

FREE



The Campaign For Real Ale HERTFORDSHIRE NEWSLETTER

August 1978 • Number 7

1978 National Beer Festival

From Tuesday to Sunday, September 5 - 10, CAMRA will once again be staging the Great British Beer Festival - for the second year running at Alexandra Palace in North London. There will be over 145 different beers from over seventy different breweries and the range is expanding almost daily. First timers at CAMRA's National Beer Festival so far include Hydes of Manchester, Hall & Woodhouse from Dorset, St. Austell's and Hick's from distant Cornwall, Ringwood's from Hampshire and Shipstone's from Nottingham. Real cider, from Bulmers and Countryman Cider will also be on sale. The festival should go a long way towards demonstrating to drinkers the vast variety of different traditional beers still available in this country. The 1978 Festival will be bigger and better than last year's event, so make sure you come along to sample some of Britain's finest ales! Exact opening times are:

Tuesday 5 Sept: 5.30pm to 10.30pm.
Wednesday 6 Sept: 5.30pm to 10.30pm.
Thursday 7 Sept: 5.30pm to 10.30pm.
Friday 8 Sept: 11am to 11pm (there is no break)
Saturday 9 Sept: 11am to 11pm (" " " ")
Sunday 10 Sept: 12 noon to 3pm.

HOW TO GET THERE

British Rail (Eastern Region) or Underground (Piccadilly Line) to Wood Green then W3 bus outside either station direct to Alexandra Palace.

Every effort will be made to keep prices as low as possible but they have to reflect the cost of staging the festival and - most important - the price that is charged by breweries for their beer. Some bitters will cost 6p a pint more than other bitters even though they have exactly the same strength. This will be purely because the brewers concerned charge 6p a pint more to the free trade. However most beers will be sold at local pub prices. See you there!

Dark Mild

With Greene King Dark Mild outlets in Hertfordshire so few and Courage's apparent refusal to supply dark mild to their newly acquired pubs, what is the future for cask conditioned dark mild in the county? Greene King have already intimated that the future of their dark mild is in the balance and deliveries of dark mild to Courage pubs in London have been spasmodic in recent weeks. Courage, it seems, want to push their keg mild - which leads us to conclude that they may want to phase out their real dark mild altogether. The 'strange' thing is, where dark mild is available it sells well. Perhaps if the brewers put aside a small amount of their huge advertising expenditure (mostly promoting fizz and lager) for dark mild they would see that this beer does have a future in the county. Or do they already know this, but are just not interested in continuing to supply a so-called minority demand beer. It's easy to be cynical about many of our brewers' motives.

TAKING PAINES

One of the most recent additions to the range of real ales to be sampled in Hertfordshire is also one of the most welcome. In fact, the success story of the small Cambridgeshire brewery Paine and Co. Ltd., of St. Neots, over the past few years is one which shows how effectively CAMRA and the real ale movement have shaken the brewing world and revived those parts that no other consumer body could reach.

Real Ale Revival

In 1974, Paines were described in CAMRA's first 'Good Beer Guide' as "a complete waste of time". All of their 24 pubs sold top pressure beer and, needless to say, the name of Paines was not on the tip of every beer connoisseur's tongue. However later that year, Miss Fiona McNish joined her family's firm (Robert McNish, the present chairman, is a descendent of Paines founder) and within 12 months several Paines landlords had been persuaded to serve their beer by traditional methods. Under Fiona McNish's guidance, Paines issued their first ever beermat and introduced a new, strong, malty bitter, known as EG. Since then, a light mild has been added to the range of Paines regular brews (a bitter and a fine dark mild completing the list), and the brewery has produced various "one-offs" for special occasions - Campaigne for last year's Great British Beer Festival and Festivale for the Cambridge Beer Exhibition, and a special bitter brewed exclusively for a free house in Bedfordshire.

Satisfying the Customers

When Fiona McNish was guest speaker recently at a CAMRA Herts North branch meeting, she stressed that because Paines had remained small, they could easily get to know what their customers wanted and brew accordingly - unlike the big brewers, who have been known to spend thousands

(continued page 3).

Pubs & Food

The sad thing about most pubs these days is that, although there is a resurgence of interest in traditional ales and the pride taken by landlords in keeping a good pint, the same cannot be said about pub food. In fact, the opposite seems to be the case. With a few notable exceptions pub catering, on the whole, is pretty awful - and it's getting worse.

