

**FREE**



THE CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE

# THE HERTFORDSHIRE NEWSLETTER

MARCH 1983

CIRCULATION 5000

NUMBER 59

## PAYING THE PRICE

Why is a pint of beer in this part of the country so expensive? You don't think so? Then let me quote you some figures.

CAMRA's Manchester newsletter for January 1983 quotes the price of a pint of bitter brewed by Holts, a local brewer whose beer has an excellent reputation, as 49p. Holts Bitter is a little stronger than our own local Benskins Bitter, whose average price in late 1982, according to a CAMRA survey recently carried out in Hertfordshire, was 64 pence per pint.

Can anyone, brewer or landlord, offer me a reasonable explanation as to why beer in Hertfordshire costs 30% more than a pint in Manchester? After all, beer is beer wherever you are — there is no difference in the ingredients.

Turning to draught mild, the price per pint in the same Joseph Holt's Manchester managed house was 46p (in the best bar). This is about the same strength as McMullen's AK, whose average price late last year was found to be 56p. About the same strength as both Holt's and Mac's milds is Harp Lager, whose average price per pint in this county is an amazing 67½p (only tuppence less than the average price of the significantly stronger Greene King Abbot Ale).

Can the same brewer or landlord explain why lager is so ridiculously expensively priced?

Is the answer to both questions not, in fact: "If people are silly enough to pay these prices, then this is what we'll charge them"?

Peter Lerner

### Calling all Whitbread landlords

Most Whitbread landlords in Hertfordshire now serve one, or possibly two excellent real ales: Wethered's Bitter, and Flowers Original. A far cry from the bad not-so-old days when the choice was either keg Trophy or keg Tankard, and we should indeed be grateful.

However, landlords and customers alike may have noticed that Whitbread's real ales, good as they usually are, are often somewhat pricey when compared with those of their competitors. A price survey carried out in Hertfordshire during 1982 revealed that Wethered's Bitter was generally more expensive than the equivalent bitters brewed by McMullen's, Greene King, Courage or Benskins. Might the reason for this be the costs of transporting Wethered's all the way from Marlow, and Flowers all the way from the brewery at Cheltenham?

Whitbread's do have a local brewery. It's modern, it's at Luton and it can brew real ale. But it doesn't. And yet, we understand, it's not brewing to its capacity. So it's quite possible for Whitbread to brew, at Luton, a local real ale for local pubs, and to charge a reasonable price that will enable them to wipe out the opposition.

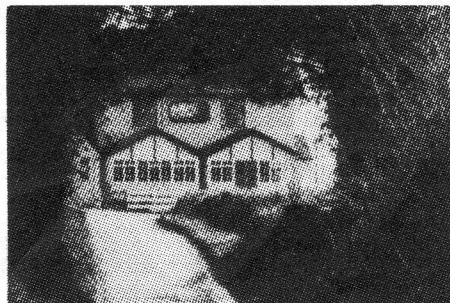
So come on, friendly Whitbread landlords. Please ask your brewery representatives to consider brewing a local beer, for local tastes, that we can all be proud to drink.

### Explanation

Rob and Marianne of the Rest and Welcome at Haultwick wish to apologise to Mike Tebbutt of Epping, whose letter was published in the February Newsletter, and to anyone else who found their pub unexpectedly closed on 28th December last. In fact, this was not of course a Bank Holiday, but the pub was closed because of a family bereavement. There was a notice on the door to explain this.

Your local CAMRA correspondent advises that the Rest and Welcome is still one of the best pubs in this part of the county, with an atmosphere and character that are hard to beat.

