

FREE



THE CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE

THE HERTFORDSHIRE NEWSLETTER

MAY 1983

CIRCULATION 5000

NUMBER 61

BENSKINS TEST THE MARKET

A test sample of around 60 pubs has been chosen by Benskins (that's about 10% of their tied house estate), to be host to a guest real ale. These guest beers will come from the Allied Group and will probably include:

Taylor Walker Bitter and Mainline
Friary Meux
Romford Brewery Bitter
Ansells Mild and Bitter

Each of these beers will be on sale, in rotation, for two months at a time, starting with Taylor Walker Bitter followed by Mainline, and available to the customer alongside Benskins Bitter and Ind Coope Burton Ale on handpump.

Pubs in the Hertfordshire area which should be participating are as follows: Aldenham, Roundbush; Bovingdon, Bell; Boxmoor, Three Blackbirds; Burnham Green, White Horse; Chipperfield, Boot; Croxley Green, Duke of York; Elstree, Plough and Waggon & Horses; Gt Missenden, White Lion; Hemel Hempstead, Boars Head; Hertford, Old Barge; Hertford Heath, Townsend Arms; Hunton Bridge, Dog & Partridge; Kinsbourne Green, Fox; Kitters Green (Abbots Langley), Royal Oak; Much Hadham, Bull; Nash Mills, Red Lion; Potten End, Red Lion, Potterscrouch, Holly Bush; Redbourn, Cricketers and Punch Bowl; Rickmansworth, Feathers; St Albans, Boot, Fighting Cocks, Rose & Crown and Six Bells; Sarratt, Cock; Sawbridgeworth, Black Lion; Shenley, Black Lion; Standon, Bell; Stevenage, White Hart; Ware, Old Bulls Head and Royal Oak; Water End, Red Lion; Watford, Tantivy.

CAMRA have for some time been pressing Benskins to try adding another cask beer to their range (since the demise of KK), and fully support them in this move to a 'Guest beer' system. What is now needed is the response of the drinker in not only imbibing but also informing Benskins Brewery of your views.

Finally, just to help your sampling, Benskins also have in their pubs a handy 2-pint container for take-aways — free of charge — for the transporting home of your favourite beverage.

Jim Axford
Benskins BLO

Competition Corner

McMullen's will be introducing a new keg lager in 1983. It will replace Harp, in their pubs, and it will be brewed in Hertford. Can you suggest a suitable name for this exciting new brew? Please send your ideas to the Newsletter; we will publish the best entries and offer prizes for the most appropriate.

THE ROYAL OAK, BUSHEY

Free House

★ 6 Real Ales □ Food ★
★ Guest Beers ★

Beer garden with childrens playground

SPARROWS HERNE ★ ON THE A411

LICENSING HOURS — LET'S FIGHT TOGETHER

Recently, the Hertford Licensed Victuallers' Association applied to the local Magistrates, on behalf of 91 local publicans, to extend pub closing hours to 11pm Mondays to Thursdays.

A modest request, but after representation from the police, and a letter of objection from one Hertford resident, the application was turned down.

The strange thing is that although Mr. Arthur Rutter, who presented the application on the publicans' behalf, told the court that he was doing so on behalf of public house customers, apparently not one customer was asked to speak in favour of the application, nor was one letter or signature in favour of the change, from the public, produced.

Local licensees must know that, at the present time, CAMRA is working with the licensed trade to produce a petition of several hundred thousand signatures requesting more flexible licensing hours. This petition has been well publicised in the Newsletter, and in the publicans' own trade newspapers. Why did the Hertford LVA not think to ask CAMRA, or any of the thousands of local residents who have signed our petition, not to come and support their most reasonable case? I am sure that support would have been gladly given.

CAMRA, as a beer drinkers' consumer organisation, has achieved many changes in the pub world, some with the help of brewers and publicans, some without. But when there is a chance for us all to work together, what is the advantage of going our separate ways and failing to achieve our objective?

We can all secure a better deal for publicans and customers — if we fight together.

Peter Lerner

THE BARLEY MOW



TYTTENHANGER GREEN

TRY OUR 15 REAL ALES

We hope the coming summer will be a good one with plenty of sunshine and good drinking weather for all our customers