Convenience Food

The main reason for the decline of pub grub (and that served everywhere else for that matter) is the increased use of 'convenience' foods. Everyone complains about them - but they still get eaten. Instant mashed potato which tastes more like badly mixed plaster-of-Paris; plastic 'bread' - here words fail me; frozen chips, these are barely edible at best; bread-paste sausages; greying tinned peas...the list goes on. With the closer links being forged with Europe pubs are now 'importing' Continental cuisine. I merely hope, though, that the bland, rubbery concoctions passed off as pizze don't put people off Italian food for good!

Disasters

The other villains of the piece are freezers and micro-wave ovens. These, coupled with junk foods, make a formidable combination. These are the weapons that have made such places as Wimpy bars into the great gastronomic disasters they are. Hence we get oblong fish 'steaks', frozen for so long they taste only of water; microwaved chips - those are particularly nasty; and pies made of soggy cardboard-like substance wrapped around a filling which beggars description.

Crusty Bread

Fortunately, all is not lost. Some pubs still serve crusty, fresh bread, cheese that doesn't taste of soap, beefburgers with meat in them, chips made from potatoes and chicken without a basket. They take as much pride in their food as they do in their beer - and that's how it should be. It's about time that standards improved and customers should be able to expect real food as well as real ale. As CAMRA has already shown - it's up to the customer to show what he wants and given time, landlords will follow. BY DAVE BURNS.

Ruddles to Expand

Recent fears over the future of Ruddles prompted by the company selling all their tied houses bar one, can be quashed. Chairman, Tony Ruddle, has explained to CAMRA that this was to raise capital for a new brewery expansion programme. Far from being in financial trouble, the company are forging ahead, and see their future in the Free Trade and in brewing for big concerns, such as Sainsbury's. The rather drastic action of selling most of their pubs shows Ruddle's confidence in the road they are taking. Ambitious Everards from Leicester have purchased many of the tied houses which are mainly situated in Rutland, East Leicestershire and the surrounding area. Everards have undertaken to supply real ale to all these pubs. In Hertfordshire, Everards are now well established in many Free Houses. Tiger and Old Original are proving to be popular drinks and they may soon be joined by the company's third bitter - Beacon.

The Lager Days

For many, the long hot summers of 1975 and 1976 bring back pleasant memories. The poor crop of runner beans and the fear of water rationing were about the only cause for concern. Expert meteorologists including Bill Giles of the BBC and Walter Gabriel of the Archers were quite sure that this was something quite out of the ordinary and would not happen again for at least 50 years.

Hot Summers

During those two summers more people visited pubs than ever before, not people who usually frequented pubs, but those who had a raging thirst and anything cold would do. Not quite sure of what to order, they asked for products which had been advertised on TV, in the main, lager.

More Lager

The big combines watched the rise in lager sales during those two summers, it was the moment they had been waiting for. With sales of their own keg products slumping and being unable to keep pace with the soaring demand for real ale which had most of the smaller independent breweries working round the clock, they decided to make lager the national drink. Millions of pounds have since been spent by them, increasing capacity to brew the stuff and filling the North Sea with pseudo Vikings pretending to row the stuff over.

Staying Away

Last summer was our average British-type summer - no heat wave, no water shortage and some very nice runner beans. The lager drinking public of 1975 and 1976 did not return and if this summer so far is anything to go by then they won't come back this year either. The expected results have not been forthcoming, although sales of lager continue to rise it is mainly at the expense of keg and bottled beers, profits are not rising fast enough to justify the investment made. Most customers are now aware that lager is poor value and is not brewed on the continent as those commercials make out.

S & N

Scottish and Newcastle Breweries Limited recently reported only a marginal rise in profits last year, which was £3million less than expected. Hamish McRae, editor of the Guardian Newspaper's Financial Notebook writes "Unless S and N recognise the long term trend towards real ale by producing capacity for cask conditioned beers, they will find the growth seen in the sixties and early seventies hard to emulate in the next few years."

Burton Ale

My own favourite memory of 1976 incidentally, was the introduction of Burton Ale by Allied Breweries (Ind Coope) which has since gone from strength to strength, it made up for the poor crop of runner beans that year.

BY DENNIS ROBERTSON.

ANYONE FOR CRICKET?

