

FREE



THE CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE

THE HERTFORDSHIRE NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 1984

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NUMBER 69

WATNEY'S NEW REVOLUTION

Remember the Watney Red Revolution? For those who are too young to remember the early 1970s, this was when a major brewery saturated the media with exhortations to the public to drink insipid, fizzy beer. The public ignored the exhortations. Watneys Red disappeared, many top executives had to look for new jobs and we all thought a lesson had been learned.

But we had not bargained for the Host Group. This is the new name for the 1500 managed pubs owned by the Watney group. According to their press publicity, the Group's pubs — sorry, "leisure outlets" are soon to be "brimming with fitness fanatics", "packed with kids entranced by computerised puppets" or "full of young people enjoying the exuberance of Manhattan life style (does this mean mugging one another?).

Pubs — sorry, "leisure outlets" — will be categorised into different themes. The Red Lion might turn into an "American style bar lounge"; the Dog and Duck a "fast food restaurant for the motorist". The Plough could well become "the ultimate family leisure experience", rivalling even Terry Wogan on the telly.

The landlord won't be "mine host" or even "mate", but part of an "elite corps" — presumably you'll have to

phone for an appointment if you want to bother him to serve you a pint.

Laughable all this may be, but Watney's announce that they want to spend £100million wrecking this havoc in our traditional British pubs. Spread over 1500 pubs, this means that over £65,000 will be spent on each pub, in the relentless pursuit of the gimmick fantasies of some half-crazed marketing executive. Fun is fun, and some pubs undoubtedly need a boost of new life. However, I would suggest to Watney's that if they were to spend a mere £6,500 on necessary redecorations to their pubs, and the same amount on ensuring that all staff behind their bars can look after their drink and their customers, then we the customers would be better pleased.

When will the executives of the larger breweries learn that a good pub is a good pub because it has grown and matured into what its customers want, by a process of slow change? The brewer's role in this process is to look after the maintenance of the pub, to select a competent landlord or landlady, and to provide regular supplies of decent drink.

Peter Lerner

Pints 'n' Litres

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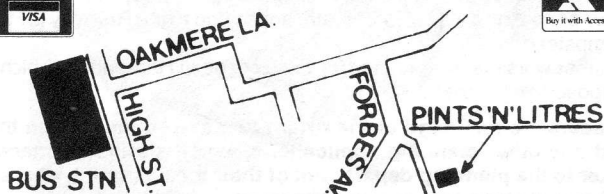
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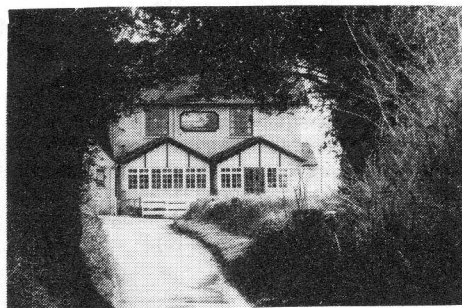
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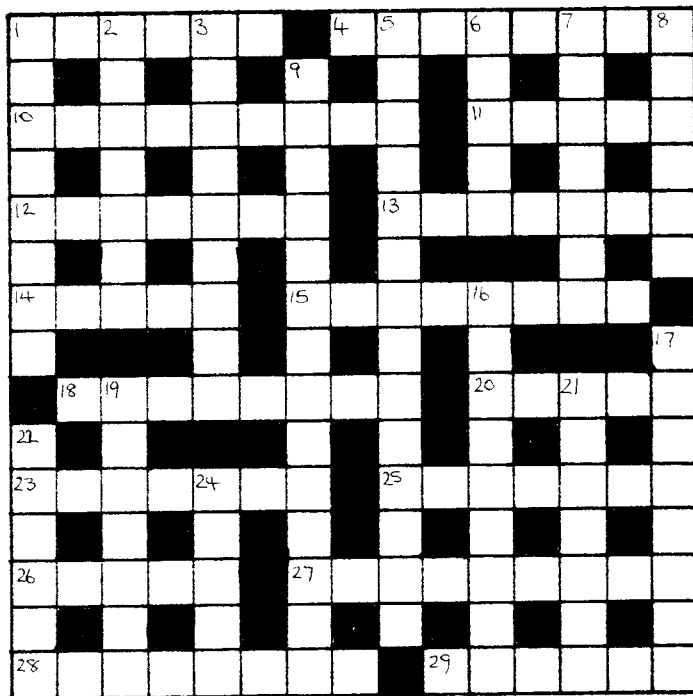
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COMPETITION

The sender of the first correct entry opened on March 9th will receive a book of crossword puzzles. Please mark entries February Competition.