Our barbecue is now in use

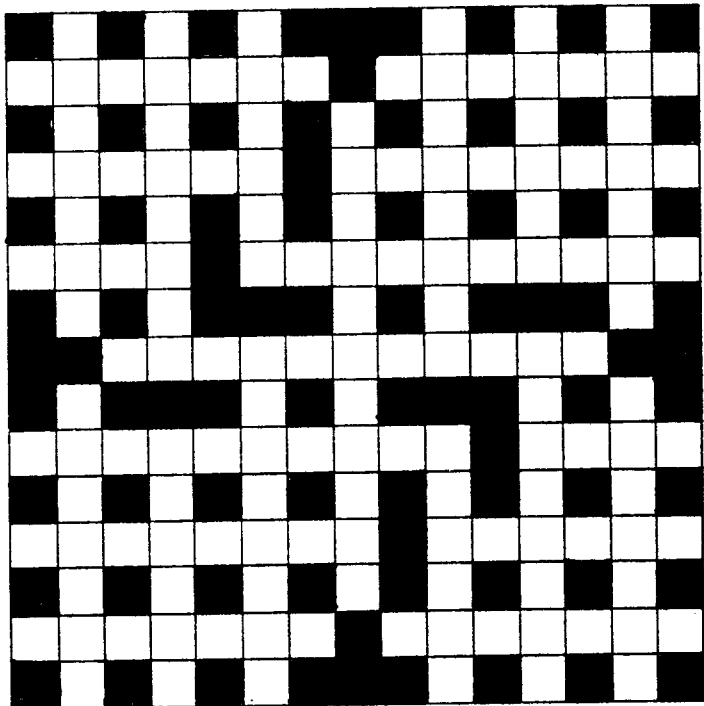
**PLEASE NOTE NO COACHES
INCLUDING MINI BUSES**

COMPETITION

The sender of the first correct entry opened on 10th June will receive a copy of Michael Jackson's Pocket Guide to Beer. Please mark envelopes May competition.

ALPHABETIC JIGSAW

Each answer begins with a different letter of the alphabet. Clues are grouped by length of answer. The initial letters of each group's clues are given, but the clues within each group are not in any particular sequence. After solving the clues, the answers must be fitted into the grid.



4 letters (B,P)

Runner, or one that jumps in Mexico?
Gave money back in India, perhaps

6 letters (C,E,K,N,T,X)

Prying into drink is an offence
Ten tread fearfully — this might be frightening
Extract part of relic (Italian)
It's wholly (or perhaps three quarters) in Lakeland
Can Russian uprising give aid to conflagration?
150 stuck on snowdrift, silly people

7 letters (A,F,H,J,Q,S,W,Z)

Combination of ten has to give up about half that number
He brews without interruption — support this policy
TV programme in viewing that's the limit
A state of merriment — Roger, perhaps, conceals it
Pair cavorting on bed — that's fruity
Extremely damp in east and dry in west
Having more hair hides his concern
And isn't being replaced by a substitute (*hyphenated*)

8 letters (I,M,O,R,V,Y)

What you ought to be doing if your CAMRA membership's lapsed
Newest Scottish brewer is at last replaced by Stones
Old Iberian settler living inside Dagoes' goatherd centres
Works back-to-back where building is facing on the other side
Image much reduced when CID motor crashed
Example in driver's attitude

10 letters (L,U)

Aristocracy have superior cheek
Raised help when in trouble — it's what you expect from the top

11 letters (D,G)

Dane brews in water shortage — he's nothing to fear
It's vital to me in grain development

DOING THE ROUNDS

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

Well, it had to happen. The first pint of top pressure BBA, and what a place to have it! The **White Lion** at Sawbridgeworth is hardly Rayment's plushiest pub, in fact its interior is reminiscent of a licensed transport cafe. The beer was, as you might expect, fizzy, but the service was cheerful and the bright lights of the Star of India restaurant beckoned from outside. I understand that there are plans to restore this grand old pub to its former glory, and hopefully this will include some real ale.

A sucker for punishment, Roundsmen's next foray took him to the **White Horse** at Ware, another pub where top pressure beer is the order of the day. A sign outside warns motorists that users of the car park who are not visiting the pub will be charged £2, but my impression that there is hardly an overwhelming struggle for car parking space in rural Ware was reinforced by the fact that there was only one other caller at the pub at the time of my lunchtime visit. But the clean oak-panelled lounge bar was warm, the barmaid and customer friendly, and the liver paté sandwich was excellent. A nice old pub, proud of its past with old photographs of itself on the walls. What a difference a pint of traditional ale would have made.

And what a difference the following Sunday lunchtime at the **White Horse** (yes, another one) over at Newport in Essex. A packed pub with hardly a spare square foot of space, and an excellent pint of hand-pulled BBA. What a delightful, cheery, thriving place, unspoilt by the ravages of time or brewery architect. Another one to come back to.

My final visit of the month took me to within yards of the BBA-drinkers' Mecca, the **Brewery Tap** at Furneux Pelham. After 8pm and the landlord was still in the bath, the barman had to search for his rubber stamp for my Rayment's round card, cases of crisps waited forlornly on the bar tables and the BBA was tired, to say the least. One of my companions, who was down on a fleeting visit from the north of England, was justifiably unimpressed by this sample of our local brew. Still, the Tap has always been a somewhat drab pub, but I note from my April Newsletter that the landlord is new and keen, and surely he will soon brighten up what should be the brewery's showpiece pub.