### THE BARLEY MOW



**TYTTENHANGER GREEN**

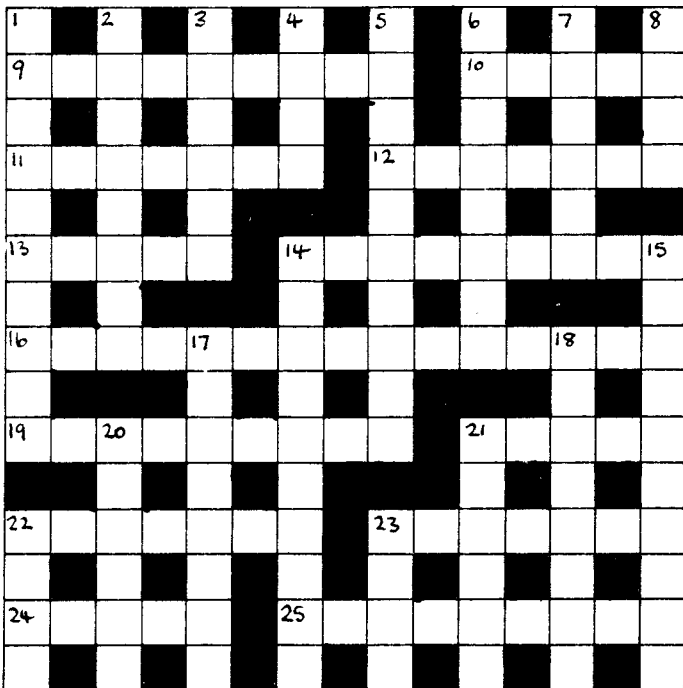
**TRY OUR 15 REAL ALES**

We do many different things during the year but one thing we still pride ourselves in is that our beer is the best in the County

**PLEASE NOTE NO COACHES  
INCLUDING MINI BUSES**

# COMPETITION

The sender of the first correct entry opened on 15th April will receive a copy of Michael Jackson's Pocket Guide to Beer. No other enclosures please except names and addresses.



## Across

- 9, 10 'Firm' chose death, unfortunately (for Caesar) at this time (3,4,2,5)  
 11 They're not sensible things to eat (7)  
 12 Ape, tame one, it adapts (7)  
 13 Cutback in Border apparent (5)  
 14 Cost holds itself back with no right — don't go over it (9)  
 16 Italy in rent loan dealt with thus? (15)  
 19 It has lots to do with a variable type of fungus (9)  
 21 Perhaps box of fruit with hot tropical origins (5)  
 22 First part of *Sun* in E. London sounds up-to-date (7)  
 23 Pa has liver disorder to overcome (7)  
 24 Cancer possibly discharging right matter (5)  
 25 Incitement to dash into gents? (9)

## Down

- 1 Reproduction frames rippling pond in view (10)  
 2 Carter was one to get himself mostly involved with MOD (8)  
 3 One and half Double Diamonds mixed with ale is bad (6)  
 4 Seeks information about off barrels (4)  
 5 One good for a frolic, e.g. if an inside job (6-4)  
 6 It's sought-after morning part, but no-one gets up (8)  
 7 Asian sheep found roaming in outer Algeria (6)  
 8 Disorderly house, non-U, in which Foot's often found (4)  
 14 Ghastly pint, so a loo needed on which to sit (5-5)  
 15 In which mothers are studied, as their children say (10)  
 17 His career collapsed without one investigation (8)  
 18 House? Call 'Bingo' excitedly when '50' comes out (3-5)  
 20 Unexpected, but par is achievable here (6)  
 21 Holiday partly satisfies taverners (6)  
 22 Dainty striker of ball protects middle of pitch (4)  
 23 Stake to take into account (4)

The winner of the Christmas crossword competition was A E Jones of Braughing, who will receive a copy of the 1983 Good Beer Guide. The solution was:

**Across:** McMullens, Baize, Pull the other one, Diet, Probably, Condiment, Ratio, Fists, Dromedary, Ethereal, Best, Pulling a fast one, Terse, Rare event.

**Down:** Moped, Malvern, Late, Even, Saturation, Beer barrel, In orbit, Everybody, Lip Service, Head Banger, Coffee pot, Scholar, Acetone, Treat, Afar, Isle.

The winner of the Hidden Breweries competition, who also receives a 1983 GBG, was David Wilbraham of Little Berkhamsted. The 32 different breweries were:

Ansells, Banks, Beard, Brain, Brakspear, Burt, Charrington, Darley, Gales, Gibbs Mew, Hartleys, Holt, Hydes, Lees, Manns, Marstons, McEwan, Mendip, Okell, Paines, Selby, Shipstone, Sussex, Swimbridge, Tennents, Tetleys, Tolly Cobbold, Vaux, Victoria, Wells, Wern, Youngs.

# QUICK ONES

## Proud Preston

Readers will remember that the village local at Preston, near Hitchin — the Red Lion — was recently bought from Whitbread's by a consortium of local residents.

The latest news is that the pub is due to re-open in late February, to be managed by Roy and Kathy Hart, a young couple from Hitchin. Real ale is confidently expected, and much work will take place to improve the pub garden and to provide facilities for families with children.

The chairman of the Red Lion's local board of directors, Mr. Richard Beharrall, is quoted as saying: "We wanted the village local to be just that. It is the centre of our small community and we want to make sure it stays that way."