Across

- 1 Cavalryman in a rush madly going round the bend (6)
- 4 In fact, we do wrong when double-dealing (3-5)
- 10 Nation's head has view of his country(9)
- 11 In explosion it reacts (5)
- 12 Fretful, Eve is queasy in swaying ship (7)
- 13 Earlier form of jumper (7)
- 14 Relative discord in EEC (5)
- 15 Barrel with two-fifths extra could produce our favourite drink (4,4)
- 18 How to keep warm in clinch (6,2)
- 20 Walker has lost rights to leisurely stroll (5)
- 23 Colourful scene painted by artist in E London? (7)
- 25 Check for comfort where new ideas are tried (4-3)
- 26 Original inhabitant of Burma or Indonesia? Yes and no (5)
- 27 He puts on a coat — all men here are shivering (9)
- 28 Several times has sip of noggin, fine old brew (8)
- 29 Frightful, as we hear some bears are (6)

Down

- 1 Measure of beer provides clue to Greek letter or New Testament (4-4)
- 2 Genuine increase without a struggle (7)
- 3 At best inn, drunk? Not one like this (9)
- 5 Herts village had a map with the west misplaced (14)
- 6 Real beer is penalised (5)
- 7 This helps discharge each dot on TV screen (7)
- 8 Fuel from coalfield, i.e. Selby (6)
- 9 This looks ace, when lit here spinning (9, 5)
- 16 In the bar, speak right about this beer (9)
- 17 Affectionately care for senile mother, until infirmity ends (8)
- 19 Mac's brewery tap is fabulous (7)
- 21 Unsound schemes a result of CO₂ infusion? (7)
- 22 Brown spirit included by brewer (6)
- 24 Put in the picture, in case (5)

The winner of the Christmas competition was Richard Lee of Hitchin. The correct solution was: **Across** — Real Ale Pubs, Realise, Red Deer, Fidgeting, Expel, Elan, Ready Money, Regalement, Edge, Petit, Stalemate, Alepole, Engages, Reallotment. **Down** — Real Draught Beer, Alive, Alewife, Enraged, Undreamt, Sleeping-partner, Trifle, Orally, Plethora, Repeal, Misdeal, Nearest, Ever So, Eagle.

The winner of the November Greene King competition was Richard Graham of Wembley, Middlesex. The correct answers were:

1. At Baldock, the former Simpson's brewery.
2. Martin Corke is descended from the Lake family, related by marriage to the Greens.
3. Greene King acquired Christmas's Brewery in Haverhill, Suffolk, in 1918.

NEWS

LOCALS FIGHT TO SAVE PUB

Regulars at the Haydon Arms in Oxhey, near Watford, are fighting a last ditch battle to save their local from demolition.

Benskins have seen fit to make a planning application to demolish the pub, and want to build four small houses on the site instead. The regulars have amassed a petition with over 400 signatures of people who want to save the pub, which they will present to Watford Council before the application is considered.

The **Haydon Arms** is a typical local community pub. It is architecturally undistinguished, but has two bars and a pleasant and welcoming atmosphere. It is described in the latest CAMRA Hertfordshire Real Ale Guide as a 'lovely little boozier', and that description would be hard to better. So why on earth do Benskins want to tarnish their reputation as a caring local brewery, by sending their customers elsewhere?

The **Haydon Arms** is not the only pub in Oxhey, nor is it the only Benskins pub. It may well be the pub with the smallest trade, but the present very energetic landlady does not appear to be complaining about that. Oxhey villagers argue that the community needs a choice of pubs of various types, and that the **Haydon Arms** serves the needs of many villagers extremely well.

If Benskins have decided, as it appears, that it is no longer economic for them to run this pub, then fine, they should sell it, as they are ultimately answerable to their shareholders who wish to see profits recorded. But that is no reason to demolish the pub, and so lose the goodwill of many people. There are a good number of breweries who would willingly pay to obtain a good pub in this part of Hertfordshire: Greene King, Charles Wells, Fuller's and Marston's — not forgetting our county brewers McMullens, who do not have one single tied pub in the Watford area, although they advertise their beers heavily on local poster hoardings. Benskins would do well to sell this grand little pub to another company who could run it properly and profitably.

The question has to be asked. Which does Oxhey need the most: one good pub, or four more houses? The vote of the people of Oxhey is for the Haydon Arms.