If you are free on the afternoon of Sunday 13th August why not come along to Rethampsted Park in Harpenden where Herts North are taking on Herts South at cricket. We will be meeting in The Queen's Head in Harpenden during lunchtime.

Honest Hatfield Ales by Martyn Cornell

Only a few old-fashioned beer bottles remain now as a reminder of the days when Hatfield town was a major centre of the local brewing industry. But less than 60 years ago you could drink a pint of Hatfield mild or bitter in 98 different pubs in Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Essex and Middlesex. And 40 years earlier, local drinkers had the choice of no less than three different Hatfield brewers.

From 1607

Brewing in Hatfield began seriously with the Seranke family who were established in the town by 1607 when they ran a brewhouse at the back of a pub called the Chequers in Fore Street. In 1805 the family owned 12 pubs in the Hatfield parish, as well as others outside, and they also controlled the Kingsbury brewery in St. Albans. The same year they suffered a drinkers nightmare, when one of the giant casks at the brewery burst and 535 barrels of best beers ran down Duck Lane, as Park Street was then known, and into the River Lea.

Bankrupt

Ten years later, in the year of Waterloo, Francis Seranke sold his share in the Hatfield brewery to his partner Joseph Bigg of Stanstead Abbots, leaving to concentrate on the St. Albans business. Bigg, somehow, managed to go bankrupt in four years, which must have been almost an impossible feat for a brewer, and the brewery was bought by his kinsman Joseph Field, who ran it until his death in 1836.

Auction

By this time, the brewery had 40 tied houses and sold 7,600 barrels of beer a year and at an auction in the Red Lion, Hatfield it was bought by James Spurrell of Southwark, a relative of the Watneys, for £24,350. Less than a year later, however, Spurrell sold the business to John, Morris and Alfred Pryor, members of the famous quaker brewing family, for £34,000 - despite the fact that sales had dropped to just 6,000 barrels a year.

Pryor Reid

Eventually Alfred Pryor became sole owner of the Hatfield business and upon his death in 1876 the brewery was bought from the trustees by his son, Edward, for £29,442. Shortly afterwards Edward's brother-in-law Percy Charles Reid became a partner and the company took the name it kept until its demise - Pryor Reid and Co. In 1878 Pryor Reid bought the neighbouring Park Street brewery, built in about 1700 as a maltings, from the leasee, local businessman, Arthur Sherriff. Towards the end of the century they bought Hatfield's third brewery, the Newtown brewery, established in the 1850s by the brothers Bradshaw, at the back of their pub the White Lion, and around the same time they also acquired Benjamin Youngs of Hertford.

Death Knell

An amalgamation with Glover and Co. of Harpenden established the company as one of the most important breweries in the county, bringing the number of their pubs to almost 100. A big fire at the brewery in 1908 needed the Hatfield Fire Brigade, the St. Albans brigade and Lord Salisbury's own brigade to put out, and destroyed the mineral water works. But it was the First World War and the death in action of Lieutenant Geoffrey Reid,

Percy Charles' only son, that was the death knell of the Hatfield brewery. With no heir to succeed him, company Chairman Percy could see no reason to carry on the business and in March 1920 the brewery closed, with a farewell dinner at the One Bell in Fore Street. The 98 pubs were sold to Benskins of Watford, to eventually end up with Ind Coope, and the brewery site was sold to garage owners Waters. Nothing marks the spot now - the site has been turned into, of all things, a car park.

Morris Men

If you like Morris Dancing, the St. Albans Morris Men will be dancing at the following real ale pubs in the coming weeks:

Mon. 14 Aug: The Boot, Chipperfield at 9.15pm

Mon. 21 Aug: The White Hart, St. Albans at 9.15pm

Mon. 4 Sep: The Crooked Billet - Colney Heath at 9.15pm.

Mon 11 Sep: The New Fiddle, Hatfield at 8.15pm.

Sat 30 Sep: The King William IV, St. Albans, at 10.30am.

Paines (contd)

launching highly advertised beers which nobody wanted - remember Watney's Red Barrel and Ind Coope's Superdraught?

Paines, who operate from attractive buildings in the Market Square at St. Neots (the second largest market square in the country, reputedly), have other interests besides real ale. They supply ingredients for home brew kits (Tom Caxton, John Bull), and malting is a major part of their business. Nevertheless, it is by their real beers that we know them, and Paines beers are beginning to establish a well deserved reputation in Hertfordshire. Try them at the Cricketers, Ickleford (near Hitchin), the White Horse, Hertford and one or two other enterprising free houses. You won't be wasting your time.