Well done, the proud villagers of Preston. But it's a peculiar world when the people of a small community have to pay out over £100,000 to ensure that their local isn't ruined by a national brewery.

## Brewing again in Walkern

After a gap of 59 years, brewing returned to Walkern when Mickles moved to the Victoria Works from their converted piggery premises at Lilley near Luton last month.

The Victoria Works — not to be confused with a Ware brewery that began production in July 1981 — is better known as the home of Wrights Drinks Ltd. Samuel Wright started a malting business in 1790 and his successors were brewing commercially for at least 60 years until 1924. Now under different owners, only cider and soft drinks are sold by the firm and these are merely bottled at Walkern.

The fine tower brewery, built in 1870, survives today, but most of the brewing equipment was removed long ago. Mickles are using the former maltings which stand alongside, with water pumped from the 300 feet deep well beneath the site. 'We'd been looking for new premises for several months', said brewer and director Les Kent recently, 'before we decided to move to Walkern. I was keen to remain in Hertfordshire.'

Mickles Birch Bitter (OG 1038) and Oak Bitter (1048), which was introduced last October, are now sold in many free houses and clubs in Hertfordshire and adjoining counties, and they are prepared to supply outlets much further afield. During Wright's heyday at the turn of the century, they were restricted to a 20-mile radius, the maximum the drayhorses could manage.

Wright's and Mickles will remain independent, although each hopes for extra business from the other's customers.

## Licensing lunacy

A classic example of the need for flexible licensing hours was seen at the Brewster Sessions for the Dacorum Division in February. The local LVA canvassed its members on a proposal to open later in the morning (10.30 rather than 10) but earlier (5.30) in the evening. Of the 80 who replied, 45 were in favour and 35 against. The proposal was made to the licensing justices and was agreed. One licensee, Mr. Thomas Robson of the "Robin Hood", Tring, objected to the change, saying he had plenty of early morning trade but would have none at 5.30. He felt that many other licensees, particularly in rural areas, would find the same, but the change will nevertheless be implemented in April. Both Ind Coope Benskins and Whitbread supported the change; presumably as licensees themselves of managed houses, which tend to be big town centre houses, they felt more business would accrue. It doesn't say much for their opinion of their own tenanted houses, where the licensee forms his own judgement of the most suitable hours. The Dacorum area has 136 pubs, of which 103 are LVA members. Thus a quarter is now a majority! Had the magistrates permitted each licensee to determine his own hours (which of course they can't, until the law is changed) everyone would be satisfied. Mr. Robson is no stranger to unusual hours; his house has a market extension on Monday afternoons.

## THE ROYAL OAK, BUSHEY

Free House

★ 6 Real Ales □ Food ★  
 ★ Guest Beers ★

We hope that our customers are not inconvenienced by our building work

SPARROWS HERNE ★ ON THE A41

## DOING THE ROUNDS

*A diary of the travels of "Roundsmen"; an anonymous Newsletter reader who is attempting to visit all of Rayment's pubs and thus claim his free prize of a t-shirt or pottery mug.*

Where better to commence my Round than in Rayment's brewery village, Furneux Pelham, at the **Star**? A lovely old pub, with a warm open fire and a warm welcome. Landlord Peter Reynolds showed me the pottery mug to be claimed by successful Roundspersons, and I decided there and then that I would choose a t-shirt. Only another 22 pubs to go. The hand-pumped BBA was delicious, and my companions and I enjoyed a well-cooked and inexpensive lunch. A most promising start.

To the brash new town of Harlow for my second call, the **Willow Beauty**. Named, as all Harlow pubs are, after a butterfly or moth, this pub is no beauty to look at. Cracked weatherboarding, a broken window and an ugly car park are a complete contrast to the plush, oak-panelled interior. Friendly service from the bar staff, combined with another excellent pint of BBA and a hearty meal of a Jumbo Sausage made for a cheery lunch hour. The pub overlooks Harlow's sports ground, and my female companion and I were amused to watch a single loony jogging desparately round and round the athletics track.

Across Hertfordshire to reach pub number three, the **Rose and Crown** at Tewin. The Rose and Crown is actually no longer a Rayment's pub, having been recently transferred to Greene King, and potential Roundpeople are allowed to visit Harlow's **Archer's Dart** instead, if they wish. The Rose and Crown is more of an eating-house than a local's pub, and when I visited it with several companions one lunchtime, we had to wait some time to be served at the bar, then wait in a queue for the privilege of ordering food. The hand-pumped IPA was of average quality and there was little in the way of pub atmosphere.

