

FREE


 Campaign  
**CAMRA**  
 for Real Ale

# THE HERTFORDSHIRE NEWSLETTER

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## HOPE FOR HOURS REFORM FADES

The Government are now believed to be unwilling to introduce flexible opening hours before the next General Election – a decision which could delay reform until 1988.

Sources close to the Cabinet suggest that licensing reform will not be included in the Government's agenda of legislation in the 1986/87 session, which starts in November. Strong opposition from within the Government's own ranks to the Sunday Trading Bill is seen as the reason for the change of heart.

The best hope for reform now is said to be for flexibility to be included as a carrot by any or all parties in their next election manifestoes.

### 11p.m. CLOSING FOR ST. ALBANS

The sweetest win in the latest round of applications for later closing times at Brewster Sessions was in CAMRA's home town of St. Albans. Here the LVA application proved successful after three years trying.

CAMRA company secretary Iain Dobson and Steve Bury of the South Herts Branch both spoke out in favour. They were joined by local MP Peter Lilley (Con.) in support of an extra half-hour till 3p.m. in the afternoon and 11p.m. in the evenings Monday to Saturday. This was a bold gesture for a man who lives in the city's Temperance Street.

### TIE INVESTIGATION STARTS

The Office of Fair Trading has taken its first tentative step towards a possible referral of the tied-house system to the Monopolies Commission. It came with an eleven point questionnaire being sent out to the following major breweries: Allied, Bass, Whitbread, Courage, Scottish & Newcastle, Watneys, Vaux, Greenall Whitley and GreeneKing.

The OFT insist that the request for information was more of an informal enquiry than a vigorous questioning. But already some senior figures in the industry are hitting out at what they feel is interference. Brewers Society chairman Edward Guinness said that the industry now needs "a long period of freedom from officialdom's interference in affairs". But CAMRA welcomes the probe into the tied-house system. National Chairman Jim Scanlon said the system "restricts choice and competition, acts as a formidable barrier to entry into the industry, and allows for an abuse of monopoly power at a local level".



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*Widest selection of real ales  
in Hertford with many guest beers  
all served on gravity*

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**Home cooked food at all times  
Sunday lunch a speciality**

The Editor would like to remind contributors to the Newsletter that it is vital to keep to the deadlines. Please note that it has been necessary to bring forward the copy date for the July edition to May 24th.

## The Raven, Hexton

### NORTHERTS

It is now five years since Derek and Mary Jones came to the **Raven**, the lively focus of this attractive and quiet village. The **Wethered's Bitter** and **Flower's Original** are always excellent and a wide variety of food is available. The childrens facilities in the garden make this a popular family venue in the summer.

The nearby earthworks of Ravensburgh Castle lends its name to the **Raven** which replaced an earlier pub in 1912.

When approaching Hexton from Hitchin, do not be deterred by the Bedfordshire road sign as the county boundary meanders among the surrounding hills, from which views extends over much of Bedfordshire. The **Raven** is pub of the month for May and we celebrate on the 22nd.

Del Turner

## The Plough, Tyttenhanger Green

### SOUTHERTS

The **Plough**, Tyttenhanger Green, in the lanes near St. Albans, was the deserved winner of South Herts February award. The **Plough** is well known in the area for its beer mats which proclaim that the owners: "are purveyors to the multitude of murky beers and watery spirits in short measures. We specialise in incompetent staff, greasy food and exorbitant prices in a terrible atmosphere. Ideal for discreet liaisons.

"Not recommended by Egon Ronay, the English Tourist Board, the local Public Health or Trading Standards Officer or CAMRA."

None of this is true of course, as landlord Mike Barrowman and his wife Solveig preside over a very well looked after free house serving a range of six real ales, including Greene King, Adnams, McMullens and Everards.

At lunchtimes there is an excellent and reasonably priced menu, popular with workers who drive out from St. Albans, but in the evening the **Plough** is transformed into a lively local with the action focussing around the bar which often has its very own busy barmaid (hello Caryl!!). Other points of interest in the pub are Mike's amazing, and still growing, bottle collection and some rare old brewery posters.

Mike and Solveig were both surprised and delighted with their award as they have only been at the pub for eighteen months, but they are not going to get rid of the beer mats!

Adrian Jolliffe

## MARKET PUBS

Throughout Hertfordshire there are pubs which have extended hours on one afternoon a week to serve local markets. One that we are aware of is the **Crown** in Buntingford High Street which is open until 4p.m. on a Monday afternoon to serve the recently revived market which takes place outside. If there are other real ale pubs with market hours which you know about then let the editor know and they can be given a mention in the columns of the Newsletter.