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.

QUICK ONES

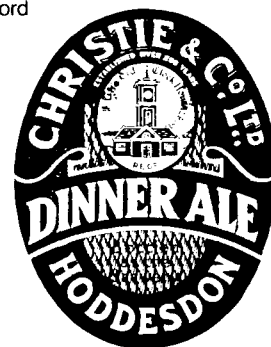
Buffalo Victorious

Victoria Brewery recently held a highly successful promotion evening at the **Buffalo's Head**, Puckeridge, in conjunction with CAMRA's Hertfordshire North Branch and landlady Chris Miller. On offer were Victoria's three brews, in ascending order of strength, **Bitter, Special and the knockout Hellfire.**

The previous week, your correspondent had accompanied a party on a tour of Victoria Brewery, at the massive Victoria Maltings in Ware, and was most impressed by the high standards of attention to detail and cleanliness in their brewing operation. The quality of Victoria beers has improved enormously in recent months, and after much sampling at the brewery, the party found the ale in a local McMullen's house to be something of a disappointment.

Found!

Newsletter reader John Oldham of Hertford was recently sorting through some old belongings, and found this old beer bottle label from the now defunct Christie's Brewery of Hoddesdon. The label dates from the 1920s and is brightly coloured in red and blue. A Dinner Ale was generally a light beer of low gravity, suitable for drinking with a good meal. If any other reader finds some interesting evidence of Hertfordshire's brewing past, whether it is a beer mat, bottle label or whatever, please let the Newsletter Editor know.



WESTERN MAIL — The Amsden Column

The Newsletter's new columnist is Tim Amsden, former CAMRA national chairman, who lives in Tring. As well as contributing a column of personal views and opinion, Tim will also be keeping us up to date with what's happening on the pub scene 'out west'.

This month, Tim takes a cautious look at the Brewers' Society and their promises of substantial investment in pub 'improvements'...

The Brewers' Society, the industry's answer to the Ministry of Truth, has lately announced that Britain's brewers will be investing tens of millions of pounds in their pubs over the next few years, over and above normal spending on maintenance. This is intended as an affirmation of the industry's belief in the pub as an institution and a sign of long-term optimism for the currently depressed drinks trade.

Collective announcements of this kind always need a wary assessment, partly because it is impossible to determine whether or not the promise comes true. If it doesn't, everyone will have forgotten the original undertaking. The Society, however, will have achieved the publicity at the outset. A similar instance was the 1,000 pub swap announced jointly by the brewers and the outgoing Labour government in 1978. Only about six of these pubs actually changed hands; the brewers correctly assumed that the new government would not exert any pressure on them, and ditched the whole scheme (although they had assured CAMRA the scheme would go ahead regardless of any change in the administration). No matter, for the press had already printed the story, and the "swap" had entered the mythology. Misinformed licensees, and even Government departments, refer to it as though it had taken place.

But back to the pub plan. Some observers have commented that such investment announcements usually refer to capital outlay on production, and suggest that the brewers have deliberately switched their spending from breweries to outlets. If this is so, the reason is not hard to perceive. During the sixties and seventies the brewers endlessly announced capital projects for production, and the result was the "white elephant" modern breweries by the sides of motorways, their brewing capacities based on absurdly high forecasts of future trade. All the Big Six made the same mistake to a greater or lesser extent — the smaller brewers were more cautious. (The wily old birds who built so many breweries in the late nineteenth century generally provided room for any likely expansion, but the barons of late twentieth century brewing felt the need to sweep away the old and flaunt their names in a suitable space-age style). Whitbread were the most heavily committed to new breweries, building three, at Luton, Salmesbury near Preston, and Magor near Newport. Declining beer sales have forced (or enabled) them to close most of their existing older plants and to badge-engineer their brands to suggest nothing is any different. The imminent closure of their Portsmouth brewery means that their Cheltenham plant will brew cask beers branded as Whitbread, Flowers, West Country, Strongs and Pompey — the same as Allied are having to do at Romford while wishing they still had some small plants!

Perhaps their pub investments will be more successful, for both brewer and customer. Many pubs are indeed still primitive, with outside lavatories, poor staff accommodation (the bit you never see), inadequate cellars, lack of parking, and so forth. Many have been starved of routine maintenance and consequently require major renovation. But in the main pubs require only small sums spending on them, but regularly, if they are to cater properly for their actual, or likely, trade. I am deeply suspicious about "potential", which is often only fulfilled at another pub's expense. Brewers have this conviction that things automatically improve if you throw money at them, and we all know how wrong this can be. My

suspicion is that investment in pubs means, to a brewer like Whitbread, turning village inns into "Beefeaters" and terraced boozers into disco nites. All right for some.