BY PETER LERNER.

Pub News

Berkhamsted The Crooked Billet, an Ind Coope to Courage swap now has handpumped Courage Best Bitter and Director's Bitter.

Bishop's Stortford The Old Maltings (Triad Leisure Centre) has closed down.

Boxmoor The Swan has changed from Ind Coope to Courage.

Cheshunt The Rose and Crown in Turners Hill now has Ind Coope Bitter and Burton Ale on handpump.

Hemel Hempstead The Bell at Two Waters (on A41) now sells handpumped Ind Coope Bitter & Burton.

Hitchin The Talisman is now serving Wethered's Bitter on handpump - pub is near railway station

Hoddesdon The Boar's Head in Stansted Road is now selling Ind Coope Bitter by handpump.

Ickleford The Cricketers: + Everard's Beacon Bitter.

Rickmansworth The Fox and Hounds now has Director's Bitter - at 36p in the public bar!

St. Albans The Duke of Marlborough is now serving Ind Coope Burton Ale. The Lower Red Lion is now selling Young's Bitter next to the Special

St. Margaret's The Crown now has I.C. Burton Ale in what up to now has been a 'dry' village.

Membership

CAMRA is an independent organisation fighting to improve the quality of beer and pubs throughout the country. Why not join and help us improve the lot of Britain's drinkers. For your £4 subscription you will receive a copy of the monthly 'What's Brewing', CAMRA's newspaper on what is going on in the world of beer.

HERTFORDSHIRE NEWSLETTER

I wish to become a member of CAMRA Ltd. I agree to abide by the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Campaign. I enclose £4.00 as my annual subscription.

Name
Address

Signature Date

Please send to: The Membership Secretary, The Campaign for Real Ale, 34 Alma Road, St. Albans, Herts, AL1 3BW.

Branch Contacts:

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

Newsletter

The Hertfordshire Newsletter is produced by the Herts South, Herts North and Herts/Essex Borders branches of the Campaign for Real Ale. The west of Hertfordshire (including Hemel Hempstead and Berkhamsted) is covered by Mid-Chilterns Branch who produce their own Newsletter. Any up to date information for the Hertfordshire Newsletter

What's On

HERTFORDSHIRE SOUTH BRANCH

- 10 Aug Darts Match v Pub Team at The Hope and Anchor, Welham Green, Near Hatfield (Courage) 8pm.
- 17 Aug August Branch Meeting
The Three Horseshoes, Garston (Ind Coope) 8pm
- 19 Sept September Branch Meeting
The Dimsdale Arms, Fore Street, Hertford (McMullen) 8pm.

HERTFORDSHIRE NORTH BRANCH

- 9 Aug August Branch Meeting
The Roebuck, Stevenage (Rayment's) 8pm.
- 16 Aug Social at The Cat and Fiddle, Pirton (Charles Wells) 8pm
- 23 Aug Social at The Fox, Aspenden (Greene King) 8pm.

HERTS/ESSEX BORDERS BRANCH

- Not: There is no August Branch Meeting.
- 21 Aug Social at The Nag's Head, Moreton (Charrington's) 8pm.
 - 25 Sept Social at The Hare and Hounds, Matching Tye (Courage) 8pm.

would gratefully be received. Editor: Les Middlewood, 81a Linden Way, Southgate, N14 4NG. Printed by Kenmar Press (Printers) Limited, Sidney Road, Wood Green, N22. Tel: 01-888 7221.



IT'S ALL VERY WELL GOING ON ABOUT CRIME IN THE STREETS! WHAT ABOUT...

I MEAN, I'VE BEEN BRUTALLY ATTACKED BY HIVES, SHINGLES, PSORIASIS... FURROWED BROWS, PILES, FLATULENCE, ULCERS... VARICOSE VEINS.....

... MY GOD, I'VE STAGGERED UNDER THE ONSLAUGHT OF TIRED BLOOD, TOOTH DECAY, AND NARROW-MINDEDNESS... HAYFEVER, SUNBURN, BEER BELLY.....

INFLATED LIVER, PUNCTURED CAPILLARIES... SWOL... ER... ARE YOU... OH NO, NOT...

HEWUR!

WAS THE CAT LUNCH OR DINNER?