CAMRA's local branch and national Pub Preservation Group have offered advice to the local campaign to save the Haydon Arms. If you feel that your local is under threat of closure or something nasty, please contact your nearest CAMRA Branch, as we can probably help you.

Swannell's cease trading

The end of 1983 brought the sad news that Swannell's, one of the gallant few new small breweries to challenge the might of the established concerns in this county, has ceased trading.

Swannell's were set up in Kings Langley in 1982 by Alan Swannell, previously with Victoria Brewery, and tried to secure a foothold in the local free trade with a wide range of brews, whose gravities ranged from 1034 to 1070 (Old Licky, a barley wine).

Anyone seriously interested in purchasing the brewery should contact Alan Swannell by telephone on Kings Langley 65076 or Watford 772282.

Let us hope that 1984 brings better trading conditions to Hertfordshire's other real ale breweries, whose efforts to provide choice in our county's pubs, clubs and off-licences should be continually supported.

Peter Lerner

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PLANNING NEWS

Stevenage Council have received applications to re-model the interior of the **Yorkshire Grey**, in the Old Town High Street. The applicants are Clifton Inns, part of the Grand Metropolitan (Watney) group, and they intend to convert the present two bars into one.

Elsewhere, proposals are afoot to alter the **Artichoke** at Croxley Green (a Truman's pub in the 1984 Good Beer Guide), to extend the **Townsend Arms** at Hertford Heath, and to add to the **Railway** in Hemel Hempstead.

A rather worse fate is planned for the **George** in Harpenden, which it is proposed to demolish.

Readers are reminded of their right to make comments on these and any other planning applications, which should be made by letter to the planning department of their local council, where the submitted plans may also be inspected.

QUICK ONES

Cocktails at P.J.'s

Remember the old **Coachmakers Arms** at the Parade, Watford? (The young and the deaf do!) Well, it has now been refurbished into what I can only describe as a mix of late 30s/art deco/Casablanca-style cocktails and bistro bar. It is bright, colourful, clean and different.

For a start, the bar opens at 9.30 am for coffee and snacks only. Alcohol sales follow the normal opening hours, and food is served at most times. Entertainment (apart from the customers) is either taped music or a real live pianist in the evening. (Play it again, Sam . . .) Admittance is strictly controlled on the door, and jeans and scruffy dress are **not** allowed!

Now for the essentials — the booze. There are price lists on the bar and tables giving details of various cocktails and soft drinks, which seem par for the course. There is also an interesting selection of canned American beers for those who were wondering what drove Americans to choose Coke as the national drink. The draught beer dispensers are tall font-type units from which flow Orangeboom lager or John Bull Bitter. Löwenbrau comes from a china flower vase-style dispenser which defies description. Needless to say it is firmly nailed to the counter to deter souvenir hunters.

What, no real ale? Correct. Not a drop in the house (apart from the odd bottle of Guinness). Shame on you, Benskins, forcing your up-market clientele to drink John Bull substitute bitter. What happened to the Burton Ale promotion and even your own bitter?

For all that, **P.J.'s** is still a great improvement and has much to recommend it. 'Miss, a pint of creme de menthe in a straight glass, please!'

JA

Battleaxes

Possibly the worst news in November was that this onebar free house in Butterfly Lane, Elstree, overlooking the aerodrome, had discontinued its three real ales. When there were only two real ale outlets in St Albans this was one of the few outlying oases. Owned by Trusthouse Forte, it was part of their original real ale drive, serving Draught Bass, and was in the Good Beer Guide until 1977. In the latest edition of Real Draught Beer in Hertfordshire the beers listed are Fullers ESB, Greene King IPA and Abbot — alas all gone. On my visit I was informed that all draught beer, including keg, had been discontinued for good. You can have lager, but only half pints; needless to say I was the only person in the once-busy bar, and didn't stay.

Has this move been made from the top at THF Head Office? If so it was definitely a bad one for trade. When the Red Lion, Radlett, its sister hotel, is adding to its range of beers in an attempt to increase custom in the downstairs "Lion" bar, the changes at Battleaxes are highlighted as a retrograde step, which I hope will not be as permanent as I have been led to believe.

Steve Bury

Guardian Anglers

Congratulations to Hertfordshire CAMRA celebrities, Dave Burns and Roger Protz, also to regular "What's On" contributor Alison MacFarlane, for all getting letters published in the same national newspaper in the last few weeks. Topics ranged from food to medical statistics. How about a letter about real ale next time, folks?