It is ironic that whenever brewers are asked, or leant on, to do more customer-orientated acts like swapping pubs in monopoly areas, or displaying price lists, they will reply "it'll cost you". And yet here, where they will be spending the customer's money on something presumably improving the customer's lot, we will get little say in it. How *much* the brewers could usefully do with all those millions! Quite apart from the existing stock of houses, they could look at all those areas where people now live but where pubs don't exist. Taking a town like Berkhamsted, all its pubs are to be found along the High Street or the canal bank. In the present century the development has been away from these areas, and while the brewery has shaken out all the unprofitable pubs in the older town, it has failed to build replacements in the newer. Admittedly, modern requirements make it exorbitant to build new pubs, but very little thought has been given to the possibilities of smaller developments, probably because the industry became demented with the "fewer but better" policy of eradicating spit-and-sawdust pubs and building mock-tudor palaces on arterial roads, and hasn't taken a really fresh look at the market in eighty years.

Those are just some aspects of the announcement which are worth exploring. But with the brewing industry you can be certain of one thing. Here is a golden opportunity; now just watch them louse it up.

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PRESENT



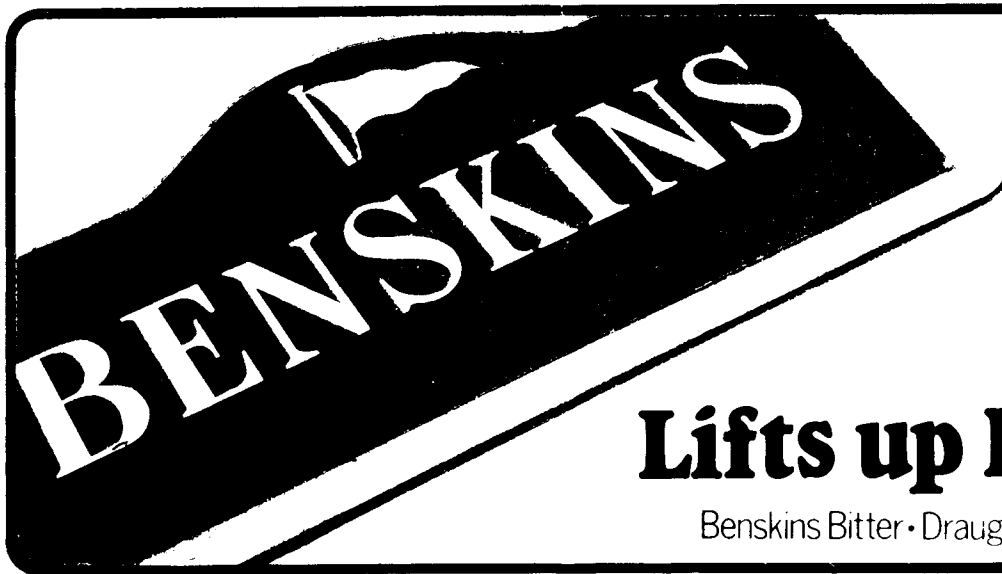
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FRIDAY & SATURDAY
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Lifts up Herts.

Benskins Bitter • Draught Burton Ale

BRANCH OUTING

The Great Coach Trail West

The 7th Hertfordshire South Branch weekend trip in pursuit of new beers in their natural surroundings and the visitation of breweries of great hospitality took place at the end of March.

The trip started off well, early Friday morning with everyone, except your scribe and spouse, at the appointed pick-up point on time.

The coach this year was luxury indeed, with on-board toilet facilities which knocked hours off the travelling time!! There was also a video player for those who could keep their eyes open.

The first port of call was Bath, reached just after opening time. Besides Wadworth 6X other local brews available were Ushers, Archers, Mendip, Butcombe and Smiles.

Closing time saw the departure of the coach over the Severn Suspension Bridge into Welsh Wales and straight to the **Gwent Brewery** at Usk. An unpretentious basic brewery serving the local free trade but soon to be moved to a new brewery behind their first tied house. The hospitality at the brewery was excellent with sampling of all four of their real ales, including the Silverthorne Bitter straight from the racking tank. The Druids Ale with an OG of 1074 was better sampled by wine glass. After a few hours of sampling we thanked our host and embarked for the **Bear Hotel** at Cowbridge for the night. After a good meal there was hardly time to catch the 10.30pm closing of the local pubs, so it was residents' lates in the hotel, which happened to be Gwent Ales.

So ended the first day with no significant move in the "Slob of the Trip" competition other than Ralph's cap which he is understood to have kept on even in bed.