Allied Breweries have transferred production of all cask bitters for South East England from Romford to Burton. And on the way the Ind Coope beers have picked up a new word to add to their pumpclips: they have become **Best** Bitters. The gravities, however, remain the same at 1037, though there has been some fine tuning with the recipies.

First to reveal the new identity was Surrey based Friary Meux, which renamed its bitter Friary Meux Best Bitter in March. The company declared the Burton brew "clearly superior" with "a rich colour and a fuller flavour."

Benskins of Watford who, as we reported last month, conducted a fifteen pub trial earlier in the year, introduced the Burton beer into their pubs in February under the old identity. It is expected to be relaunched as Best Bitter during May, once the company is confident about the quality. "We want to provide a consistent pint which we lacked before," said marketing manager, Jerry Hughes. The new beer is described as smoother and slightly less hoppy. Brewers Bitter for Essex, now also produced in Burton, is linked to the Benskins brew.

Taylor-Walker moved more slowly in introducing the Burton beer; deliveries to all pubs only being completed by the end of March with a name change expected in April. ABC, the other Ind Coope bitter we are familiar with in Hertfordshire, changed its name to Best Bitter some months ago.

The switch of production means Romford becomes an all processed brewery producing only keg ales and lager. Meanwhile Burton now brews ten cask ales in 350,000 barrels a year. "They are all different, each one unique in itself," stresses Burton technical manager Peter Tulloch.

## JOHN WARD

It was with great sadness that we heard of the sudden death of John Ward, licensee of the **Plough** at Ley Green. We would like to extend our sincere sympathy to his widow, Joyce.

## FIVE YEARS AGO

In contrast to this year, when the Chancellor thought fit not to increase the duty on beer, the Newsletter of five years ago was bemoaning the budget of that year that had brought price rises all round. However, the landlord of the **Star**, a Greene King pub in Standon, had decided to absorb the latest round of Government imposed increases. Also reported was the assurance from Ind Coope that their three new bitters, Benskins, Friary Meux and Taylor Walker, were three very different beers with individual characteristics, despite being produced from the same mash at Romford. Experience confirmed this to be so; now production has moved to Burton, resulting in further different but individual beers.

On the national front in 1981 the Newsletter reported the results of a CAMRA survey which showed that over 50% of pubs offered traditional draught beer. During the previous year nearly 4,000 pubs had converted to real ale, the leading brewer in this changeover being Whitbread with 470 conversions.



**BENSKINS**

**Lifts up Herts.**

Benskins Bitter Draught Burton Ale

# LENTEN ABSTINENCE

One of the occupational hazards of being an active CAMRA member is that it is very easy to drink too much beer. So, once a year during Lent, I attempt to give up alcohol, mainly to make sure that I can do without it. There are other advantages of course: I have more money to spend on other things and my trousers miraculously start to fit comfortably around the waistline for a while, whilst my long-suffering wife enjoys a blissful few weeks of sharing the marital bed with a non-beery and slightly less flatulent husband.

This year I decided to do something positive and visit some of the few remaining local non-real ale pubs, especially the cluster of handpumpless Ind Coope houses south of St. Albans, in the hope of persuading landlords to install real ale. What happened is as follows:

**The Bull**, London Colney: An old fashioned inn near the river, this had long been the last bastion of fizz in the village, (apart from Charington's Watersplash which is not really a pub). The **Bull** has a new landlord and to my great pleasure he had already installed a handpump dispensing Ind Coope Bitter. This old pub is a fine example of Ind Coope's former 'nicotine stain and dark wood' interior style and, with a pleasant saloon and good public bar, unaltered for many years, is worth a visit.

**The Harrow**, Bendish: Another new landlord – the local milkman – in this attractive Mac's pub set in a little known and most picturesque hilltop hamlet. Unfortunately there are no plans for real ale. "There isn't room," is the standard reply trotted out by landlords in such pubs. (Perhaps a more knowledgeable reader could explain the logic of this argument?). A great shame, especially as this is the closest Mac's pub to Luton – just over the county boundary – and could do with more custom.

**The Bell**, Benington: If ever there was an archetypal village pub, then this is it! On my Sunday lunchtime visit it was bursting with locals and vibrant with broad Hertfordshire twang which lingers on in this out of the way village. No sign of any Greene King real beer though.

**The George & Dragon**, Colney Street: This roadside pub was lost to the real ale cause about eight years ago, and so much was my pleasure to find the saloon bar sporting a fine pair of handpumps just installed by the new landlord. He was formerly gov'nor of the Garibaldi, when he was a lager drinker, but converted to real ale when working for Fullers at the Harpenden Arms. Of course I couldn't test the quality of the Benskins or Burton – why not go along and try them yourself? There's a good public bar with darts and bar billiards, plus a larger saloon with food available.