There are four Rayment's pubs in Bishop's Stortford, and my first call was at the **Wheatsheaf**. A small pub covered with hand-written notices and assorted bric-a-brac, including a collection of guns on the lounge wall with one mysteriously missing. Very much a local's pub, where a stranger such as myself has great difficulty forcing a route through the regulars who occupy all available space at the bar. A reasonable pint of BBA and a slightly over-priced "special" lunch of fish and chips.

*Does this man do nothing but eat lunches? Find out by reading more next month. Meanwhile, if you would like to attempt the Rayment's Round, you can obtain details from any Rayment's pub, or by writing to the brewery at Furneux Pelham, Buntingford, Herts.*

### Blakes Beer Cellar

96 Queens Road, Watford

- Wadworth 6X ● UXB ● Swannells ●
- Old Peculier ● Guest Beers ●
- Draught Cider ●

### GOOD FOOD AT ALL TIMES

Open pub hours, 7 days a week

LICENSED BAR & CATERING FOR OUTSIDE  
EVENTS

## LETTERS

Dear Editor,

I really must take issue with Mr Tittle (Letters, February Newsletter) about Greene King. While Martyn Cornell was in error in his original article in referring to top pressure beers as keg, there is no possibility of these beers being considered real. CAMRA's definition of real beer, i.e. 'ask-conditioned beer served **without** extraneous carbon dioxide, is now widely recognised, even by that standard reference work, the Oxford English Dictionary. Indeed, Greene King themselves have stopped pubs which serve top pressure beers from advertising them as real.

Mr Tittle may be interested to know that I was recently told by a Greene King representative that he considered beer served on a high top pressure to have an unacceptable 'bite'. I, along with all CAMRA members and obviously many non-members, find all top-pressure beers to taste inferior. I am surprised that Mr Tittle thinks that CAMRA's fight was 'good and noble' if he is in favour of top pressure. As far as I know cask beer (albeit mostly served on top pressure) was served in all Greene King, McMullen, Charrington, Wells and Rayment's pubs and most Ind Coopie pubs in North Herts in the 70s, leaving Whitbread as the only major supplier serving keg. The fact that all these breweries — with the notable exception of Greene King — have made a massive switch to handpumped beers shows public preference.

Finally, CAMRA is quite correct in its use of the word 'ale'. While this indeed originally referred to an unhopped beverage, 'ale' and 'beer' have been generally synonymous for a few centuries now. Furthermore, in the brewery trade ale refers to a top-fermented beer such as bitter, mild etc, as opposed to a bottom-fermented lager.

Martin Connelly

(Chairman, Herts North Branch)

## Pints 'n' Litres

Real ales to take away

GREENE KING IPA & ABBOTT ● ADNAMS  
EVERARD TIGER ● MICKLES ALES

from 56p per pint

ALSO REAL DRAUGHT CIDER

BRIGHT POLYPINS & CASKS ALWAYS  
AVAILABLE FROM 53p PER PINT

GLASS LOAN ● OPTIC HIRE ● BAR  
SERVICE & CATERING AVAILABLE

HOLD YOUR OWN ALE FESTIVAL WITH  
BRIGHT BEER & PUMPS FROM US

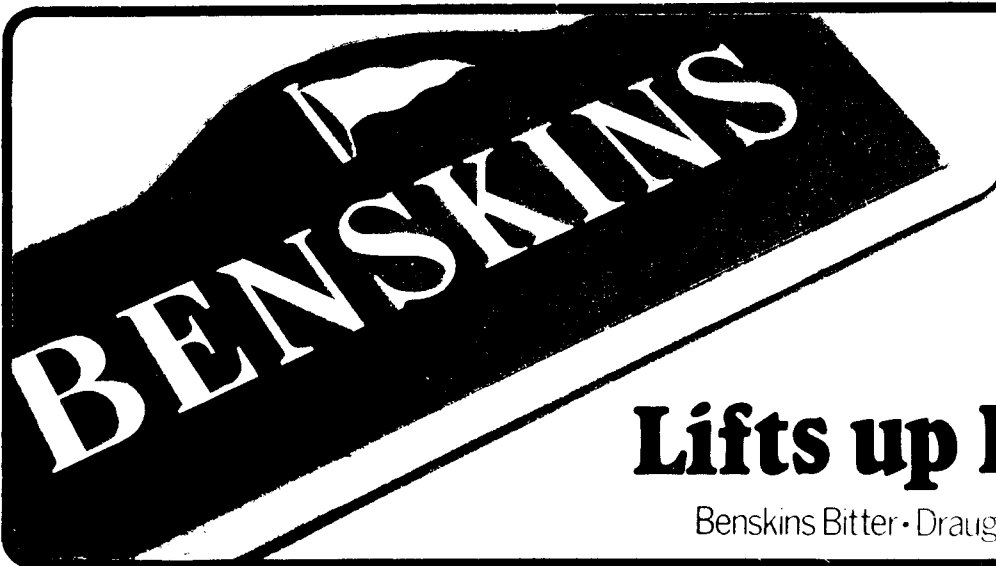
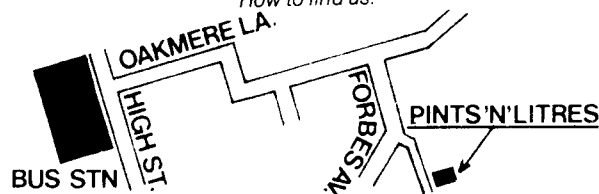


