield, closed 1920 (for IPA, in a figure-8 shape, and coloured red and green) is known: only one from Adey and White of St Albans; and only two, from different periods, from Lucas of Hitchin, closed 1923.

There are also plenty of older brewers whose advertisements showed they produced bottled beer but, again, whose labels are unknown. Among

these are Parkins' Sons of Borehamwood, E.J. & C. Healey of Watford (closed 1898), and Hawkes of Bishops Stortford, whose brewery site is now an Ind Coope depot.

Many of the surviving labels make a fine display. Those from Phillips of Royston, with their black-and-white Royston Crow trademark, and the label itself edged in a broad band of bright blue or red, grace any collection. Fordham's issued a giant label for their luncheon ale with a highly pleasing drawing of the brewery on. McMullen's early labels look very nice, printed in a single colour, with the proud claim: "No artificial gas is used". Christies of Hoddesdon had a whole series—including Empire Bitter—showing the Hoddesdon clock tower, their trade mark.

It is still possible to build up a good collection showing how one firm, such as McMullens, has changed its labels over the years—and how, almost always, the change in design has been very much for the worse. (It is good to see that Whitbreads have recently gone back to an "old fashioned", and highly pleasing design for their labels). It is even possible to build up a collection for one particular brew—there are at least ten different types of label for Benskin's Colne Spring Ale, ranging from the days when it was naturally matured in the bottle to just before it was withdrawn, when it was simply an Ind Coope beer.

You can even start building up a collection from the county's new brewers. Victoria, in Ware, issued a label for their Royal Wedding Ale last year, in blue and silver, and it can't be long before our other "mini breweries" bring out their own bottles.

The Labologists' Society can be contacted at 211 Pinewood Park, Cove, Farnborough, Hants. GU14 9LQ.

Pints 'n' Litres

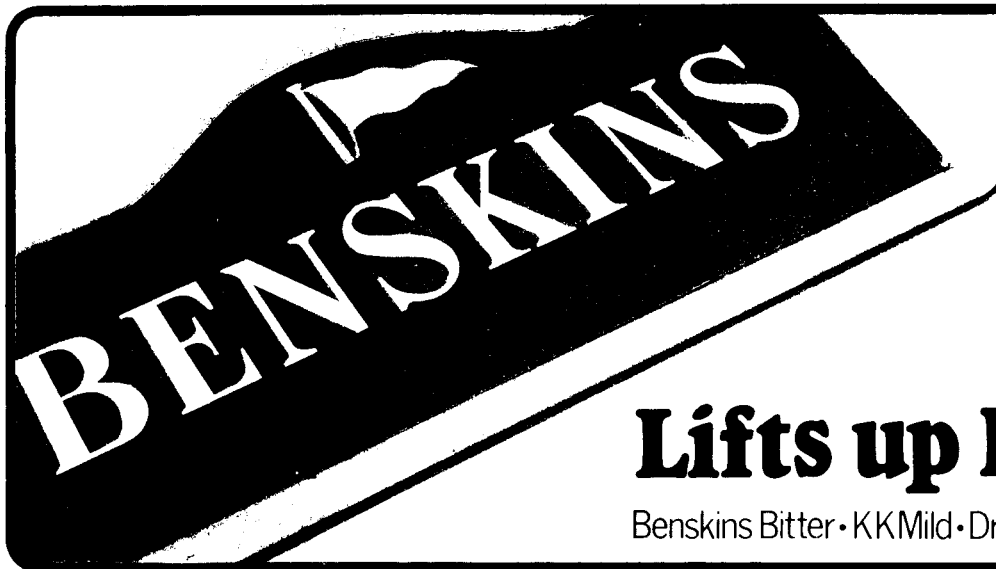
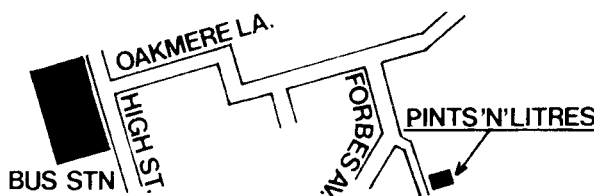
FULL FREE OFF LICENCE

