



THE CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE

THE HERTFORDSHIRE NEWSLETTER

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CAMRA CALLS FOR PUB HOURS REFORM

The Campaign for Real Ale has called for urgent government action to free pubs in England and Wales from the straightjacket of outmoded "permitted hours" imposed during the First World War. In a pamphlet called "Licence for Change"; the campaign recommends that publicans should be allowed to sell alcohol between the hours of 10am and 1.30pm during the week and from 12 noon to 12.30pm on Sunday and Christmas Day. Within that framework, CAMRA suggests that there should be genuine flexibility of hours for landlords, who could choose to have an afternoon break or seasonal variations to suit their trade. "Chosen hours" for a licensee would be granted by the licensing authorities. The report shows that England and Wales have some of the most restricted licensing hours in the world. It charts the experience of Scotland, once infamous for its "10 o'clock swill", where bars and pubs have been allowed to open all day through "regular extensions" since 1976. The police in Scotland have welcomed the change, which has led to more sensible drinking and to no significant increase in drink-related offences. CAMRA says that the pub exercises moderation, in a controlled environment, and that over-consumption and hooliganism are more likely to stem from the too easy availability of alcohol in *unsupervised* outlets such as supermarkets.

The report attacks much of the "research" into alcohol abuse, which interprets the *use* of alcohol as the *misuse* of alcohol and which largely ignores the fact that the overwhelming majority of alcohol users are light and moderate drinkers for whom drinking is a pleasurable social pastime.

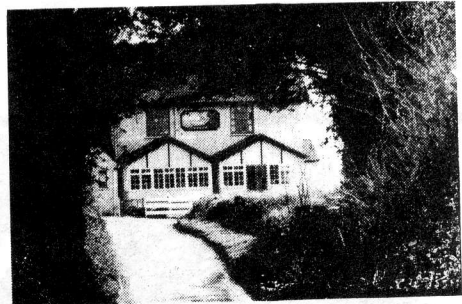
"License for Change" (£1 from CAMRA, 34 Alma Road, St Albans) was launched on 25th June at one place that enjoys the pleasure of flexible hours - the House of Commons where MP's can drink whenever the house is sitting.

Homespun Limerick from Ware

A London rat-catcher from Sentokil,
Moved to Ware, as of vermin he'd had his fill.
But Ware rats wax, I fear, fat on malt-sacks and beer
And his phobia here is identical!

BROCKET ARMS
— Ayot St Lawrence —
*Drink in the rural atmosphere of
George Bernard Shaw's haunt*
A well-sampled real ale pub
with beers from
**Youngs • Greene King
Marston • Hook Norton**
plus guest beers
Evening meals Tuesday to Saturday
Buffet lunches served every day.
Enquiries welcome ☎ Stevenage 820250
Dogs on leads, but no motorcycles.

THE BARLEY MOW



TYTTENHANGER GREEN

WE HAVE THE LARGEST SELECTION OF
REAL ALES IN HERTFORDSHIRE

We also pride ourselves that they are all
in the best of condition. Why not try our menu
of hot and cold meals at lunchtime?

We are always first so come and try our
indoor Beer-B-Q

**PLEASE NOTE NOT COACHES
INCLUDING MINIBUSES**

QUICK ONES

PLANNING NEWS

The ever-active McMullens are busy again, with planning applications to extend and alter the **Woodman**, Wormley West End; the **Woolpack**, Hertford; and the **Candlesticks** at Essendon. The last-named is a real gem of a pub, despite the absence of real ale, so let us hope that its unique character remains unscathed.

Meanwhile in the north of the county, Whitbread plan to add bits to the **Wagon and Horses** in Graveley, including a gazebo and a summerhouse. Presumably there will be an igloo for winter fun and games as well?

The oddly-named **Badger Bitter** from Hall and Woodhouse's brewery in Blandford Forum, Dorset, is starting to make an appearance in Hertfordshire. It is on sale at the **Chequers**, Ware, the **Crown**, Buntingford, the **Cabinet**, Reed, and advertised (but not on sale during your correspondent's last visit) at **The Goat**, **St Albans**, **The Chequers** and the **Cabinet** also dispense the hefty Gibbs Mew Bishops Tipple.

FIVE YEARS AGO

Is it as long ago as August 1980 that CAMRA held its final Great British Beer Festival at Alexandra Palace? Yes it is, and the reason is that in that year, the old palace burnt down. But the new venue in Brighton should prove a popular replacement, and we look forward to seeing you there. Meanwhile in Hertfordshire, Greene King beers were found to be the best value for money, in a survey whose results delighted the East Anglian brewers.

WILL MAC'S MANAGE IT?

Rumours emanating from McMullens suggest that they are embarking on a policy that will eventually turn their tied houses into an 100% manager-run estate, bad news for any ambitious tenants and bad news for some community pubs where the customer often benefits from the continuity of a longer-stay tenant. It is acknowledged that no tenants are to be evicted but as pubs become vacant, Mac's will install managers. Indeed the process is already underway. So when other Breweries are still appointing tenants why are Mac's hellbent on eradicating a well-established tradition. It seems that new EEC regulations releasing the tenant (if he is prepared to 'buy out') from the tie of wines, spirits and soft drinks are worrying Mac's because of their own heavy involvement in the production of soft drinks and house name wines and spirits. Another brewery which set off on this course, Samuel Smiths, turned round after pressure from within the company. So there must be ways round this regulation. Mac's have some excellent managers but also some excellent tenants; coupled with the company's policy of rotating managers every two years I feel that some pubs especially community pubs, are set to suffer. I don't see why the dual system of having both managed and tenanted pubs cannot continue. Perhaps Mac's can divulge their reasons.

LM

CAMRA staged a most successful demonstration in Edinburgh on 22nd June. 400 people turned out to support our opposition to the proposed takeover of Blackburn-based Matthew Brown by Scottish & Newcastle. This is the most crucial campaign ever – our first 'Big Six' takeover. A green light for S&N could see a rapid end to all that CAMRA has campaigned for. There are currently only 50 brewing companies left over with 50 pubs. They could all be mopped up very quickly by the Nationals, who are ready to pounce.

Latest Bass profits are up by 26% and 'Big Six' share values are soaring on the back of lager, while independents are static. This equals cheaper takeovers!

If this takeover bid goes through it will almost certainly spell the end of Lion, John Peel, Theakstons and many other popular brews, together with their breweries.

The Office of Fair Trading referred the proposed takeover to the Monopolies Commission who will report back in about four months time.

