

# THE HERTFORDSHIRE NEWSLETTER

The Campaign for Real Ale

CAMRA

FREE

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## McMULLENS REPORTED TO OFFICE OF FAIR TRADING

Local brewery McMullens have a fight on their hands following a decision to refuse to deliver AK Mild to the **Plough** at Great Munden, near Puckeridge.

Margaret Merridale, owner of the popular freehouse – famous for the mighty Compton cinema organ in the lounge bar – explained her problem:-

"Greene King were rumoured to be phasing out KK Mild – which was popular with my customers – in favour of a lighter bitter, and so at the request of our regulars we took McMullens AK instead, and were soon selling at least one and a half barrels per week. But a few weeks ago we had a call from McMullens to say they had had a complaint from the **Rest and Welcome**" (a McMullens tied house at nearby Haultwick) "that this was affecting their sales of AK." In reply, McMullens have issued the following statement:-

"Like any brewery it is our aim to increase sales of our beers. As a result, when the owner of the **Plough** at Munden recently asked us to supply AK Best Mild and Country Best Bitter we agreed to do so.

"We then received representations from tenants of small neighbouring houses where sales of AK represent a large part of their business. In these circumstances, it then seemed to us to be the fairest course to cease the supply of AK to the **Plough**, but we are perfectly willing to continue supplying Country".

Mrs. Merridale is so incensed that she has reported the brewery to the Office of Fair Trading and consulted her solicitor. "McMullens didn't even bother to put it in writing" she complained, and added that she always paid her bills on time to the brewery. Her locals maintain that they know of no regulars at surrounding pubs who have moved to the **Plough** as a result of AK being installed. Most of the **Ploughs** trade is from Londoners who travel to hear the organ.

Mrs. Merridale points out that trade has been falling in many pubs recently anyway, and thinks that the brewery is being unfair in standing by its tied houses: "Why should free houses sell McMullens beers, when if they are too successful they might be stabbed in the back, as I have been."

She is now awaiting a decision from the O.F.T.

Watch this space for the outcome.

Adrian Jolliffe.



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surroundings*

This summer has seen many changes in St. Albans' pubs. Following on the sale of the **Barley Mow**, Tyttenhanger Green, to a freehouse chain, another pioneering freehouse, the **Goat** in Sopwell Lane, has now been sold to Inn Leisure Ltd. for an undisclosed sum. In terms of beer range the early indications at both pubs are not encouraging, with a reduction in the number of real ales available.

The **Peacock** in Hatfield Road has now completed alterations which have effectively doubled the bar area and now features a designer peacock carpet! Both the **Peacock** and its 'scaly' sister, the **Mermaid**, have recently had Strong's Country Bitter on offer as part of Whitbread's Traditional Beer Club. The **Peacock's** regular beers are Wethered's Bitter and Flower's Original.

Meanwhile down in Albert Street, Fuller's 1985 acquisition, the **Garibaldi**, has been closed for alterations. It is due to reopen on August 6th with the welcome addition of Chiswick Bitter to the already well-received London Pride and ESB.

Elsewhere in the town yet more alterations have taken place at the **Ancient Briton**, Harpenden Road, an Allied Breweries 'Chesters' eating house. Allied also have plans to convert the side street **White Swan**, off the Market Place, into one bar.

McMullens are reported to be planning groundfloor alterations at the **Peahen**, which has already lost its hotel facilities, and at the **Blue Anchor** in Fishpool Street, where they are threatening to destroy the public bar atmosphere by converting it to a second lounge. Undoubtedly the existing lounge could be improved, especially after this year's spring flooding, but the public bar is in the original part of the building facing onto Fishpool Street and needs little more than a fresh coat of paint. So think again, McMullens!

One of the most surprising transformations in St. Albans has taken place at the **Midland Railway** in Victoria Street. Thanks to the efforts of the enthusiastic tenants, what was previously little more than a bikers watering hole has become a friendly and welcoming pub for all the family, with good value meals available for 14 sessions per week and a garden with swings etc. for the children. Courage Best and Directors are available on handpump.

G.A.

## PUBS WITH NO BEER

Ebenezer Howard, the father of the first garden city in Letchworth, adopted the ideals of the growing intelligentsia – vegetarianism and teetotalism – and so for the first fifty years of the city's existence it was a town with no beer!

At the birth of the town, the British Women's Temperance Association persuaded the Garden City Company to keep the new city dry. Several referendums took place, but until 1959 the puritan influence remained.