Bright and early Saturday morning, well at least 10am, we left for **Crown Brewery** at Pontyclun. The brewery caters mainly for the Club Trade with over 350 of them. The trip around the brewery with open fermenting vessels was quite interesting, but in the hospitality room a debate took place as to whether the Best Bitter was on top pressure. A visit to the cellar showed an open vented cask with electric pump dispense.

Having left the Crown Brewery early it was decided to stop for lunch at the **Craig Hotel** at Ogmere on Sea. It was here that there was conflict in the party over those that wanted to watch the Wales versus France rugby match on the hotel's television and those that wanted to go straight on to Llanelli. As the hotel had an extension until 4pm and some of the party had set off along the coast road looking for more pubs, the departure for Llanelli was delayed until closing time. It was in the hotel that Roger Wilson made his first move in the "Slob" competition by tripping over the TV aerial lead just as Wales were going over for a try, much to the chagrin of the Welsh locals. Roger went further ahead during the pub crawl of Llanelli by falling asleep in a shop doorway waiting for the return of the coach driver.

The final session of the day was spent in Cowbridge with last year's slob John Warby trying very hard to make up lost ground on Roger. Ralph Lawday unknowingly gained points by going to bed early and locking his room mate out for the night.

Sunday morning found many people finicky about what they could eat and keep down for breakfast. We left the Bear Hotel at 10.30 am and en route voted for the "Slob of the Trip". Yes! you have guessed right — Roger Wilson was the winner. After crossing the Severn back into England we arrived at the **White Hart**, Littleton-upon-Severn five minutes before opening time. Such was the excellent coach driving we had been treated to by Robbie Myddleton the whole weekend.

At the White Hart John Warby presented the "Slob" award to Roger with one of his well-known eloquent speeches. We also had a bowls match against the local Avon Branch, things became a bit hectic at closing time and I believe the honours were shared.

There then followed a restful journey home, and our thanks go out to Nick and Val Page for organising a very successful and enjoyable trip.

Eric Sim

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

MORE CORNELL

Lots in a name

A dig through old trade directories has uncovered a few more odd and unusual names of vanished Hertfordshire pubs to add to those brought to you last year.

The **Full Measure**, in Fore Street, Hatfield in the 1850s, sounds like a promise a few more landlords ought to be making. This pub later changed its name to another unusual one, the **East India Chief**.

The height of unoriginality must have been reached in the 1860s, when two landlords named their pubs the **Innkeeper**, one in Maidenhead Street, Hertford, the other in Tonwell. At least this is an understandable name, which is more than can be said of the **Old Roson**, in St Michael's village, St Albans in 1862 — if anyone can tell me what a roson is, young or old, I'd be very grateful.

The **Clutterbuck Arms**, at Chandlers Cross in the 1870s, commemorates a local family who actually owned a brewery themselves just across the county border in Stanmore, Middlesex. But what about the **Gwendoline Arms**, open in Leavesden Green around 1866? She sounds a welcoming lady, anyway.

Typographical errors occasionally throw up oddities — the **Grandison Arms**, Bramfield comes out as Grandsons Arms in the 1870 Kelly's directory. The same may have happened with a beerhouse listed in the 1886 directory as the **Dells**, in Dane Street, Hockerill. The **Trumpet**, in Holywell Hill, St Albans, clearly took its name from the instrument used by the guards of the coaches that galloped up the hill on their way from London, and the **Old Highway** at Rye Common, near Hoddesdon took its name from the road itself. The **Coffee House**, in Maidenhead Street, Hertford has overtones of Dr Johnson and Boswell, rather than a pint of ale, but the **Bird Cage**, in Waltham Cross in the 1860s, brings the worrying thought that something other than grit and sawdust might be found on the floor.

Oddly enough, although there were at least two pubs in the county called **Royston Crow**, neither was in Royston. One, in the village of Reed, was closed in 1874. The other, in Ware, closed in 1912, was actually owned by Phillips, the Royston brewers, whose trademark was the black and white Royston Crow.

There was an ordinary **Crow** in Fishpool Street, St Albans in 1862, and a **Cat** in East Barnet, which gave its name to Cat Hill.

A question mark hangs over another name in the 1890 directory — the **Cyclists Rest**, at Millward Park Cottages to the south of Hatfield, prop. Mrs Diana Walby. Although Kelly's list it as a pub, there is no reference to it in any of the (very comprehensive) history books of the town. Hatfield was a popular destination for cyclists from London, who would pedal up the Great North Road literally in their thousands — but was the Cyclists Rest really only a tea shop?

Finally, it is odd how localised some unusual names are. There is no record of any pub in Hertfordshire being called the **Case Is Altered** — but three or four miles south of the county border, around Harrow, there are no less than three pubs with this still unexplained appellation, all still open.