To save our consumer choice from further erosion we must fight these takeovers. Already there have been instances of Thwaites and Yates & Jackson, Marston and Border, and Mansfield buying North Country to close them down.

Takeovers mean less competition and higher prices, brewery closures mean less choice and fewer pubs,

Remember it's Matthew Brown today – it could be our own local independents tomorrow – so motivate yourselves and put pen to paper showing your abhorrence to the S&N/Matthew Brown takeover.

Write to the Monopolies Commission* and your local MP now before it's too late!

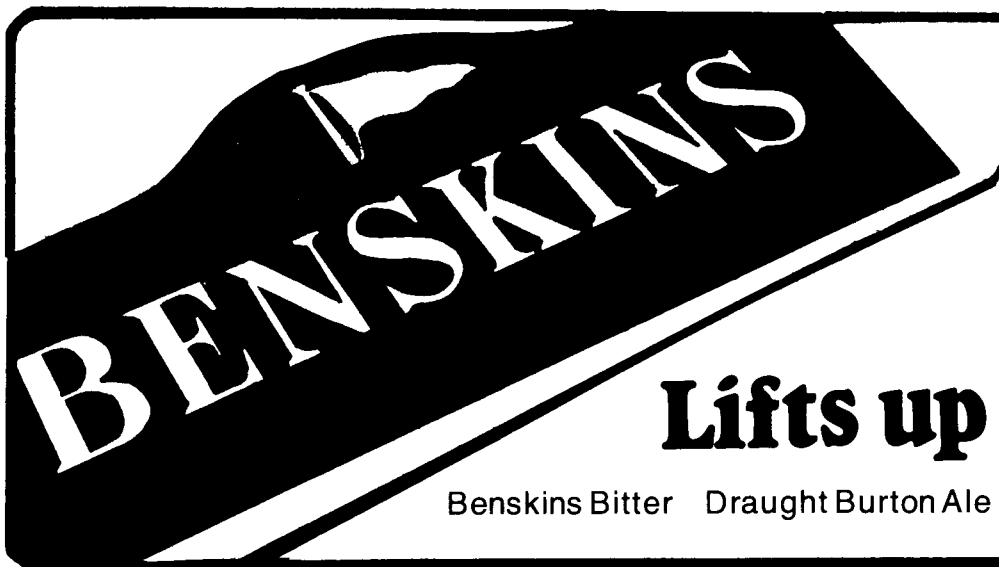
*The Secretary, Monopolies and Mergers Commission, New Court, 48 Carey Street, LONDON WC2 2JT. Reproduced from Firkin Weekly (N.Beds.).

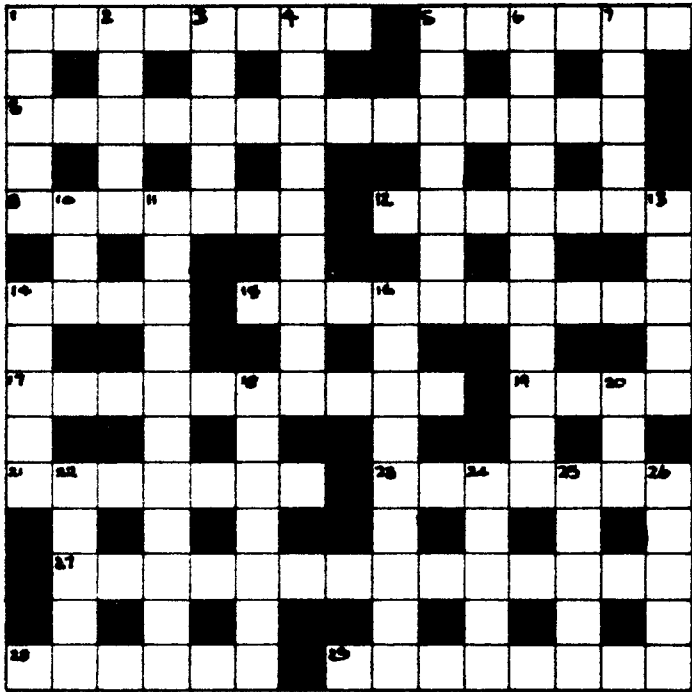
A further takeover shook the real ale movement in early July, when the small Black Country brewers Simpkins sold out to the north-west giants Greenall Whitley.

Another nail in the coffin of choice.

Refurbishments

A recent Sunday lunchtime took us on a trip to the **White Horse**, Weston and the **Rising Sun**, Halls Green. What has happened to these pubs? All the charm of the White Horse has gone with the two bars knocked through into one long faceless one. The beer, now on handpump, left rather a lot to be desired. The **Rising Sun**, once one of Mac's nicest country pubs could now be considered for a prize as one of their worst. The term "sublime to the ridiculous" is insufficient. Question: where do the twee little cheap plastic and copper-look tin lamps now being stuck to the side of Mac's pubs come from (see **Rising Sun** above and **Greyhound**, Bengo)? My suggestion is Taiwan. What will our local brewer do next to push back the frontiers of good taste?





The sender of the first correct entry opened on September 1st will receive a CAMRA t-shirt (please state M, L or XL). Please mark envelopes Summer Competition.

Across

1. Bull, one I mistook for long-closed St Albans pub (4,4).
5. W.Midlands brewer has a good wash in the morning (6).
8. Country pub tarted up by Macs – do we relent? (4,3,7).
9. Disturbing trait in the north-east – it'll help things shoot up (7).
12. Dior, perhaps, first in designing, is to me creative (7).
14. Manchester brewer's dregs (4).
15. He might use the **Three Hammers** and boycott one of two Yorkshire brewers (10).
17. Basic preparation of circular reversing argument within Greene King (10).
19. Extract from Colne, a river producing kind of weak beer (4).
21. Cops, they say, find unintelligent space traveller (7).
23. Cockney's wanting a drink round London's capital to begin with (7).
27. I'll have turnover fee reappraised in Ware and Oxhey pubs (5,9).
28. Small aperture you spotted in return TV? (6).
29. What's set light to joints, we hear, in a chain (8).

Down

1. Pub, in a word – a top joint (5).
2. Unhappy at being knocked over (5).
3. One having trouble climbing? Not at all (5).
4. Strange chap, one with arms in Watford (9).
5. Redbourn pub's bird with head cut off – this has also suffered certain cuts (7).
6. Call at bridge in Stevenage (3,8).
7. Beer has right to be alive (5).
10. Rocks part of scientific equipment (3).
11. Ingenious clue – ferrous compound (11).
13. Number three brew (5).
16. Anxiously flay cruel treatment (9).
18. Endless Stag's nuisance – that's most profound (7).
20. Sounds like beer's causing one to be sick (3).
22. King of St Albans is great in Hemel Hempstead (5).
24. Hurried back, say, to choice of beers (5).
25. Subject for an article on McMullen's esoteric origins (5).
26. Where to park manoeuvring drays (5).