BREWERY VISIT

Windmill goes to Wells

On Thursday 20 October, a party of regulars and CAMRA members from the **Windmill**, Charlton visited the Charles Wells brewery in Bedford. The event was arranged by The Windmill On Thursday club (abbreviated TWOT, would you believe), and landlord Tim Hunter.

After one false start, the trip set off for Bedford in the evening of Thursday 20 October. We were welcomed by Tony Thornton and his two brewery guides, and were treated to a film starring — yes, you have guessed it, Bernard Cribbins, during which yours truly correctly recognised some scenes taken in Wadworths.

We split into two parties to tour the modern towerless brewery, starting at the control room, which has been craftily perched over the mashing area. Apart from the central control panel, there are three alcoves around the walls, each of which contained an inspection port to the mash tun, copper, and lauter tun respectively. Upon peering in, one could be blinded by steam and drop one's false teeth into the next batch of Kellerbrau.

Wells still use their own supply of well water pumped from three miles away, and the all-stainless plant is capable of producing both real ale and keg. The bottling and canning plants are vast for the size of the brewery, and a great deal of contract filling is done for other breweries, plus the supermarket trade.

Back at the sample room, food was laid on, and a very pleasant evening was spent talking to the brewery staff who were joined by one of the brewers. They had suspected early on that there were a few CAMRA members present although it was a pub trip (we get everywhere), so they were able to handle the inevitable questions about the mild and top-pressure with non-committal ease. Since my previous visit to Charles Wells in 1977, I was pleased to see handpumps on the bar (last time it was all fizz), and I duly made sure that they worked.

Half-past ten came round quickly, and we were all despatched with a pack of bottled Fargo, which we duly drank in stages.

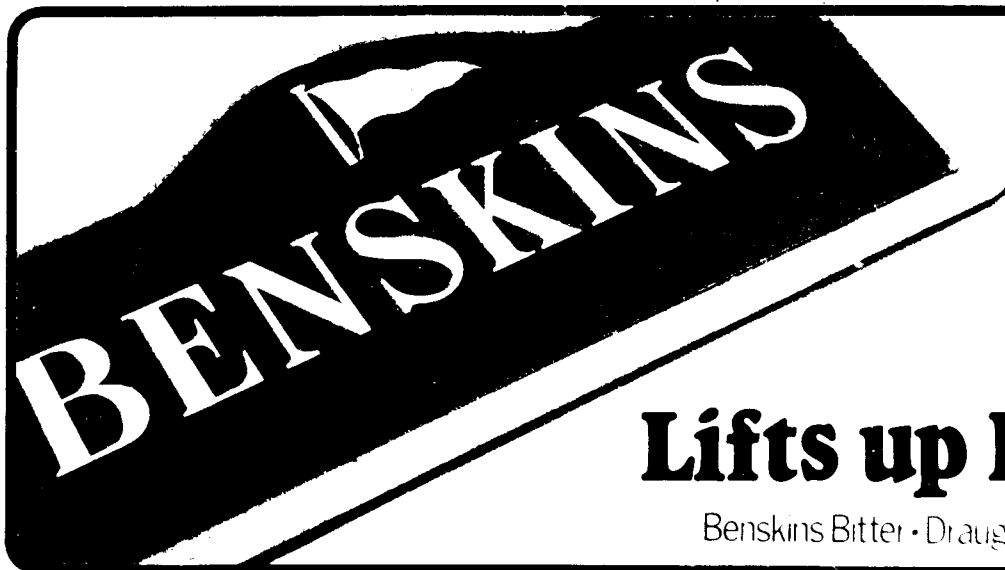
Cheers Charles, — and Tim!

Steve Barber

WHAT'S ON AT YOUR PUB

- 9 February **St Albans**: Rose & Crown. 8.30 pm. Traditional music session.
10 February **Stanstead Abbots**: Crown. 8 pm. Hoddesdon Folk Club. Guests Portway Pedlars.
Woolmer Green: Chequers. 8 pm. Stevenage Folk Club. Club Night (Love Songs)
12 February **St Albans**: Garibaldi. Lunchtime traditional music session.
14 February **Great Munden**: Plough. St Valentine's Night fancy dress party.
15 February **Ware**: Old Bulls Head. 8 pm. Second Hand Folk Club. Singers' Night.
16 February **St Albans**: Rose & Crown. 8.30 pm. Traditional music session.
17 February **Woolmer Green**: Chequers. 8 pm. Stevenage Folk Club. Guests: Dab Hand.
22 February **Ware**: Old Bulls Head. 8 pm. Second Hand Folk Club. Guests: Strawplait and Bonelace.
23 February **St Albans**: Rose & Crown. 8.30 pm. Traditional music session.
24 February **Stanstead Abbots**: Crown. 8 pm. Hoddesdon Folk Club. Guests: Tony Rose.
Woolmer Green: Chequers. 8 pm. Stevenage Folk Club. Guest: Andy Caven.
26 February **St Albans**: Garibaldi. Lunchtime traditional music session.
29 February **Ware**: Old Bulls Head. 8 pm. Second Hand Folk Club. Guest: Eddie Walker.