Martyr Cornell

Pints 'n' Litres

REAL ALES TO TAKE AWAY

- Greene King ● Adnams ● Everard Tiger ● from 57p a pint
- Guest beer: Archers Village 54p ●
- Also Real Draught Cider ●

BRIGHT POLYPINS AND CASKS ALWAYS AVAILABLE
from 51p per pint

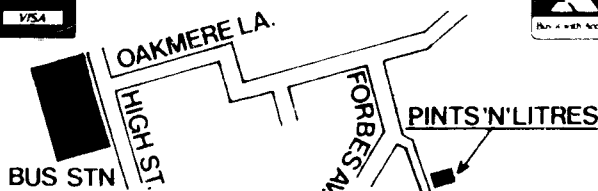
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LETTERS

A number of letters this month, on the continuing themes of flexibility, top pressure and prices. An anonymous (?) Welwyn reader takes up the points raised by previous correspondents (Letters, February issue):

Dear Editor,

I must take issue with both letter writers in the February Newsletter. Firstly Mr Tebbutt and his dislike of flexible opening hours. I can never understand why people in this supposedly great nation of ours (the 'Bulldog breed' is the term I believe) acquiesce to the government and its right arm, the law, meddling in areas which are none of their concern. As with the current farce concerning Sunday trading; what right have our so-called leaders to impose any form of restriction on opening hours on pubs or shops? It would seem that a more appropriate metaphor than that of a dog (the rest could be called 'bull') would be that of Oliver Twist: by naively asking for a little extra (freedom in this instance), the man-in-the-street is merely given the summary 'slap on the wrist' for his presumption. I have my own views on how people should react to arbitrary restrictions of this nature and could write pages on the subject (as my friends well know!), but this letter alone is probably sufficient to ensure my place on the Police National Computer as a dangerous subversive. My God – people will be wanting democracy next!

Secondly (yes, there is a second point) we come to Mr Tittle's letter. Far be it for me to stop this gentleman from drinking his fizzed-up Greene King. Some of it is possibly very pleasant (certainly better than Double Diamond for instance), although I suspect that as much is not. However, what he is drinking **cannot** be called real beer, simply by definition. Why? Because CAMRA defined the term, and that definition precludes the use of gas dispense. As to the difference purely being in the brewery — a simple demonstration in one or two pubs could easily give the lie to that. At the risk of going on too long (which I always do anyway) I should perhaps retell a story, which many long-standing CAMRA members may already know. It's about a marvellous CAMRA character, sadly no longer with us, called Boathook by all who knew him. Boathook was the scourge of fizz vendors in the Isle of Wight and Hampshire. In a letter from a typical PR man from a large, gaseous brewery, he was informed that 'carbon dioxide is a natural by-product of beer', so using gas dispense could do no harm. Boathook, far wiser than any PR Man, knew otherwise. In his reply he made this immortal retort: 'S**t is a natural by-product of pigs, but I don't expect it with my bacon!' And so say all of us.

Yours

Disgruntled of Welwyn

Mr Tittle, however, remains unconvinced:

Dear Sir,

I thank Martin Connelly for his reply to my earlier letter, also the correction about 'keg' beers. He states that it is only a CAMRA definition that the word 'real' can only be applied to cask-conditioned beer delivered with CO₂ top pressure. But the brewing process produces CO₂, so how can top pressure to drive beer to point of sale damage it? Most breweries use the CO₂ produced in the brewing process to fill their gas cylinders. Now let us look at handpump delivery. This produces a negative pressure upon the beers:

5 foot head gives minus 2.1660 psi

10 foot head gives minus 4.3320 psi

This is the verticle lift from bar to barrel. Above 30 ft it is impossible to handpump beer. Where customers require a sparkling pint, without the natural gas sucked out of it, then sparklers or multiple jets are fitted to the output pipe. Another objection to handpump is the gas that replaces the beer. Namely 'air'. This can contain wild yeast, lead and other contaminants. As beer in the cask is still a living organism, it can absorb anything in the air and go sour.

Many landlords with handpumps now find they must order in more complex amounts. They cannot allow themselves after a weekend to be left with a large quantity on the pump. So it requires smaller containers, more changes of barrel, therefore more waste and increased cost to the customer.

I still maintain that the best pint is mature in the cask with top pressure delivery. No one can call it fizzy beer, but it is always a lovely bright one.