Don't forget signsong at the Buffalo's Head, Puckeridge every 1st Wednesday of the month.

Welcome to Hertford, John and Kim Lynch, formerly of the **Windsor Castle**, Ware. They take over at the **White Lion**, Bengoe from Les and Margaret Dunwich who after many years at the pub are retiring from the trade. Best wishes to them all.

One that has slipped through the net is the **Victoria** in Ware which has been selling handpumped McMullens Country and AK for some time. See South Herts Branch diary.

The **Bell**, Widford is a free house with Charrington IPA and Courage Directors Bitter on Handpump.

The **Kings Head**, Bushey Heath is now selling Ind Coope Burton Ale on gravity as well as Bitter on handpump.

The **Railway Arms**, Oxhey is now selling Friary Meux instead of Benskins Bitter. However, at present, availability is spasmodic. McMullens AK, Youngs Bitter and Special, and Fullers London Pride is now available at the **Windmill**, Thundridge.

The **White Horse** in Hertford, a free house, is up for sale. Adnams bitter is now available at the **Two Brewers**, Port Vale, Hertford. Other handpumped beers include Abbot, Courage Best and Directors. There is a bar billiards table – one of six in the town – and good lunchtime food. Just down the road and worth a mention is the **Bell and Crown** where they serve McMullens.

Up in Chapmore End the **Woodman** is being refurbished. Greene King dark mild has been back on sale for some time – according to our reporter it was very nice too.

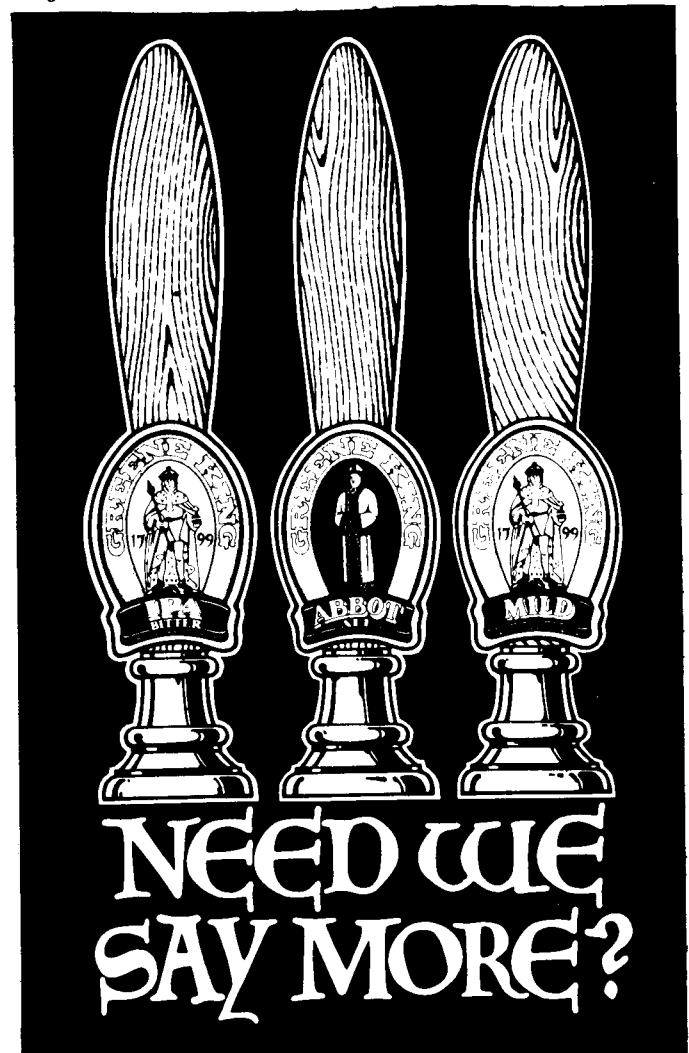
Foxy's Wine Bar, Radlett has discontinued Charles Wells Bombardier and replaced it with Marston's Merrie Monk.

August sees the departure of Les and Marge Elder from the **Woodman**, Nuthampstead to the West Country. We wish them a long and happy retirement.

Two further outlets for Samuel Whitbreads Strong Ale are **Pinks Hotel**, Shenley and the **Bridge**, Potters Bar.

The Cup that Cheers

A worthy cause which has come to my notice is a football match, played once a year, between the **George IV**, Baldock and the **White Lion**, Baldock, for the Cyril Harvey Memorial Trophy – all proceeds go to Cancer Research. As the George IV has won this trophy ever since its inception, could it be that the White Lion boys are blown out with all that 'gaz.



Among the recent activities of CAMRA South Herts Branch, was a midsummer ramble.

It sounded a pleasant enough way to spend a summer evening – a gentle walk of four or five miles length through the Hertfordshire countryside, taking in three village pubs en route. Unfortunately the great British weather had other ideas. It had rained for much of the day and the sky threatened even more of a deluge.

Undeterred, ten members plus one dog, assembled at the Lynch Gate, Bayford – which to some people's surprise, if not disappointment, was a church not a pub – and we set off across a stile, following footpaths, bridleways and country lanes. After only a mile a heavy thunderstorm forced us to take shelter under a convenient garage roof. Once it eased off we tramped on through flooded lanes to the **Five Horseshoes** at Little Berkhamstead (nowhere near Berkhamstead) for a welcome pint of Ind Coope Bitter.

Suitably refreshed, our leader insisted we then took the pretty route to the next village, which turned out to be something of an assault course along the muddiest of bridleways any of us had seen, let alone walked along. We eventually emerged at Epping Green (nowhere near Epping) and enjoyed more Ind Coope Bitter, and also Burton Bitter at the **Beehive**.

The final leg of this supposedly gentle ramble was across fields, through a dark wood, along another muddy bridleway and through a stream. It was dark by the time we reached our goal, the **Bakers Arms** back at Bayford, but thanks to the 11pm extended opening we were able to do full justice to the McMullens Country and AK.

Given more agreeable weather conditions this is indeed a delightful rural oasis in the middle of Hertfordshire with numerous unspoilt village pubs, and with the aid of an OS map and the Herts Real Ale Guide you can plan your own walking and drinking itinerary.