Just down the road is the **Red Cow**, which in CAMRA parlance might be described as "an unspoilt gem". No real beer here and the landlored wouldn't believe me when I told him his was the only pub for miles around with no handpumps.

The nearest pub without handpumps is in fact the **Three Compasses** at Patchetts Green near Aldenham. This fifteenth century listed building has no cellar. The new manager here has been very enterprising by installing a stillage high up behind the bar so that Burton Ale is now available by gravity dispense. Yet another old fashioned, unspoilt pub the **Three Compasses** has become very run down of late, but Ind Coope will hopefully retain the small rooms when they renovate soon. I especially liked the two-seater shelf in the snug saloon bar. Shame about the deafening juke box though.

In the end this year's Lent turned out to be most enjoyable as most of the remaining fizz pubs south of St. Albans have changed landlords and had real ale installed. It cannot be coincidence that these pubs – formerly run by long-standing tenants – have 'benefited' from lack of brewery investment by remaining old fashioned and unspoilt. Let us hope that in these more enlightened times the breweries will renovate them sympathetically, rather than turn them into plastic beamed cloned bedecked in factory-produced horse brasses that I, for one, tend to avoid out of choice.

Finally, the landlord of the **George & Dragon** has agreed to let South Herts have a Branch meeting in the bar at 8p.m. on 20th May when any newcomers will be welcome.

**Adrian Jolliffe**

# SIMPSON'S REVIVAL

Simpson's, the new cask bitter from Greene King has been withdrawn – but is to be re-introduced. The light bitter was in trial in a selected sixteen pubs, a trial that was deemed a qualified success. The rate of sales was up to expectations, but there was no overall increase in sales. Simpson's Bitter was intended to attract the drinker who was deserting mild but, unfortunately, many drinkers also switched from IPA.

Following sales research and questionnaires to the landlords involved, Greene King feel they can develop the product to appeal more to the drinker. Simpson's Bitter was withdrawn during April and will be relaunched in the autumn. It will be at the same gravity and in the same price range, but sweetened to appeal to mild drinkers. And this time it will be available throughout the Greene King trading area, according to demand.



## PUB OF THE YEAR

*NORTHHERTS*

### The Maiden's Head, Whitwell

The Hertfordshire North Branch of CAMRA is pleased to present its coveted Pub of the Year award to the **Maiden's Head** at Whitwell, only the second time in nine years a McMullens house has topped the poll.

The **Maiden's Head** is a seventeenth-century building, but much altered and restored. Mike and Barbara Jones have been there for four years and have worked hard to make the pub the centre of local life. Indeed there is something for everyone: a log fire in winter, a comfortable lounge, darts and juke box in the public and, as you might expect, excellently kept McMullens AK and Country Bitter as the pub's success in McMullens cellar competitions would indicate. You have a chance on the 5th June to see why it has been voted the best of 226 pubs in North Herts.

**Peter Clarke**

## Answers to March Crossword

**Across:** 1 Fuller; 4 Woolpack; 10 Leverstock Green; 11 Old Bell; 13 Stomach; 14 Tot; 15 Tally Ho; 16 Amoeba; 18 New; 20 Adnams; 22 Attempt; 23 Air; 24 Everard; 26 Pyramid; 29 Labour intensive; 30 Reddened; 31 Census.

**Down:** 1 Fellow traveller; 2 Livid; 3 Eerie; 5 Oncost; 6 Leg room; 7 Arena; 8 Kindheartedness; 9 Stilton; 12 Balsa; 17 Opera; 19 Warpath; 21 Measure; 23 Admire; 25 Ebbed; 27 Range; 28 Mains.

The winner was Janet James of Stevenage who receives a CAMRA PVC apron.

# BRANCH DIARY

## HERTFORDSHIRE NORTH BRANCH

**Thursday 1st May**

Social at the Fox, Aspenden, 8p.m.

**Thursday 8th May**

Antio-social in Ashwell; meet in the Three Tuns, 8p.m. sharp.

**Thursday 22nd May**

Pub of the Month social at the Raven, Hexton, 8p.m.

**Thursday 5th June**

Pub of the Year social at the Maidens Head, Whitwell, 8p.m.

Contact **Peter Clarke** ☎ **Stevenage 65957**

## HERTFORDSHIRE SOUTH BRANCH

**Sunday 4th May**

Herts Guide meeting at the Queen's Head, Colney Heath, 8p.m.

**Tuesday 6th May**

Committee meeting somewhere in Ware, 8p.m. For where, telephone contact

**Tuesday 13th May**

Survey for Herts Guide. Meet Hatfield Arms, Hatfield (opposite station) 8p.m. sharp. Large turnout vital for comprehensive survey.

**Tuesday 20th May**

Branch meeting at the George and Dragon, Colney Street, 8p.m.