- ★ Real ales to take away ★ served by handpump from our
- ★ new refrigerated cellar ★
- GREENE KING — ADNAMS — MICKLES
- ★ Plus guest beers ★
- Real draught cider available
- ★ Polypins and casks supplied to order ★
- Glass loan service
- at 6 Eastfield Parade, Forbes Avenue, Potter Bar

☎ Potters Bar 55585



How to find us:



Lifts up Herts.

Benskins Bitter • KK Mild • Draught Burton Ale

HOLIDAY INNS

Peter Lerner takes us round the southern part of the Lake District.....

The Lake District has everything in its favour as a holiday area – magnificent scenery, unlimited places to visit, excellent pubs and superb ale. And there's no language problem.

Lake District pubs tend to be of two distinct types. Either they are small and homely, generally owned by a local brewery – or they are larger, smarter, and more obviously catering for the tourist trade. Most pubs serve food, lunchtime and evenings. My crawl of southern Lakeland is intended to include pubs of several different types, as well as most of the real ales available in the locality.

South Lakeland, for the beer drinker, is Hartleys country. You can always be sure of a good pint in one of this company's blue-painted pubs, although the one I have chosen is actually a free house, the Crown at High Newton, just off the A590 Barrow road. The two large bars can sometimes appear empty, but come to life on Tuesday and Thursdays when there is live jazz and folk music. The Hartleys XB is on electric pump. Other Hartley houses which I would highly recommend are the Golden Rule at Amberside (the meeting-place of the local CAMRA branch), the Outgate Inn at Outgate and the New Hall (better known as Hole in t'Wall) at Bowness.

Jennings ales are more associated with the northern part of the area, but are on sale in some free houses farther south. A good pint of hand-pumped bitter can be had at the Sawrey Hotel at Far Sawrey, whose bar is a converted stable with a very friendly red setter in attendance. Theakston's Bitter and Old Peculiar can also be sampled here.

The best pint I tasted during my most recent visit to the area was Tetley's Bitter at the Hare and Hounds, Bowlands Bridge. A solitary handpump does its duty amidst a sea of fizz taps, and the pub may not be to everyone's taste, being a large bar with loud music. However it is on a most spectacular and little-used road, which will take you eventually to Kendal.

Kendal is a real beer drinkers' paradise, with pubs of all types and a superb choice of ales. It's an interesting town, too, bisected by a river and full of small, old-fashioned shops. My chosen pub is The Globe, Yates and Jackson's northernmost tied house, a happy and comfortable town pub selling electrically-pumped bitter at 51p per pint.

Many Lakeland signposts point to Newby Bridge, which is a surprisingly small settlement at the foot of Windermere. The Newby Bridge Inn is a hotel bar with a pub atmosphere, and is one of many in the area to sell a fine pint of Younger's Scotch Bitter.

Heading north to Keswick, the traveller passes by Grasmere, which is both a small town and a beautiful lake.

Wordsworth spent many years of his life here; however if you have just a few hours, make a note to stop at the Travellers Rest, just outside the town on the main road. This Vaux house has a Scottish flavour, and is justly proud of its handpumped Sunderland Draught, Best Scotch and the mysterious Vaux Mild.

One of the district's lesser-known lakes is Elterwater. Again, the lake gives its name to a beautifully-situated village, the centre-piece of which is The Britannia inn. One of the best and least spoilt pubs in the area, this gives you the opportunity to sample Bass Cask, as well as Tetley Mild and Bitter.