The Cheap Cottages Exhibition led to the opening of the **Skittles Inn** in 1907, but it served merely ginger beer and lemonade. However, it remained a congenial meeting place until the premises were taken over by The Settlement, and has remained a centre of adult education ever since.

Throughout the years Letchworth drinkers had to seek their alcohol in other towns or in the pubs on the fringe of the prohibition boundary. The Three Horseshoes at Norton had an ancient tradition behind it. When the Garden City was created it had already been in the hands of the same family for many generations – unbroken since 1710. The **Three Horseshoes** in Willian, recorded as a pub since 1813, had been taken over as the Willian School until the new school was built in 1872. The **Willian Arms** was re-named the **Fox** in 1902.

Letchworth Hall, purchased by the Garden City in 1902, was the basis for the new town, and it was converted into a hotel at the time. Today it is in demand on an international basis. Outside the County of Hertfordshire, yet within the boundary of the Garden City, the **Two Chimneys** and, from 1938, the Wilbury Hotel flourished.

Prohibition ended in Letchworth after 57 years when the licensing justices at Hitchin granted a licence for a hotel to be built beside the Police Station, known as the Broadway Hotel. Charrington's brewery applied for the licence, yet they posted the compulsory notice on the wrong door – the church!

Finally the flood gates were opened, and a pub was built on each of the estates: on the Grange Estate was the **Pelican**, now known as **Ebenezer's**; the **Sportsman** is on the Jackmans Estate and the **Black Squirrel** is in the heart of the town.

For a while the **Chequers** and the **Fox & Duck** in Stotfold, the **George & Dragon** and the **Coach & Horses** in Graveley, and the **Baldock** pubs felt the draught, but new housing estates have brought the customers back. Until February 1985 closing time was 10.30pm, so customers raced down the road to Bedfordshire to finish up elsewhere; the change in closing time keeps the patrons nearer home.

## BELATED BIRTHDAY GREETINGS

June's issue of the Newsletter marked the 10th anniversary. The Newsletter began as the South Herts Newsletter in June 1976 (to be followed by North Herts News in December) and went on to become the Hertfordshire Newsletter in February 1978.

## SECOND BEST

Ind Coope formally introduced its second "Best Bitter" in June. The 1037 Benskins Bitter has been brewed by Allied Breweries at Burton-on-Trent to a modified recipe since early in the year, after the ending of cask beer production at Romford.

Unlike Friary Meux, which renamed its bitter, Best Bitter, almost at once, however, Benskins delayed the launch of Best Bitter in 400 pubs until June.

"We believe the new bitter fulfils customers requirements for a robust and better session bitter. Its a light quaffable pint," said marketing manager, Peter Jones.

## HISTORIC OFFER

The **White Hart** in St. Albans is believed to be the first pub in the country to have received a major conservation grant from the Government's historic monuments body, English Heritage. Up to £7,500 has been promised to Benskins for restoration of a 400 year old mural discovered in the pub during refurbishing last year. The wall painting depicts Venus and Adonis. An English Heritage spokesman said: "We do not normally give grants to breweries, but the mural is of major national importance."

## FIVE YEARS AGO

In August 1981 the Newsletter was heralding new brewery fever in the county. In the **Victoria Maltings** in Ware the Victoria Brewery had brewed its first batch of Victoria Bitter and was planning another, slightly stronger ale. Meanwhile in the west of the county, the **Bridgewater Arms** at Little Gaddesden had become the first home brew pub in Hertfordshire since the 19th century. This was to be joined by **Alford Arms** in Frithsden, which Whitbread had announced was to become their first home brew pub, a surprising move at the time.

## FOR SALE

Beer Engine bits and pieces – including cylinders, fittings and very nice set of three white porcelain handles. Proceeds to CAMRA branch funds. I desperately need the storage space! Offers to Dave Burns, 25 Wellington Street, Hertford; 553903.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

I know that this will come as news to no one, but with advertising slogans the prime consideration appears to be **AMBIGUITY**. If manufacturers told the whole truth about their products they probably wouldn't sell very well. Out-and-out lies would offend even the Advertising Standards Authority's feeble controls. So, for instance, we get: "British Rail is getting there!" The fact that they seem to be going somewhere completely different to their passengers is beside the point: you can read what you like into that catchphrase, good or ill.