Please send details of events (in no more than 15 words) by the 10th of the previous month to Peter Lerner, 14 Hazeldell, Watton-at-Stone, Herts.



PUB NEWS

The **Robin Hood** in Walkern, possibly the friendliest pub in the village, now sells handpumped Wethered's Bitter.

The **White Lion** in Sawbridgeworth has now been re-opened after a thoroughly excellent transformation by Rayments, and now happily dispenses BBA, Abbot Ale and KK Mild by handpump.

Massey's free house in Broxbourne is now selling Young's Bitter and Flower's Original, alongside Rayment's BBA and Greene King Abbot. More pub news from Hertfordshire's Lea Valley towns would be welcome, if there is anyone out there.

The **Bay Horse** at Old Hall Green, near Puckeridge, after previously flirting with Bass, Courage, Gibbs Mew and Ruddles real ales, is now under different management and is selling handpumped beers from the Whitbread group.

The **Golden Fleece** in Braughing has recently re-opened as a free house under new ownership. The range of beers is not yet known, but is rumoured to include Benskins Bitter and McMullen AK.

News from Stevenage: The **Man in the Moon** in Broadwater Crescent has Truman's Bitter and Sampson on handpump. The Best Bitter has been discontinued, however. At the **Pyramid** Truman's Best Bitter has also gone, along with the mild - the net result is that neither Truman's mild nor Best Bitter are now available in Stevenage. The customer at the **Pyramid** is faced with the sorry sight of five discontinued handpumps in the lounge alone! Still in Stevenage, the **Discovery** in Chells Way is now advertising 'Truman Real Ales', but this hasn't been confirmed yet. Our Stevenage pub newshound, Steve Webster, also claims that the **White Lion** in Stevenage High Street sells Green King KK, IPA and Abbot on electric pump - can anyone else confirm this?

The **Shooting Star** in Rossington Avenue, Borehamwood is a new real ale outlet, with Wethered Bitter and Flowers Original now available as part of the recent refurbishment. The **Red Lion Hotel** in Watling Street, Radlett is now serving Draught Bass in the downstairs bar, as well as Greene King IPA and Abbot in the lounge bar (see Quick Ones). Despite its new Benskins livery and 'barrel-end' plaque, the **White Horse** in Shenley has no real Benskins - one handpump dispenses Burton Ale and the other... John Bull keg bitter!

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BRANCH DIARY

HERTFORDSHIRE NORTH BRANCH
Contact John Law ☎ Stevenage 721015

HERTFORDSHIRE SOUTH BRANCH
Tuesday 21st February
Branch Meeting, Barley Mow, Tyttenhanger, 8 pm.
Contact Eric Sim ☎ Hatfield 60647

WATFORD & DISTRICT BRANCH
Monda / 13th February
Minibus trip to Victoria Brewery. Contact Tony King for details.
Wednesday 22nd February
Branch Meeting, Horseshoe, Garston, 8 pm.
Wednesday 29th February
Minibus trip to McMullens Brewery. Contact Tony King for details.
Wednesday 21st March
Branch AGM at the Wheatsheaf, Watford High Street, 8 pm.
Friday 16th-Sunday 18th March
Herts branches weekend trip to Stockport, visiting Robinson's Brewery.
Contact Tony King ☎ Garston 72587

MID-CHILTERNERS BRANCH
Contact Del Allen ☎ Chesham 76141

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FIVE YEARS AGO

February 1979's Newsletter carried a long article by Martyn Cornell tracing the history of the former Wright's Brwery at Walkern, near Stevenage, regretting that it seemed unlikely that beer would ever be brewed there again. Five years on, Mickles are brewing their Oak and Birch Bitters at these very premises. Did the Newsletter article start an idea germinating?

The same issue also recorded the closure by Greene King of the Old Punch House in Ware. The pub was shortly to re-open, several times larger in size and thoroughly altered in character, many would say for the worse.



The Wicked Lady

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