You will need a good map to find my final pub, as it is completely isolated and far from the main roads. Still, the Drunken Duck at Barnegates is well worth the effort of finding; this is a most welcoming pub, serving Slaters Bitter from the new Westmorland Brewery, as well as beers from Jennings and Theakstones. Cat-lovers will make two good friends here. Researching for this article this year meant that I had to miss several of the pubs I had most enjoyed on previous visits to the area. Some of these, which I would also heartily recommend, are the Tower Bank Arms at Near Sawrey, owned by the National Trust and close to Beatrix Potter's farmhouse, where Matthew Brown's Blackburn ales are available; the Royal Oak in the historic village of Cartmel, a Whitbread house serving excellently-kept ale, formerly Whitbread Cask and now Duttons Bitter; Hartley's excellent Queens Head at Hawkshead, the only pub I know where background music is provided by Radio 3; and don't miss the faded glories of Thwaites' Crown Hotel at seaside Grange-over-Sands.

These and many other good pubs are listed in Real Ale in Cumbria, which is yours for 50p plus a large stamped addressed envelope from Margaret Simpson, Collina, Princess Way, Heversham, Milnthorpe, Cumbria.

BRANCH DIARY

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HERTFORDSHIRE SOUTH BRANCH

Tuesday August 17th

BRANCH MEETING at the Goffs Oak Hotel, near Cuffley, 8.00pm. (Ind Coope)

Wednesday August 11th

Brewery trip to Fullers. Contact Tony King on Watford 48256.

Tuesday August 17th

BRANCH MEETING at the Goffs Oak Hotel, Goffs Oak, near Cuffley. 8.00pm start (Ind Coope)

Tuesday August 24th

Herts Liaison meeting at the White Hart, Welwyn, 8.00pm. (Wethereds).

Sunday August 29th

Cricket match versus the Old Bull's Head, Ware, at Verulamium Park, St. Albans.

Monday September 13th

Brewery trip to Greene King at Bury St. Edmunds, 2.30 pm. Contact Steve Bury on Radlett 3106.

Tuesday September 14th

Darts match versus the John Bunyan, Coleman Green, near Wheathampstead, 8.00pm. (McMullens).

Saturday September 18th — Sunday 19th

24-hour games marathon for charity at the Old Bull's Head, Ware. A three way contest between CAMRA, the pub and a team from Benskins. Contact Eric Sim on Hatfield 60647 for details.

HERTFORDSHIRE NORTH BRANCH

Wednesday August 11th

BRANCH MEETING at the Plume of Feathers, Ickleford, 8.00pm. (Wethered's)

Wednesday August 18th

Social at the Mallard, Julian's Road, Stevenage, 8.00pm. (Wethered's)

Wednesday August 25th

Social at the Lamb and Flag, Collier's End, 8.00pm. (McMullen's)

Friday September 3rd

Social at the Fox, Aspenden, 8.00pm. (Greene King)

HERTS-ESSEX BORDERS BRANCH

Monday August 2nd

Pub Crawl of Sawbridgeworth, starting at the Old Bell, 8.00pm.

Monday August 9th

Darts match at the Queen's head, Sheering, 8.00pm.

Monday August 16th

BRANCH MEETING at the Black Horse, White Roding, 8.00pm. (Ridleys)

Monday August 23rd

Social at the White Hart, Moreton, 8.00pm (Ind Coope)

Tuesday August 24th

Ruddles brewery trip. A mini-bus has been arranged and there are still a few places left. Contact Pam Smith on Epping 73677 for information.

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THE PRINCE OF WALES
Hertingfordbury, Herts

Wednesday, September 8, 1982

Brochure available from Auctioneers:
MARSHALL SHEPHERD AND REDMAN
113 Fore Street, Hertford

HERTFORD 551955

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 the Editor, CAMRA Ltd, or its branches. The Editor gratefully receives articles or letters for publication. **THESE SHOULD PREFERABLY BE TYPEWRITTEN AND DOUBLE-SPACED; HANDWRITTEN ITEMS SHOULD ALSO BE WELL SPACED AND AS LEGIBLE AS POSSIBLE PLEASE** Send to D. Burns, 11 Turpins Chase, Oaklands, Welwyn, Hertfordshire.

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