And so to the latest of these gemettes of marketing twaddle, which comes from our very own local brewer, McMullens. "Hartsman" – so we're told – "stays the distance." What, pray, is that supposed to mean? Perhaps they're referring to the distance between the bar and the urinal? I don't expect brewers to tell the "truth" about lager – no one would drink it – but I do expect a little more imagination and sense from their advertisers. Perhaps the newsletter could offer a prize (a pint of Hartsman?) for the best interpretation of this phrase. Unlike other competitions I would not disqualify entries from Mac's employees as they probably don't know what it means either.

Yours at a distance.

Dave Burns

A certain pub in the Berkhamsted area is listed in 'Real Draught Beer in Hertfordshire' as having Benskins Bitter and Ind Coope Burton Ale on handpump. A recent visit found a rather different state of affairs... I asked the landlord for a pint of Burton and was told it "wasn't on". I got the same answer when I asked for a pint of Benskins Bitter. Naturally I then asked what was on the handpump and was offered a pint of Benskins Diamond Bitter from it - no clip on the pump, naturally - and accepted. The pint was pulled with some difficulty and I soon guessed and asked if it was a keg bitter, which the landlord acknowledged without further comment.

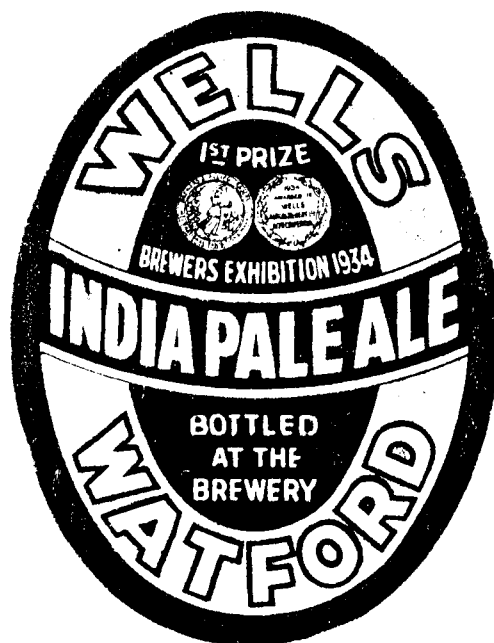
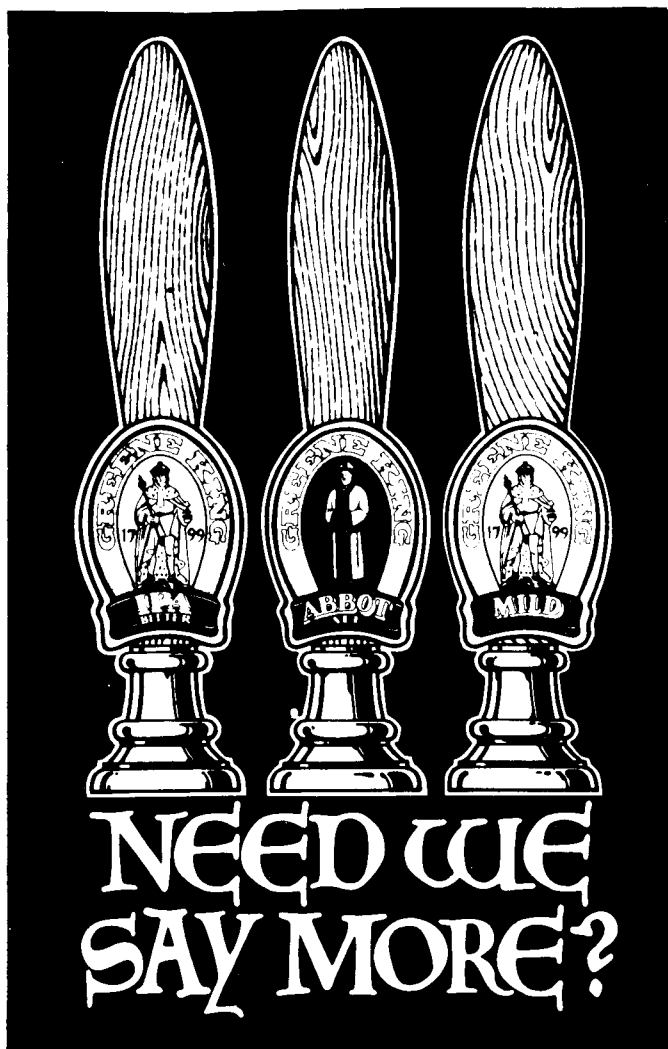
Drinking my awful pint and looking around the pub, I couldn't help but notice the certificate on the wall which testified that the landlord had passed a Britannia Sales Division Correspondence Course in Licensed House Management in August 1985.