at 6 Eastfield Parade, Forbes Avenue, Potter Bar



Potters Bar 55585

How to find us:



## Lifts up Herts.

Benskins Bitter • Draught Burton Ale

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## PUB NEWS

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Mickles Oak Bitter is now on sale at the **Lytton Arms** in Old Kriebworth. The **Post Office Club** in Stevenage Old Town has only one handpump, which dispenses Wells IPA at times, at others Bombardier. Mild is available only in keg form unfortunately. The **Pyramid** in Stevenage has, as expected, stopped selling Truman's Prize Mild. The original reason given was lack of availability, now lack of demand. Best Bitter has also disappeared, so that of the 6 handpumps in the lounge only one is now in operation (serving the bitter). In the **St Nicholas** in Stevenage, the handpump labelled 'Old Nick' now also reads 'Flowers Original Bitter'. A Whitbread 'house' beer? Still in Stevenage, the **Gamekeeper** has stopped selling real ale.

Moving south, the **Abbot John** in Wheathamstead has permanent tenants at last — welcome to Mick and Denise Oldman, who although new to the pub trade are looking after the Benskins and Burton Ale well. Also a belated welcome to Mike Delaney, new landlord of the **Wicked Lady** in nearby No Mans Land. Formerly tenant of the Townsend Arms, Hertford Heath, Mike has increased the range of gravity beers to include some rare ones for the area, e.g. Robinsons Best Bitter, Gales HSB and Zum! Cider, as well as beers from the new local breweries.

News from 'out west' comes from Tim Amsden, former CAMRA Chairman. The **Old Palace**, King's Langley, has a new licensee — Mr. David Day, from Berkhamsted. It is his first pub, and it sells Benskins. New, too, is the manager of the **Royal Hotel**, Tring Station — Mr. Ted Davy, from Skegness. This imposing hotel, lately free of tie from Ind Coope, sells Abbot and ABC beers. Manager of "Langleys", the Scottish and Newcastle pub in King's Langley, Mr. Colin Warren, has made an abrupt departure. The pub, once the Langley Hotel, subsequently horrendously done over in Scotch Kitsch and re-named (a stroke of genius, this) "The Young Pretender", was re-hashed and re-re-named as a fun eat-and-drinkerama only last summer. Its sign, a wooden gantry with half a dozen smaller signs dangling from it, would suit the approach road to Dead Man's Gulch.

Despite a large sign proclaiming major refurbishment, there is no sign of activity at the **Boat**, Raven's Lane, Berkhamsted, a run-down canal-side pub which Fullers bought from Ind Coope well over a year ago. The pub can confidently expect an extremely good trade when it re-opens.

Gordon Michie (ex **Bell**, Totterhoe) has sold the **White Horse**, Bourne End, and intends to rest a while from the pub trade before starting another venture. The White Horse, once no more than an annexe to the **Watermill Motel** opposite (now the Moat House) was most imaginatively revived during Gordon's time there, and is now a thriving free house with good food and excellent real beer (Adnams, Marstons, Wadworths, Youngs).

Majorie Quincey, wife of Bill Quincey who formerly kept the **Crown and Sceptre**, Briden's Camp, died suddenly last month. Her ill health had forced the couple to leave the pub last year. Bill now lives in retirement in Berkhamsted. The Crown and Sceptre is one of the handful of Hertfordshire pubs to have been in every edition of the Good Beer Guide (missed from the published list as it has been entered variously under "Briden's Camp" and "Water End").