Good beer is a tradition with us.

The McMullen family have been brewing beer since 1827, making us Hertfordshire's oldest independent brewery.

Our AK Mild is as popular today as it was when it was first brewed in 1829. Another best seller is Country Bitter. Both are traditionally brewed. Cask conditioned. Full flavoured.

We are still the same small family

McMULLEN

Brewers in Hertfordshire since 1827

business we've always been. Still brewing traditional beer in Hertford. Every bit as genuine as we were when we started.

And the kind of welcome you get in our 150 or so pubs is as welcome as it's always been.

That's kind of traditional too.



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

I noted with interest in your June, No. 84 issue, the announcement that an English style pub has recently opened in Budapest. I shall certainly make a point of calling in there on my next visit. The additional information which may have puzzled some of your readers, but which came as no surprise to me, was that the beer to be served in the "English" pub, will be West German Lager. I have always regarded the brewers of England to be the most greedy, old fashioned and unentreprising enterprises in England and my observations abroad during the last sixteen years have confirmed this view. In my particular sphere of activity in Eastern Europe, I have never, ever, seen British beer on sale even in the so-called "hard currency" shops.

Certain reforms and relaxations have taken place in the last three years, particularly in Hungary, Romania and Poland and our West European friends, the Germans, Austrians and Danes, have vigorously exploited this potentially huge market.

To quote a certain brewer's ad "need we say more?"

Yours sincerely,
Peter I Robbins

The Jockey, Royston

The North Herts Branch Pub of the Month for August has undergone two changes of name over the years. The pub was once known as the Red Cow but apparently an incoming landlady took exception to this name and its possible implications and it was changed to the Black Boy. The current name, **The Jockey**, is a reference to the racehorse stables and exercise runs on the nearby Therfield Heath. At the time of writing **The Jockey** is undergoing a thorough redecoration which should be completed for August. A feature of the public bar is the paintings of aircraft and other RAF items, reflecting the interests of landlord Clive Booth. **The Jockey** has a lively programme of social and fund raising activities, the latter currently for the local St. Johns Ambulance.

The new Samuel Whitbread Strong Ale has proved so popular in **The Jockey** that a third handpump has had to be installed to ensure that it is always available alongside Wethered's Bitter, with another beer from the Whitbread range completing the trio. **The Jockey** is easy to find on the Baldock road out of Royston and is only a short walk from the railway station and coach stops. Why not come along on 28th August (or any other time) for a welcome from Clive, Cynthia and Bev.

JFF

September

George IV, Baldock

Long standing licensees Eric and Jean Todd are worthy receivers of North Herts September Pub of the Month Award. They have been serving excellent ale for over twenty five years and are the only pub in the North Herts branch area to have appeared in every edition of the national Good Beer Guide.

The pub was built in the late part of the last century to serve as a road house on the Great North Road, now bypassed by the A1M. It is a pleasant retreat with a large garden and nature trails through to the Weston Hills behind. It is also one of the few pubs not to assault the ears with juke boxes, fruit machines and video games.

Once a Simpsons house it now serves Greene King IPA and Abbot and will be well worth a visit on Thursday 26th.

Peter Clarke

The Pub of the Month award is limited to pubs in the North Herts branch area.

THE STORY OF XX MILD

When the Romans invaded Britain they found their wine didn't travel too well so they decided to make a drink for the troops using local materials. Each of the three legions (2nd, 9th and 20th) set out to brew its own elixir. That made by the IXth was so strong that the soldiers were never in a fit state to fight the natives, that made by the IInd just made them fight each other, whereas the drink brewed by the XXth legion, a mild-tasting dark drink, made from malt and hops proved just right for the northern climate. It came to be known as XX Mild in honour of the legion which invented it.

By the time the Romans left the Brits had got a taste for this beer too, and its secret recipe was maintained by the Kings of England. King Arthur led the fight for Britain and its dark beer against the invading hordes of Saxons and their lager: his Round Table was the end cut off a huge barrel of XX. And when St. Edmund died to defend us from another invasion of lager drinkers (Danish this time), his body and his recipe were brought to the Abbey at Bury for safe keeping.

From then the secret of dark mild was kept by the Abbots till the 1530's. Then Cardinal Wolsey (a Tolly Cobbold shareholder) destroyed the Abbey. Just in time the Abbot hid the age-old recipe in a sealed-up cellar under his house, and prophesied that it would remain hidden 'until the King returns to Bury. For 350 years the world forgot about XX.

The Abbot's prophesy was fulfilled in the 1880's when Mr. Greene and his partner Mr King extended their newly-amalgamated breweries. While digging foundations on the reputed site of the Abbot's residence, workmen broke into a sealed-up cellar, found a collection of old manuscripts, and called Mr King. Noticing that one appeared to be a recipe, he decided to try it out and so XX mild was born again. But faithful to the tradition that it should remain a secret, the company have from that day to this never actively promoted it. It is there for those who wish to find it. Are you in on the secret?

Reproduced with thanks from "Last Orders" – the CAMRA Suffolk Branches Newsletter.

A PUB SAVED

A short while ago the residents of the village of Pimlico, near Hemel Hempstead, along with visitors to their local pub, **The Swan**, breathed a sigh of relief when the Department of the Environment turned down an appeal by Roast Inns which would have led to the destruction of their pub.

The appeal, by the Whitbread subsidiary, was against a decision by Three rivers District Council to refuse planning permission for the conversion of the popular, traditional village pub into a standardised Roast Inn with "bar area, servery and restaurant" which would have virtually doubled the size of the existing building. Residents protested that the extension was not necessary and unwanted and that the proposed alterations to the car park would be dangerous with the new egress to Redmond Road being a blind spot on a sloping, curved road. Lighting for the car park would be a nuisance to neighbours until at least midnight.

Roast Inns appeal was based on the Council's decision to refuse permission because the site lies within the confines of the Green Belt. Their argument was that because the Council had stated that they would only consider allowing development if it was "essential for agricultural or other uses appropriate to the rural area", then there was nothing wrong with the design; because the land was *not* suitable for agricultural development it would be perfectly alright to put a Roast Inn there.

Much was made of this by the advocate for Whitbreads who repeated his remarks frequently. As an independent observer I was surprised that the Council's advocate did not develop this theme, pointing out that just because a site was not suitable for farming it did not mean to say that everyone should be a liberty to build restaurants on them. It turned out, fortunately, that this was not necessary. Another point amused the casual onlooker when a spokesman for Roast Inns declared that in recent years trade at the **Swan** had "increased from that expected of a purely local public house" and then four sentences later stated that the existing facilities were unable to satisfy the patrons. If this is true why have the patrons become patrons?