The limited menu as well as the absence of real ale might suggest that a correspondence course in running a pub teaches fairly limited skills. Keg beer served through handpumps has led to action by Trading Standards Departments in several areas over the past few years.  
**Steve Webster.**

## 11 O'CLOCK - NOT QUITE

Now the dust has settled after the recent campaigning throughout Hertfordshire for eleven o'clock closing Monday to Friday, it seems that some drinkers are still being discriminated against. The licensing district of Welwyn still has 10.30p.m. closing, condemning the drinkers in Welwyn, Codicote and Woolmer Green to an early evening while all around they can enjoy an extra half hour. It may be left to the Government to win the extra, as they now appear to again favour a relaxation of our outdated licensing laws. Lets hope so, if only for the discriminated drinkers of Old Welwyn.

**P.Clarke.**



Brewers have often used their bottle labels as a cheap, and often effective, means of advertising the worthiness of their products. Such is the case with the Wells of Watford label illustrated here, from which we gather that their India Pale Ale gained first prize in its class at the 1934 Brewers Exhibition. Such devices would often continue as part of the label design for many years after the original prize had been awarded, presumably until the brewery considered that they had had sufficient mileage out of the award, or maybe until their customers considered that standards had dropped since the prize was awarded, because no subsequent prizes had been won. Such additions to a label's design are a great help in trying to date the label. For instance the label shown cannot have been issued before 1934, and could equally not have been issued after 1951 when the Company was swallowed up by its much bigger neighbour in Watford, Benskin's. I have a few other labels issued by this company which I am fairly certain are more modern, indeed post war, so my guess would be that this label was issued at some stage between 1934 and the beginning of the war.

India Pale Ale is an interesting title for the beer, especially as I have grave doubts whether the Company ever exported their beers, let alone entered the once lucrative Indian market. The original India Pale Ales were exactly that, beers brewed to a sufficient quality and strength to survive the long and arduous sea passage to India. However it came to represent a better quality pale ale in the range of most brewers' beers. I doubt whether many of the India Pale Ales brewed today would have survived that long sea journey.

**Graham Tubb**

Editor Labologists Society  
66 High Street,  
Puckeridge

## PUB OF THE MONTH

*North Herts*

### Red Lion, Woolmer Green

August sees a return to the east of the country for North Herts Pub of the Month award, worthy winners are Norman and Gloria Wright who have been serving excellent ale at the **Red Lion**, Woolmer Green for the last five years, after previously running a real ale pub in the Bishop Stortford area. Benskins and Burton are the order of the day and Norman proudly displays his Burton Master Celarman certificate which was earned for the excellence of his Burton Ale.

The **Red Lion** was originally built for the Hatfield brewers Prior Reed before the turn of the century but is now an extremely comfortable two bar pub, the public very games orientated while the pleasant saloon has tropical fish and a collection of miniature bottles. A social will be held on August 28th to present the award.  
**P.Clarke**

# BRANCH DIARY

# WHAT'S ON AT YOUR PUB

## HERTFORDSHIRE NORTH BRANCH

### Thursday 7th August

Social at the Buffalo's Head, Puckeridge, 8p.m.

### Thursday 14th August

Branch meeting at the Bull, Watton-at-Stone, 8p.m.

### Thursday 28th August

Pub of the Month social at the Red Lion, Woolmer Green, 8p.m.

### Thursday 4th September

Anti-social in Hitchin – meet 8p.m. sharp at the Rose & Crown

Contact Peter Clarke ☎ Stevenage 65957

## MID-CHILTERN BRANCH

### Tuesday 12th August

Social in Flaunden. Start at the Green Dragon, 8.30p.m., then on to the Bricklayers Arms.

### Monday 18th August

Social at the Sun, Lamb's Conduit Street, London W.C.1, 8.30p.m.

### Tuesday 26th August

Pub crawl around Amersham. Start at the Chequers, 8.30p.m., finish at the Eagle.

### Tuesday 2nd September

Social at the Full Moon, Hawridge, 8.30p.m.

### Saturday 27th September

Advance warning of Treasure Hunt in Chesham, 6p.m. Watch this space.

Contact Peter Freeman ☎ Hemel Hempstead 69773

## WATFORD & DISTRICT BRANCH

### Friday 15th August

Camping in the Cotswolds all weekend – phone contact.