Regards,

D S Tittle

On the subject of prices, two readers take issue with Peter Lerner over regional price variations — Del Allen of Chesham and Eric Sim of Hatfield:

Dear Cathy,

Your correspondent who writes under the heading "Calling all Whitbread Landlords" has not thought his/her subject through. The idea that beers which travel long distances are inherently more expensive than local

products is not always borne out in practice; Marston's brew at Burton-on-Trent and own tied houses as far apart as Cumbria and Hampshire, but still manage to undercut the big brewers in these trading areas, as well as holding their own in the highly competitive Manchester market. Frankly, the reason why real beer is so expensive in Whitbread London houses is that they simply charge what the market will stand, and take the attitude that if people are prepared to pay more for real beer, then so much the better.

If as you suggest, Whitbread start brewing cask beers at Luton, it is the whole world to a China orange that Wethered's Marlow brewery will go the same way as many of Whitbread's other traditional breweries at Romsey, Portsmouth and Tiverton, to name but three.

Furthermore the area currently supplied with processed beers from Luton is very large indeed, stretching from London to the Wash and across to Warwickshire. Is a drinker in Coventry or Norwich going to be too bothered if his pint is brewed in Marlow or Luton? Neither are local to him, but at least the beer brewed in Marlow is of proven quality whereas nobody knows quite what Luton might produce. And what about us poor drinkers in Bucks who already have a good local brew, are we going to be satisfied with ersatz Luton Wethered's or whatever? I suspect not.

No, Luton is one brewery I do not want to see brewing cask beer.

Yours sincerely

Del Allen

In response to Peter Lerner's article on "Paying the Price" I feel he is not comparing like with like in the 30% difference in price between Holt's bitter in Manchester and Benskins bitter in South Hertfordshire. He leaves the reader to ponder the reasons for the difference as to whether it is the price ex-brewery, rent charged by the brewery, staff wages or that the recession has hit harder in the North. As regards the brewery I expect that Benskins (Allied Breweries) overheads are higher because of advertising and distribution costs.

For a more realistic price difference he should have stuck to my pre-Budget table of prices for South Hertfordshire. Therein will be found a 16% difference in McMullens Country Bitter (56p to 65p), 13% in Courage Bitter (60p to 68p), 24% in Greene King IPA (54p to 67p), 24% in Benskins Bitter (58p to 72p) and 31% in Wethereds Bitter (61p to 80p) [18% if the 80p charged by Thatchers Inn is discounted].

As the VAT man allows the publican approximately 40% gross profit for tax purposes, then the price differences on beers from the same brewery must be down to the running costs of the pubs or that the publican is making an excessive net profit.

Looking deeper into the 24% difference in the price of Benskins Bitter, we find that the Hertford/Ware District has a median price of 60.3p and a difference of 10%. The St Albans District has a median of 64.4p and a difference of 18%. Finally Watford District (the headquarters of Benskins) has a median of 65.1p and a difference of 20%. Therefore, Peter, let's leave Manchester to the Mancunians and ask Benskins to explain their difference in pricing across South Hertfordshire.

We cannot leave the tied houses without a peep into the pricing structure in the free houses of South Hertfordshire: yet again pre-Budget prices. Greene King Abbot varies 8.6% between 70p (Brocket Arms and Wicked Lady) and 76p (Crooked Billet and Barley Mow) Adnams Bitter varies 6.1% between 65p (Brocket Arms) and 69p (Barley Mow and Wicked Lady). Marstons Pedigree varies 7.7% between 65p (Wicked Lady) and 70p (Barley Mow). Wadworth 6X varies 19.7% between 66p (Wicked Lady) and 79p (Goat).

Eric Sim

ON BREWING

"Taste is no criterion of good beer. In many parts of the country the palates of the people have become so accustomed to foul, yeast-bitten beer, from having none else to drink, that were good, clean, wholesome beer substituted, it would be some time before they would relish it as much as the other; but once accustomed to the pure beverage, they would not readily relapse into their former taste. . . . As malt liquor may now be considered one of the necessities of life among the working classes, it is of greatest importance that they be supplied with such an article, as may not prove injurious to their health. An honest brewer, therefore, should not rest altogether satisfied with being able to please the palates of his customers, but should endeavour to produce what he knows to be a really wholesome and nourishing, as well as an agreeable drink."