Nothing was said about the intent to entice the car borne customer from further afield and perhaps increase the risk of the drink and driving law being broken.

The Baldock Society

The Baldock Society, a group formed over ten years ago to look after and preserve the town to the best of its ability, have arranged an exhibition featuring 'Brewing in Baldock'. The exhibition will run for two weeks from 29th July to 12th August at the Community Centre – close to the site of the now demolished Simpson Brewery.

A LICENSEE SPEAKS

Members of the Watford and District branch were entertained at one of their recent meetings by an address from the well-known licensee Richard O'Gorman of the **Coach and Horses**, Croxley green, chairman of Benskins Tenants Stream.

While praising the Campaign for its work in the past 13 years, he was sceptical about recent publicity regarding the differing costs of beer from the North of England to the South. He accepted that customers were concerned about the rapidly increasing price of a pint and stressed that tenants everywhere were worried about the slow drift away of custom which was leading to a rapid rise in the number of licensees leaving the business.

The difference in costs between the North and South was because of the higher overheads in the South, in particular brewery rents and council rates, although the unaccountable difference in brewery charges (up to £17 dearer in the South) does not help tenants keep up a competitive stance against regional breweries and even Benskins managed houses.

Later he came down heavily against a reform in the licensing laws that would lead to what he called a "Scottish system" whereby selected pubs were able to stay open 14 hours a day – on the principal that the licensing authorities would be making the selection and that the opportunities should be available for all to enter into free competition. He did agree to a suggestion that a 9 hour licence should be granted to all pubs and that the licensee should open for that time whenever he found it most profitable. "This would not lead to an increase in charges" he said, "though any other system might well do so".

The branch expressed their gratitude to Mr O'Gorman and stressed that any complaints were not directed specifically to Benskins tenants but to the brewery whose policies were forcing prices up more rapidly in the South of England at a time when every effort was needed to curb inflation.

Kevin Collins

Lager from the handpumps has now arrived in Hertfordshire!! In a surprising new venture Whitbread are test marketing hand drawn Gold Label Lager in forty-nine selected tied houses in the South-East – including six in Hertfordshire – thus adding yet another dimension to the devious world of lager promotion.

To Whitbreads credit their advertising does not aim to deceive (unlike a certain other locally represented brewery promoting "Australian" lager which is actually brewed in Wales) but is instead unusually frank: "Less fizz more flavour" is the headline on the front of the glossy leaflet posted through thousands of letterboxes in Hertfordshire. Furthermore "It is less gassy and not quite as chilled as ordinary lagers which brings out even more of the flavour". Presumably "ordinary lagers" include Whitbreads own Heineken (OG 1031-1035).

But do not be deceived. Gold Label is chilled, is fizzy and is conditioned before it leaves the Sheffield brewery. In common with ordinary lagers it is very expensive for what is not a strong beer, selling at 94 pence per pint in the **Bell**, St Albans. Incidentally the pricing of gold Label seems to have placed the brewery in a quandry, for it is standard practise for their handpumped ale to be several pence dearer than Keg beer of the same strength. In the **Bell**, Gold Label started selling at 98 pence, but was quickly reduced to the same price as Heineken.

Whitbreads motives for introducing a hand-pulled lager are not entirely clear. CAMRA's stance is quite definite however: whereas until recently virtually all hand-pulled beer has been real, Gold Label is not, and will certainly lead to the confusion of the drinker to CAMRA's detriment.

From now on if you see a handpump in a Whitebread pub make sure you check what it is serving before you order.


AJ

Peter & Lesley Reynolds welcome you to



THE STAR INN

FURNEUX PELHAM



Rayments BBA ★ Greene King KK & Abbot

**GOOD HOME COOKED FOOD
MONDAY TO SATURDAY**

— ♦ Brent Pelham 227 —

Benington – Last Outpost

Beer deserts are pretty hard to find in Hertfordshire these days, as landlords realise that not everybody wants fizzy beer, except that is, in Benington near Stevenage. Whereas last year it enjoyed the company of the village of Graveley, I'm happy to report that both the **Wagon and Horses** (Wethereds) and the **George and Dragon** (Green King IPA and Abbot) have been refurbished with handpumps and landlords keen to offer choice to all their customers. Now Benington stands alone as the bastion of CO₂ dispensers. With McMullens advertising showing a handpump with the slogan 'The Real McCoy' and Greene King showing three handpumps and the slogan 'Need we say more', one wonders when the message will reach Benington. (For the purposes of this article only villages containing more than one pub were considered).

BEER FESTIVALS

Besides the **Great British Beer Festival** in Brighton (13 to 17 August) mentioned elsewhere in this Newsletter, there are several other excellent beer festivals to visit during August and September. From 2nd to 4th August the **Basildon Beer Festival** will be held at the town's enterprising Towngate Theatre, including 25 different real ales. Also in Essex, the **Star Inn** in Steeple (between South Woodham and Burnham) hosts a beer festival on August 23rd, 24th and 26th, including music from local favourites Chas and Dave (hope there will be some Rayments laid on for them). Finally, **Cambridge's** Guildhall hosts the city's 11th CAMRA beer festival from 3rd to 7th September, where at least 50 real ales are promised. This is always an enjoyable event – why not take a minibus?

WHAT PRICE BEER?

IND COOPE/BENSKINS PRICE SURVEY

A survey of Ind Coope and Benskins pubs was commissioned by Hertfordshire South Branch after much talk of the alleged disparity of beer prices between the east and west of the branch area. This survey was conducted by thirsty branch members during the six week period ending 30 June and entailed a visit to each of the 131 Ind Coope/Benskins tied houses in the branch area – an area that approximately coincides with Harpenden, Redbourn and Bricket Wood in the west, Ware and the A10 in the east, Welwyn and the villages north of Hertford and the GLC boundary to the south. Whilst accepting that pub prices are likely to fluctuate (normally upwards) the following results should provide interesting reading:-

PRICES

In the Herts South branch area the following Allied real ales are available and average prices over the whole area are shown in Table 1. Table 2 is more specific and lists the average prices according to towns or villages where there are 4 or more Ind Coope/Benskins pubs?-

Table 1 Herts South Branch Area (Based on Saloon Bar prices)

	No. of outlets	Average p per pint
Benskins Bitter	77	82
Ind Coope Bitter	43	82
Friary Meux Bitter	14	82
Taylor Walker Bitter	3	82
Ind Coope Burton Ale	71	91

Table 2 Town and Villages (Based on Saloon Bar prices)

	Benskins Bitter	Ind Coope Bitter	Friary Meux Bitter	Ind Coope Burton Ale
Redbourn	84	—	84*	92*
Harpenden	83	83*	—	93
Park Street	84	80*	—	86*
St. Albans	82	82	84	91
Elstree	85	86*	88*	93
London Colney	85	—	—	89
Wheatthampstead	85	83*	—	97*
Hatfield	83	82	86*	90
Potters Bar	—	80	—	88
Hertford	—	80	—	88
Hertford	78	78	76	88
Ware	78	78*	80	84

*Only one outlet.