Whitbread have changed their minds about a new pub for the Woodhall Farm estate in Hemel Hempstead after a number of residents' protests. This seems hard on the area since the nearest pub is more than a mile away.

The **George Hotel**, Tring, has closed and is to re-open as a showroom for a mail order firm. The brewery, ABC, had shamefully neglected this fine building over a long period, and it gave the appearance of being closed anyway. This was ABC's only pub in Tring, with all the town's tied estate now belonging to sister company Benskins.

Morrell Light has appeared in those ABC pubs which used to sell KK, such as the **Queen's Head**, Long Marston. This pub sells no fewer than five cask beers — ABC Bitter, Morrell Light, Everard Tiger, Burton Ale and Draught Bass — despite having an extremely poor cellar which the brewery refuses to improve.

Morrell Varsity and Celebration ales have appeared at the **King's Arms**, King St, Tring, which recently organised a trip to the brewery. The Kings Arms is one of the few free houses to sell Phillips Heritage from the Greyhound brewery at March Gibbon, near Bicester.

Swannells "Old Lickey" from the new Kings Langley brewery has been seen at the **King's Arms**, Berkhamsted as a guest beer, for the extremely modest asking price of £1.10 a pint.

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## BRANCH DIARY

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### HERTFORDSHIRE NORTH BRANCH

#### Wednesday 9th March

Branch Meeting at Motte & Bailey, Pirton, 8.00pm

#### Wednesday 16th March

Brewery visit to Banks' and Taylor's, Shefford, 8.00pm prompt. Anyone wishing to come **must** contact Martin Connelly on Hitchin 52907.

#### Wednesday 23rd March

Social at the Sword in Hand, Westmill, 8.00pm

#### Tuesday 29th March

Social at the Three Horseshoes, Hooks Cross (McMullen), 8.00pm.

Contact Martin Connelly Hitchin 52907

### HERTFORDSHIRE SOUTH BRANCH

#### Tuesday 8th March

Darts and Skittles v. Enfield and Barnet, Rose & Crown, Essendon, 8.00pm (Ind Coope)

#### Tuesday 15th March

Branch Meeting (and hopefully new edition of the Herts Beer Guide) at the Queens Head, Colney Heath, 8.00pm (Wethered/Flowers)

#### Thursday 17th March

Herts Liaison Meeting in St. Albans, 8.00pm

Contact Dave Andrews on St. Albans 66344 for venue.

#### Tuesday 22nd March

Social and presentation for 10 years in GBG, at the Swan, Bushey, 8.00pm (Benskins)

#### Tuesday 29th March

Beer-tasting social at the Wicked Lady, No Mans Land, 8.00pm. Includes beers not normally available in Hertfordshire.

#### Tuesday 5th April

Social and presentation for 10 years in GBG, at the Bell & Crown, Hertford, 8.00pm

Contact Dave Andrews St Albans 66344

### WATFORD AND DISTRICT

#### Tuesday 1st March

Darts/Social v. HM Customs, at the Old Shepherd, Chorleywood Bottom, 8.00pm

#### Wednesday 16th March

Branch Meeting at the King Stag, Bushey, 8.00pm

#### Tuesday 22nd March

Presentation for 10 years in GBG at the Swan, Bushey, 8.00pm

#### Tuesday 12th April

Darts v. Herts South at the Tantivy, Watford, 8.00pm

#### 15th-17th April

Rayments Pub Tour weekend.

Contact Kevin Summons Kings Langley 65076 (w)

### MID-CHILTERN'S BRANCH

#### Tuesday 1st March

Pub of the Year Presentation at the White Hart, Whepley Hill, 8.30pm

#### Tuesday 15th March

Pub Crawl around Denham. Meet at the Plough, Cheapside Lane, 8.00pm

#### Tuesday 22nd March

Branch AGM at the Black Cat, Lye Green, Chesham, 8.00pm

Contact Barry Bonnick Rickmansworth 775799

### HERTS-ESSEX BORDERS BRANCH

Contact Pam Smith Epping 73677

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## What's On at Your Pub

**A new regular feature of the newsletter will be a free monthly diary listing special events to take place at real ale pubs in Hertfordshire.**

Please send details of events (in not more than 15 words) by the 12th of the previous month to: Peter Lerner, 14 Hazeldell, Watton-at-Stone, Herts.

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The Hertfords...re 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 Cathy Totman, Hixham, Furneux Pelham, Buntingford, Hertfordshire.

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**Advertising:** £6 per 2.5cm column. Artwork can be made up at extra cost. ☎ Albury 287 for details.

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