from **A Practical Treatise on Brewing**
by William Black, published in 1835

WHAT'S ON AT YOUR PUB

- May 9th **St Albans**: White Lion, 8.30pm. Dancing by St Albans Morris Men
- May 13th **Woolmer Green**: Chequers, 8.00 pm. Stevenage Folk Club. Club Night.
- May 16th **Bulls Green**: Horns, 8.15 pm. Dancing by St Albans Morris Men
Burnham Green: White Horse, 9.15 pm. Dancing by St Albans Morris Men.
- May 18th **St Albans**: Farriers Arms. Dancing by Cottonmill Clog Morris.
- May 20th **Woolmer Green**: Chequers, 8.00pm. Stevenage Folk Club. Guest: Matt Amour.
- May 21st **Stevenage**: Bowes Lyon House, 7.30 pm. Folk Dance with Flowers and Frolics, Taffy Thomas and Rayment's BBA.
- May 23rd **Frogmore**: Red Lion, 8.15 pm. Dancing by St Albans Morris Men.
- May 27th **Woolmer Green**: Chequers, 8.00 pm. Stevenage Folk club, Guest: Martin Simpson.
- May 30th **Wheathampstead**: Cherry Trees, 8.15 pm. Dancing by St Albans Morris Men.
Hatching Green: White Horse, 9.15 pm. Dancing by St Albans Morris Men.
- May 31st **Hertford**: Dimsdale Arms, 7.30 pm. British Beer Mat Collectors Society Meeting.

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

So if you are planning an indoor or outdoor function, contest or entertainment, send details by the 12th of the previous month to Peter Lerner, 14 Hazeldell, Watton-on-Stone, giving (in not more than 15 words) details of the pub, type of event, date and time, and we will do our best to include it. If you feel that your event deserves more than 15 words, remember that our advertisement deal is cheap and effective; see back page for details.

JOIN CAMRA NOW

Full Membership £7 (£10 overseas)
 Joint husband/wife membership £7

Standing Order Form

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

To _____
 (Insert name of your bank here)

Please forward to Barclays Bank Limited, 3 High Street, St Albans (20-74-09) for the credit of CAMRA Ltd.
 (Subscription Account) No. 50187887, now the sum of £7/10* and annually on this date until further notice.

Name _____ Bank A/c Number _____

Address _____ Bank Address _____

Signature _____ Date _____

*delete as appropriate

Send to Membership, CAMRA, 34 Alma Road, St Albans, Herts AL1 3BW

BRANCH DIARY

HERTFORDSHIRE NORTH BRANCH

Monday 2nd May

Pirton pub crawl. Meet Fox 12.30 pm.

Friday 6th May

Baldock Beer Festival, 7.00 pm. Ticket only — contact Mark Barker, Baldock 892052.

Wednesday 11th May

Branch meeting, Two Diamonds, Stevenage Old Town, 8.00 pm.

Wednesday 18th May

Enfield pub crawl — contact John Law for details.

Wednesday 25th May

Social, Rose & Crown, Baldock, 8.00 pm.

Contact John Law Stevenage 721015

HERTFORDSHIRE SOUTH BRANCH

Wednesday 4th May

Presentation for 10 years in GBG, Farriers Arms, St Albans, 8.30 pm.

Monday 9th May

Committee Meeting, Barley Mow, Tyttenhanger, 8.00 pm.

Tuesday 10th May

Darts match, John Bunyan, Coleman Green, 8.00 pm.

Tuesday 17th May

Branch Meeting, Barley Mow, Tyttenhanger, 8.00 pm.

Thursday 26th—Saturday 28th May

CAMRA Stand and bar at Chiltern Beer Festival, Hemel Hempstead. Helpers required.

Contact Dave Andrews St Albans 66344

WATFORD AND DISTRICT BRANCH

Saturday 7th May

Day trip to Brighton by coach — spaces available.

Wednesday 11th May

Social and darts match (not bar billiards), Villiers Arms, Villiers Road, Oxhey, 8.00 pm.

Tuesday 24th May

Branch Meeting, West Herts Sports Club, Park Avenue, Watford, also beer-tasting competition, 8.00 pm.

Contact Tony King Garston 72587

MID-CHILTERN BRANCH

Tuesday 10th May

Branch Meeting, Queens Head, Long Marston, 8.30 pm.

Tuesday 17th May

Anti-social. Meet at the Goat, Berkhamsted, 8.30 pm.

Tuesday 31st May

Pub crawl around Great Missenden. Meet at Nags Head, 8.30 pm.

Contact Barry Bonnick Rickmansworth 775799

Graffiti Corner

Seen at the Goat Inn, St Albans:

"I thought Barsac was a white wine, until I saw the publican's suit!"

COMPETITION From page 2

The winner of the March competition is Ian Morley of Welwyn Garden City. The solution was:

Across: The Ides of March, Noodles, Imitate, Pared, Precipice, Internationally, Toadstool, Fight, Currant, Prevail, Topic, Onsetting.
 Down: Standpoint, Democrat, Addled, Asks, Officegirl, Ambition, Argali, Shoe, Piano Stool, Egyptology, Research, Log cabin, Abrupt, Fiesta, Cute, Post.

The Hertfordshire Newsletter is produced by the Hertfordshire South, Hertfordshire North, Watford and District and Mid-Chilterns branches of the Campaign for Real Ale Limited. The views expressed 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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