As should be expected Table 1 shows that the four 'ordinary' bitters (all of similar gravities) average out at the same price with the stronger Burton Ale retailing at a higher price but Table 2 confirms our suspicions that beer in the east is markedly cheaper than in the west – just compare say, Hertford with St. Albans. Some landlord will quote higher rents and overheads as reasons for higher prices but on these grounds will find it hard to justify. Others will argue that if drinkers are prepared to pay their prices then that is justification in itself. Fair enough, but pubs often set their prices against others pubs in their vicinity and where this is high the poor drinker is forced to pay or travel away from his or her own area. A raw deal. Perhaps in the east the presence of another brewer, in the shape of McMullens, creates a more competitive atmosphere, thus keeping prices low. Whatever the case the 18p difference being charged for Benskins Bitter between highest and lowest pub on the face of it appears scandalous. Table 3 and 4 name names, showing where you fill find the cheapest pints and the most expensive respectively. Special congratulations to those offering the cheapest pints:-

Table 3 Cheapest Pints in Herts South

Benskins Bitter:	East India College Arms Hertford Heath 72p (Public Bar)
Ind Coope Bitter:	Lion, Potters Bar 76p (Public Bar)
Friary Meux Bitter:	Reindeer, Hertford 75p
Ind Coope Burton Ale:	Lion, Potters Bar (Public Bar) and Rising Sun, Ware – both 84p.

Table 4 Most Expensive Pints in Herts South

Benskins Bitter:	Old Fox, Old Bricket Wood 90p
Ind Coope Bitter:	Gate, Bricket Wood both 88p
Friary Meux Bitter:	Old Fox, Old Bricket Wood 90p
Ind Coope Burton Ale:	Elephant and Castle, Amwell; Gate, Bricket Wood; Tin Pot, Gustard Wood (Saloon); 3 Horseshoes, Letchmore Heath. All 98p

NB. Taylor Walker Bitter omitted from Tables 3 and 4 – only three outlets.

However, anomalies exist, such as in St. Albans where the White Swan is worth a visit at 75p for a pint of Benskins! Everywhere else is 80p plus. But for value for money travel to the Hertford and Ware area.

Public and Saloon

It is clear from the survey's results that where 2 bars exist the traditional '2p difference' between Public and Saloon bars is rapidly becoming a memory.

Only 25% of the pubs operated this system – a statistic which excludes those 2-bar pubs where each bar is really a saloon. After drifting for a moment, the single bar pub now accounts for over 50% of Ind Coope/Benskins' tied houses. What is the brewer's fascination with one bar pubs when two or more rooms invariably make for a more interesting pub. Before leaving the subject of prices, mention should be made of the promotion of Castlemaine lager – the ballyhoo surrounding its launch is dying now but one must feel sorry for the lager drinker whose legacy is the tag of up to £1.04 for a pint of no more than average gravity. Behold the lucky bitter drinker.

PRICE LISTS

It is now law that publicans should clearly display their drink prices either in the form of a price list or clearly visible prices on or near the point of dispense. Well done to those who comply with this ruling but it must be reported that generally Ind Coope/Benskins pubs fall woefully short of this requirement. At a considered guess, only 75% of their pubs clearly display prices.

REAL ALE AVAILABILITY

The good news is that only 8% of Ind Coope/Benskins pubs offer no real ale and it is also interesting to note that the 'Burton Ale only pub', so prevalent in 1976-78 has all but disappeared. Today, when Burton Ale is available it is usually alongside Benskins or Ind Coope Bitter.

QUALITY OF BEER

Our surveyors were asked to sample each real ale and judge its quality on a 1-5 scale ranging from Excellent to Undrinkable. It would, of course, be unfair to condemn a pub's beer on one visit or indeed to extol its great quality but in the past there have been questions about the consistency of beer from Benskins and Ind Coope – there have been bad batches brewed and barrels badly kept. For the record our surveyors found that 18% of the real ale tasted was excellent, 33% good, 37% average, 10% below par and 2% undrinkable. Read what you like into these figures.

IN CONCLUSION

Besides being a good opportunity to catch up on the current real ale situation in South Hertfordshire, the survey highlighted the difference in prices between east and west. Stretching beyond these points it would be interesting to find out if things vary in say, Watford, Stevenage or Bishop's Stortford. It's good to see that Ind Coope and Benskins are up among the leaders for availability of real ale in south Herts – over 90% of their pubs sell it. And thanks to all our surveyors who are now either hooked on Allied beers or swanning off for a pint of Mac's or Greene King.

LM

SIMPSONS – NO 50s REVIVAL

Greene King are to be test-marketing a new beer in selected Hertfordshire pubs from August. To be called Simpsons Bitter, it will be served by handpump only. CAMRA officials were given an advance tasting of Simpsons at Greene King's Biggleswade brewery recently, and report that it tastes smooth and a little fruity, with a flavour belying its low gravity – a good session beer.

Why Simpsons? For those with memories stretching back to the 1950s, they will recall that Simpsons were a Baldock brewery owning pubs throughout north Hertfordshire, who were taken over during that decade by Greene King. The brewery continued as Greene King (Baldock) Ltd. until the 1960s, when Greene King took over Wells and Winch at nearby Biggleswade, and closed the smaller Baldock premises. Simpsons were latterly best known for their Double Top bottled beer, and Greene King emphasise that their new brew is definitely *not* to match the old Simpson's recipe.

While any move to increase choice of real ales is to be welcomed, and while Simpsons looks as if it could rival McMullens AK as a flavoursome session beer, one note of warning should be heeded. Greene King admit that sales of both their Biggleswade-brewed mild ales, the dark XX and the light KK are now very disappointing, and it would seem that a successful launch of Simpsons could be a final nail in the coffin of draught mild.