**Thursday 29th May**

Pub of the Month social at the Roundbush, Aldenham, 8p.m.

Contact **Adrian Jolliffe** ☎ **St. Albans 69675**

## WATFORD & DISTRICT BRANCH

**Monday 5th May**

Anti-social in Hemel Hempstead; meet at the Three Blackbirds, Boxmoor, 11a.m. (phone contact).

**Wednesday 7th May**

Anti-social in Kings Langley; meet at Orlando's (former Rose & Crown) 8p.m.

**Wednesday 14th May**

Branch meeting at Rickmansworth Hockey Club, bottom of Scotts Hill, Rickmansworth, 8p.m. Free pint for newcomers!

**Wednesday 21st May**

Herts Guide surveys; please phone contact.

**Wednesday 28th May**

Pop Quiz night at the Swan, Leavesden, 8p.m. All welcome.

Contact **Tony King** ☎ **Garston 672587**

## MID-CHILTERN BRANCH

**Monday 5th May**

Joint anti-social with Watford & District in Hemel Hempstead; meet at 12.00 in the Three Blackbirds, Boxmoor.

**Tuesday 6th May**

Social at the Royal Oak, West Hyde, 8.30p.m. then at the Cross, Maple Cross.

**Monday 12th May**

Social at the Swan, Pimlico, 8.30p.m.

**Monday 19th May**

Pub crawl around Gerards Cross (Bucks). Start at French Horn, 8.30p.m., finish at Three Pigeons.

**Friday 23rd May**

Social at the Beaconsfield Arms, Southall, Greater London, 9p.m.

Contact **Ken Smith** ☎ **Watford 31226**

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# WHAT'S ON AT YOUR PUB

2nd May **Stanstead Abbots**: Crown. Hoddesdon Folk Club: Singaround

3rd May **Old Hall Green**: Bay Horse. Live music: Bullettes

4th May **Ware**: Brewery Tap, 8p.m. Ware Folk Club: May merriment

9th May **Stanstead Abbots**: Crown. Hoddesdon Folk Club: Dave Surman Country Band

11th May **Ware**: Brewery Tap, 8p.m. Ware Folk Club: Eddie Walker

16th May **Old Hall Green**: Bay Horse. Live music: Palm Tree Club

16th May **Stanstead Abbots**: Crown. Hoddesdon Folk Club: Richard Cox-Smith.

17th May **Old Hall Green**: Bay Horse. Live music: Cuckoo's Nest

18th May **Ware**: Brewery Tap, 8p.m. Ware Folk Club: Rob & Sylvia Mehta

21st May **Furneux Pelham**: Star, 8p.m. Four sides of Morris dancers

23rd May **Stanstead Abbots**: Crown. Hoddesdon Folk Club: Dave Walters

25th May **Ware**: Brewery Tap, 8p.m. Ware Folk Club: Johnny Coppin

31st May **Old Hall Green**: Bay Horse. Live music: Aardvark & No Money

Remember that listing in the What's On column is FREE. Please use a separate sheet of paper for each month and send details of forthcoming events to the Editor by May 24th for the July edition and by July 1st for the August edition.

Peter & Lesley Reynolds welcome you to



**THE STAR INN**  
**FURNEUX PELHAM**



**Rayments BBA ★ Greene King KK & Abbot**

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## PUB NEWS

The new landlords of the **White Lion**, Apsley now sell Combes Bitter as well as the Webster's Yorkshire Bitter.

The **Beehive**, Hemel Hempstead now serves Ind Coope Bitter, The **Halfway House**, Bovingdon, however, has replaced Ind Coope Bitter with Friary Meux Best Bitter, although this may in turn be replaced by Taylor-Walker Bitter at a later date.

The **White Horse**, Leverstock Green has been refurbished recently and now sells Wethered's Bitter, Flower's IPA and Flower's Original. Flower's IPA has also appeared recently in the north of the county: pubs where it has been seen include the **Railway**, Buntingford and the **Jockey**, Royston.

## SPENDING A PENNY

Drinkers at a Hertfordshire pub have been literally spending a penny when they went to the Gents. Pennies first started appearing in the urinals of the **Alford Arms**, Frithsden, just before Christmas and the trend grew.

Manager Martin Winship said: "I suppose someone had a few too many one night and dropped their change, and now it has become like a wishing well!" He said that silver and one pound coins had also appeared, but the latter did not remain there for long.

Martin admitted that he was a bit reluctant to accept coppers that were wet and shiny over the bar. He considered posting a sign 'Spend a penny for charity', but said that the spontaneity of his customers meant there was no need.

The **Alford Arms** closed for refitting at the end of March when the money was to be given to Berkhamsted Oxfam.

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.**

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