### Wednesday 20th August

Outdoor meeting at the Eastcourt Tavern, Watford, 8p.m.

### Saturday 30th August

Real ale ramble – phone contact.

Contact Tony King ☎ Garston 672587

## HERTFORDSHIRE SOUTH BRANCH

Contact Adrian Jolliffe ☎ St. Albans 69675

# PUB NEWS

Belated congratulations to Alan and Linda Rogers who have taken over the **George & Dragon** at Colney Street. Alan has installed two handpumps in this former keg only house, serving Burton Ale and Benskins Best Bitter – such conversions are rare nowadays. A comprehensive, superb value menu has been added 13 sessions a week. Improvements at this old pub will certainly delight former punters. Hertfordshire's newest pub and the first in the county for Northern brewers Samuel Smith should be open by August. The **Coopers Apprentice** is located on the new Poplars estate in Stevenage; the range of ales was not known at the time of writing.

Congratulations to Brenda and Ian Freshwater of the **North Star** in Royston who raised £500 to help dig a well in drought stricken Somalia through an action-packed fun day.

Welcome to Keith Olds and family who have taken over the **Chaise & Pair**, Barkway, ghost included. Apparently there has been a ghost changing barrels in the cellar for many years. He has been spotted during the night and a few pub workers have felt his presence. The Olds plan that the pub should revert from a smart eating house to a more friendly village pub.

Amongst the many special brews available to celebrate the Royal Wedding last month was a 'Royal Wedding Ale' (1052) from the Barley Brewery at the **Fox & Hounds**. Most of the brew was bottled but some was available on draught.

4th August: St. Albans Morris Men at the **Rose & Crown, Tewin**, 8.15p.m. and at the **White Horse, Burnham Green**, 9.15p.m.  
11th August: St. Albans Morris Men at the **John Bunyan, Coleman Green**, 8.15p.m. and at the **Elephant & Castle, Amwell**, 9.15p.m.  
18th August: St. Albans Morris Men at the **Plough, Elstree**, 8.15p.m. and at the **Waggon & Horses, Elstree**, 9.15p.m.  
21st August: Standon Morris Men at the **Brewery Tap, Furneux Pelham**, 8.15p.m. and at the **Catherine Wheel, Albury**, 9.15p.m.  
28th August: Standon Morris Men at the **Prince of Wales, Green Tye**, 8.15p.m.  
31st August: **Brewery Tap, Ware**, 8p.m. Gary & Vera Aspey at Ware Folk Club.  
1st September: St. Albans Morris Men at the **Beehive, Epping Green**, 8.15p.m. and at the **Coach & Horses, Newgate Street**, 9.15p.m.  
4th September: Standon Morris Men at the **Buffalo's Head, Puckeridge**, 8.15p.m.  
Listing in the What's On column is FREE. Send details to the Editor by 1st September for the October edition.

Peter & Lesley Reynolds welcome you to

 **THE STAR INN**   
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**GOOD HOME COOKED FOOD**  
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# SOFT DRINK DRIVING

I'm sure we are all aware of the tremendous work done by CAMRA to promote the availability of real ales all over the country, but have you ever stopped to think about the drivers. Those selfless people driving for miles along country lanes and spending hours in pubs and at Beer Festivals sustained merely by Coke's and fruit juices.

Well, it is their choice I hear you say. But is it? To order your favourite tipple is simply a matter of requesting the beer by name. If it is not available you are advised of this fact enabling you to proffer a second choice. But soft drinks are a law unto themselves. Ask for a Coke and you get maxicola. Ask for a Britvic Orange and you get a Club Orange. On one occasion I saw Britvic '55's available in orange and grapefruit flavours. I asked if they sold the pineapple flavour and was pleased when told they did. Unfortunately the bottle said 'pineapple sixty' which is a totally different drink to what had been ordered. It's like asking for Mac's Country Bitter and being sold Green King Abbot. Would you be content to be told "It's the same thing really"

With many years experience of soft drinks, I can tell the difference between the different brands by their taste. It's bad enough that pint for pint soft drinks are twice, thrice and sometimes four times the price of beer, but to be sold something other than what was requested is an insult. I have tried making a stand but maybe I am not adept at expressing myself as the bar staff tended to look at me as if I was on holiday from the local Lunatic Asylum.

When will there be support for us poor soft drink drivers.

Diana Clarke.

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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