Greene King have not, at the time of going to press, finalised their list of initial 19 pubs where Simpsons Bitter will be tested, but those under consideration are believed to include **The Jolly Waggoner** at Ardeley, the **Crooked Billet** at Stevenage, the **George IV** at Baldock and the **George and Dragon** at Watton-at-Stone – in the latter case, the arrival of Simpsons would herald the first real ale in the pub for many years.

SUPPING IN GIBRALTAR

Regular readers of this newsletter may well remember my guide to 'Supping in Malta' printed in the July 1984 issue. This year difficulties with the £ internationally as well as that in my own pocket, lent strength to the argument against a holiday abroad this time, entailing a currency change, possible holiday surcharge costs, etc. .

Only 2- miles square, Gibraltar (unlike Malta) does not have its own brewery. It is predominantly English speaking, uses British currency as well as having its own banknotes, and brochures advertise its long-standing British tradition including countless bars serving "noted British Beers". As ever, I was suspicious of this phrase. Neither guide books nor a phone call to CAMRA Headquarters gave me further information on this point, and so the holiday was booked (purely in the interests of research, of course).

Gibraltar's shopping areas turned out to be very much a cross between those of our familiar English coastal resorts, now sadly in decline, and places like Douglas (Isle of Man): left behind by developments of the last twenty years or so. Red phone and pillar boxes were everywhere, British "bobbies" on foot patrol, on street corners giving directions and stopping traffic to help pedestrians over the road. Much of the native housing were blocks of flats thrown up hurriedly in the post war years: crowded together, damp, poorly insulated and sound proofed, going to squalor and never having seen a coat of paint since being built. The overall impression was of the British Empire in decline.

Spanish influence is increasing - pesetas accepted commonly - but it is still only marginal. As with so many hybrid nations, Gibraltar's newest immigrants congregate to the bottom of the labour market: Spanish cleaners, chambermaids and kitchen assistants (female) and Moslems and Turks (male) working on the roads, litter collecting.

Hotels were far from full but the British holiday making couples in their 50s and 60s proportionately outnumbered all the others. Requests or directions from them in English to Spanish speaking over-alled waitresses that pots of tea and not coffee are the order of the day at breakfast, and that milk should be cold and not hot stand out as memories of the stolid British character and its most insistently eccentric.

And so onto the bars. . . Very few would classify as pubs, being too small and mostly with just one room. With names like 'The Gibraltar Arms', 'The London Bar', and 'The Wembley Bar', selling cistres and nuts, with dartboards and pool tables, jukeboxes playing yesterdays British chart singles, meals mostly being fry ups, TV's with familiar programmes mostly taken from Thames TV. . .

The outstides of the bars showed names such as Whitbread, Skol, Courage, Theakston, Watney (with a red barrel),. Inside bottles of Skol, Amstel and Heineken were the most commonly drunk.

Pints of lager, including Spanish, were also popular. Whitbread Tankard and 'cooled Courage CSB' (apparently brewed specially for British Forces abroad) were available on draught (top pressure of course) and I eventually settled on the CSB as being the least noxious available.

Research to try to find a pint of real C₂H₅OH or at least a bottle of decent beer took us to many a bar. The range of bottles was usually abysmal. Bottled Guinness was fairly common, Mackeson less so. A real find in a backstreet bar were bottles of Tennent's Milk Stout.

The Theakston's signs proved to be a real disappointment. I found several disused handpumps and was informed that 'Theakston's are no longer willing to export',. Old Peculier and the occasional Best Bitter were formerly available, now no longer. Another bar found sporting a Truman's bitter pump-clip, sadly that turned out to be not only a false handpump but the beer was off as well - I returned it and was given a pint of Tankard instead (some people in this life are born to lose. I reckon I'm one of them).

Apart from the ale scene, the holiday in Gibraltar wasn't a bad one. But that's another story. . .

SW May 1985

THE ROYAL OAK, BUSHEY

Free House

★6 Real Ales □ Food ★

★ Guest Beers ★

Restaurant and carvery now open

Reservations preferable ☎ 01-9502865

SPARROWS HERNE ★ ON THE A411

WHAT'S ON AT YOUR PUB

- 1 Aug **Bayford:** Bakers Arms. 8.15pm. Standon Morris Men.
 3 Aug **St Albans:** Pineapple. Live band - Best Kept Secret.
 5 Aug **Hatfield:** Wrestlers. 9.15pm. St Albans Morris men.
Lemsford: Sun. 8.15pm. St Albans Morris Men.
 7 Aug **Colney Heath:** Crooked Billet. 8.15pm. Cottonmill Clog Moris.
Tyttenhanger: Barley Mow. 9.15pm. Cottonmill Clog Morris.
 10 Aug **St Albans:** Pineapple. Live band - Victims in Russian.
 12 Aug **Potters Bar:** Green Dragon (Trotters Bottom). 9.15pm. St Albans Morris Men.
Shenley: Pinks Hotel. 8.15pm. St Albans Morris Men.
 14 Aug **Wareside:** White Horse. 8pm. Live Folk Music
 17 Aug **St Albans:** Pineapple. Live band: Raygan.
 19 Aug **Amwell:** Elephant and Castle. 9.15pm. St Albans Morris Men.
Wheathampstead: Cherry Trees. 8.15pm. St Albans Morris Men.
 22 Aug **Much Hadham:** Old Crown. 8.15pm. Standon Morris men.
Wareside: White Horse. 9.15pm. Standon Morris men.
 24 Aug **St Albans:** Pineapple. Live band: Fear of Flying.
 29 Aug **Green Tye:** Prince of Wales. 8.15pm. Standon Morris Men.
 31 Aug **St Albans:** Pineapple. Live band: Best Kept Secret.
 2 Sep **London Colney:** Green Dragon. 9.15pm. St Albans Morris Men.
Sleapshyde: Plough. 8.15pm. St Albans Morris Men.
 4 Sep **Boxmoor:** Fishery Inn. 8.15pm. Cottonmill Clog Morris.
Wareside: White Horse. 7pm. Return of Horses and Coaches.
 5 Sep **Furneux Pelham:** Star. 8.15pm. Standon Morris Men.
 7 Sep **St Albans:** Pineapple. Live band? CD People.
 8 Sep **Ware:** Old Bull's Head. 8pm. Ware Folk Club. Guests: Sam Stephens and Anne Lennox-Martin.
 9 Sep **Abbots Langley:** Royal Oak. 8.30pm. St Albans Morris Men.
Wareside: White Horse. 8pm. Live Folk Music.
 11 Sep **St Albans:** Pineapple. Live band: Rue Morgue.
 14 Sep **Ware:** Old Bull's Head. 8pm. Ware Folk Club. Guests: Anne Lister and Mary McLaughlan.
 15 Sep **St Albans:** Pineapple. Live band: Medical Melodies.
 21 Sep **Ware:** Old Bull's Head. 8pm. Ware Folk Club. Guest: Jim Eldon.
 22 Sep **St Albans:** Pineapple. Live band: Band.
 28 Sep **Ware:** Old Bull's head. 8pm. Ware Folk Club. Harvest Home Evening.
 29 Sep

Advertising in the What's On column is FREE. Just send details of your pub event, in no more than 15 words to Peter Lerner, 7 Sheppards Close, St Albans, by the 20th August for October.



HOW TO GET THERE

Follow the posters, basically; if you're coming from the BR Station, go down Queens Road straight in front of you, follow it into West Street, turn right into Kings Road, and then it'll hit you after 100 yards. . .

BRANCH DIARY

ALL HERTFORDSHIRE BRANCHES

Wednesday 25th September
Inter-branch Liaison Meeting
Venue to be announced.

HERTFORDSHIRE NORTH BRANCH

Wednesday 7th August
Social at the Fox, Darley Hall.
Wednesday 14th August
Branch Meeting at the Plume of Feathers, Ickleford.
Wednesday 21st August
Social at the Plough, Wallington.
Wednesday 28th August
Pub of the Month social at the Jockey, Royston.
Wednesday 4th September
Social at the Coopers Arms, Hitchin.
Wednesday 11th September
Social at the Fox & Hounds, Barley.
Thursday 26th September
Pub of the Month Social at the George IV, Baldock.
Wednesday 2nd October
Friendly darts match at the Maidens Head, Whitwell.
Thursday 10th October
Branch Meeting at the Crown, Buntingford.

Contact Peter Clarke ☎ Stevenage 65957

HERTFORDSHIRE SOUTH BRANCH

Tuesday 13th August
Social at the Victoria, Ware 8 pm.
Sunday 18th August
Branch picnic. Meet at the Rose & Crown, Tewin 1pm. Half mile walk to picnic spot. Return to pub in the evening.
Tuesday 20th August
Branch Meeting at the Black Horse, Sough Myms 8pm.
Wednesday 28th August
South Herts first 'Pub of the Month' at the Cricketers Redbourn, 8pm.
Wednesday 4th September
Anti-social (pub survey) of Ware. Meet Old Bulls Head 8pm and return for sandwiches 10.15pm. Large turnout required.
Monday 2nd September
Committee Meeting at The Barley Mow, Tyttenhanger, 8pm.
Tuesday 17th September
Bayford Pub Crawl. Meet at the Dolphin, Station Road 8pm prompt. Then Red Cow, Malta, Gibraltar . . .
End of September
Pub of the Month – ring A Jolliffe for details.

Contact Adrian Jolliffe ☎ St Albans 69675

WATFORD & DISTRICT BRANCH

Wednesday 21 August
Branch Meeting at Eastcourt Tavern, Watford – Outdoor drinking area is fine.
Saturday 24th August
Meet at 10pm Berkhamstead Station for Camramble going west – all welcome.
Wednesday 28th August
Anti-social (pub surveys) meet at the Royal Oak, Abbots Langley, 8pm.
Monday 2nd September
Social at the Feathers, Rickmansworth, 8pm.
Wednesday 18th September
Branch Meeting at the Wheatsheaf, Watford (Upstairs room) 8pm.
Thursday 4th October
Joint social with Mid-Chilterns Branch at the Sportsman Hotel, Chorleywod, 8pm.
Wednesday 9th October
Social evening at the Villiers Arms, Oxhey. Members/non Members welcome. 8pm.

Contact Tony King ☎ Garston 672587

MID-CHILTERN BRANCH

Thursday 8th August
Branch Meeting at the Royal Oak, Chipperfield, 8.30pm.
Monday 12th August
Joint Social with Aylesbury Vale at the Kings Arms, Tring, 8.30pm.
Thursday 22nd August
Social at the Gate, The Lee, 8.30pm.
Thursday 5th September
Evening Minibus trip to Morrells Brewery.
Tuesday 10th September
Social at the Queens Head, Whielden Gate, 8.30pm.
Thursday 19th September
Social at the Crown and Sceptre, Bridens Camp, 8.30pm.

Contact Peter Yorke ☎ Rickmansworth 770488

HARROW REAL ALE FESTIVAL



Enjoy the afternoon drinking hours at the Harrow Real Ale Festival. Open Friday 13th September 6pm-10.30pm, Saturday 14th September and Sunday 15th September Noon-10.30pm, at the Tithe Barn, Headstone Manor Recreation Ground, Harrow, Middlesex. Entrances to the park are in Headstone Lane, Parkside Way and Pinner View. Easy access on Watford line trains to the nearest stations – Headstone Lane B.R., North Harrow L.T., on H1 bus route to park. Admission £1. Helpers are urgently wanted, please write to Jeremy Jeeves, 49 The Glen, Pinner, Middlesex HA5 5AX, or ring Keith Wildey 01-483 1243.

HANDPUMPED LAGER – BUT DON'T GET EXCITED

You may have seen advertisements for Carlsberg (possibly the most heavily-advertised drink in the world) showing a row of handpumps, one of which has a Carlsberg clip on it. No, Northampton-brewed Carlsberg is not a real ale either, and again one wonders why thousands of pounds are being spent on a deception of the public. We understand that the Carlsberg ads, being grossly misleading, may be referred to the Advertising Standards Authority. But is it not strange that, in order to add a touch of "class" to their product, the lager people can think of nothing better than to equate them with traditional real ales?

The Hertfordshire Newsletter is produced by the Hertfordshire North, Hertfordshire South, Watford & District and Mid-Chilterns branches of the Campaign for Real Ale Ltd. The views expressed are not necessarily those of the Editor, CAMRA Ltd or its branches. The Editor gratefully receives articles or letters for publication. Send to **Nadine Fynn, 78 Old North Road, Royston, Hertfordshire.**

Subscriptions: £2.25 for 12 issues. Send to address above. Cheques payable to CAMRA Herts Campaigning Fund.

Advertising: £7 per 2.5cm column. Artwork can be made up at extra cost. Contact **Eric Sim ☎ Hatfield 60647** for details

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