

THE HERTFORDSHIRE NEWSLETTER

The Campaign for Real Ale

CAMRA

FREE

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SAVE OUR BREWERIES

Save our breweries. Save what is left of our competition!

That was the message contained in a special CAMRA report to the Office of Fair Trading in the light of the recent assault on independent East Midlands brewers by the nationals.

The report called on the OFT to refer to the Monopolies Commission the takeovers of Ruddles by Watneys and of Home of Nottingham by Scottish & Newcastle, and to recommend that the probe into the tied house system be extended to incorporate an urgent review of the state of competition in the brewing industry. As an immediate step CAMRA has called for a complete halt to further brewery takeovers while the Commission are investigating the industry.

Likely effects of the recent East Midlands takeovers feature in the report, with Home and Ruddles losing their independence through the first national brewery takeovers for a decade. Traditionally the market has been highly competitive and the beers have always been keenly priced as a result. But the national takeovers immediately reduce the competition and open the way for parallel pricing — with the consumers paying the price for the greedy takeover deals.

The report highlights just how far competition has declined: 126 breweries taken over since 1960 — 108 closed down. And with other breweries up for sale and under offer, the future looks even worse for competition and consumer choice.

If things are allowed to go on as they are, we could soon end up with seven national brewers only. CAMRA believes the time to call a halt is now.

The Crooked Billet Colney Heath

Tel: Bowmansgreen 22128



*One of
Hertfordshires
Old Village Pubs
Traditional
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in Olde-World
surroundings*



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*Widest selection of real ales
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PUB PROBE GOES AHEAD

The tied-house system, which allows brewers control over what beers are sold in many pubs, could now be in for a major shake-up. That was the feeling with the news that the Office of Fair Trading has asked the Monopolies Commission to launch a major two-year probe into the supply of beer in licensed premises.

The decision to refer has been expected since the spring, when OFT director general, Sir Gordon Borrie, first hinted that the tied-house system was in need of examination. He followed this up with a survey of the major brewers and several meetings with the Brewer Society, who were opposed to any investigation. But pressure came from other directions too, notably from CAMRA and SIBA, the Small Independent Brewers Association.

Making his reference, Sir Gordon highlighted four areas of concern:

- That the brewing industry supplies a high proportion of its products through outlets tied to the brewers and that competition may therefore be restricted.
- That because of this hold over retail outlets, independent suppliers may face difficulties in marketing their products.
- That as a result of these factors consumer choice — particularly in the 'on trade' may be limited.
- That prices, margins and profits within the industry appear to be high.

It is within the power of the Monopolies Commission to recommend a series of radical reforms to put the brewing industry on a more competitive footing.

CAMRA National Chairman, Jim Scanlon said: "I welcome this investigation, mainly because it gives us a chance to identify the anti-competitive practices of the big brewers — and see some action taken on them."

(What do you think? — See Letter to the Editor)

BROWN'S OF TRING

At the west end of Tring High Street, on the south side, is an archway with, above it, the words "Tring Brewery". It is a memorial to one of the oddest characters of Hertfordshire brewing, the brewery's owner, John Brown.

John, born in Okeford Fitzpaine, Dorset around 1795, was one of 12 long-lived brothers. He started brewing in Tring in 1826. The biggest boost to business came around 1836, however, when the navvies building the London to Birmingham railway reached the site of the planned Tring Cutting. Hundreds of thirsty workers were needed to move the one and a half million tons of earth from the 2½ mile cutting, using only wheelbarrows, horses and primitive lifting equipment. John built at least two pubs in Tring, the **Britannia** and the **Kings Arms**, to cater for the navvies. He also built an inn at Tring Station, the **Royal**.

Horseman

John was an enthusiastic horseman who raced in the first Grand National, so it is said, he would ride to Northampton on business, returning from his 70 mile round trip in the early hours of the morning, put in a few hours' work at the brewery, and then mount up and be off with his hounds to a meeting of the local foxhunt. He rode in a race at Harpenden when he was 73, and he was still riding within a few years of his death at 95. One story says he went to his Regent Street hatters and asked for a hunting top hat "the same as the last one." "Yes, sir," said the assistant, "when was that?" "Sixty years ago," replied John.

Heiress

John's twin brother Samuel was living with him by the 1840s at the brewery house. In 1847 John and his wife took under their wing a 17-year-old heiress, Esther Field, orphan daughter of one of John's friends. Samuel Brown evidently determined to obtain Esther's fortune — worth £30,000 in 1842, an enormous amount for the time. The resulting scandal received nationwide publicity, and reached as far as the House of Lords.

Briefly, in May 1847 52-year-old Samuel began to put fierce pressure on the teenage Esther to marry him, saying that otherwise he would kill himself. After four weeks the poor girl gave in and Samuel took her up by train to Marylebone, where they were married at Trinity Church. Back at Tring Esther fled after a day or so to the home of Hemel Hempstead solicitor with whose son, Montague Smith, she had formed an attachment long before Samuel Brown came on the scene. Once the story of the marriage came out, the Smiths investigated, and found Samuel had made two mistakes. He had married Esther while she was a ward of court, without the court's permission, and he had lied about some of the details on the marriage banns.

Prison

Samuel was arrested, and sent to the Queen's prison in July 1847, by the Lord Chancellor, for marrying a ward of court. When he came out in March 1848 he was rearrested, and sentenced to six months in Clerkenwell prison, for the first known offence under the Births, Marriages and Deaths Act of 1836 of "wilfully making a false statement for insertion in the marriage register"

Despite all this, however, under the laws of the time the marriage was still legal and divorce almost impossible to get. Esther's friends put together a team of the best (and most expensive) legal brains available, and while Samuel was still in Clerkenwell prison they tried the extraordinary step of getting a bill through the House of Lords to dissolve the marriage.

But the Law Lords threw out the argument that Esther had been forced into marrying Samuel, saying that her behaviour at the time of the marriage ceremony showed otherwise. The marriage stood. There was one last attempt to prove that Samuel had committed adultery with a woman in the Queen's prison, but this too failed. What eventually became of Esther, and whether Samuel did actually get his hands on her money is unclear. By 1861 Samuel was being described as a widower. But the scandal did no harm to John's standing in the community, for he was churchwarden of Tring Parish Church from 1851 to 1856.

Brewery

In 1851 John was a farmer, as well as a brewer and wine and spirit merchant. In 1881 the brewery and maltings were employing nine men, but the farm employed 12 men and five boys. By this time the brewery was being run by John's eldest son, John Herbert Brown. An advert for John Brown's Tring Brewery in the West Herts Post in February 1888 read, in part: "celebrated fine ales brewed under the same system as the noted Isle of Wight ales patronised by Her Majesty", and one of the beers offered was Osbourne Ale at 2/- a gallon.

This was not, however, an oblique reference to that other John Brown, Queen Victoria's Highland ghillie. John Herbert Brown had been an apprentice brewer at Mew's brewery, Newport, Isle of Wight, and in 1850 Mews had been given a Royal Warrant to supply Queen Victoria's household at Osbourne on the island with beer.

Sold

John Brown senior died in October 1895, the oldest resident of Tring. The brewery passed to John Herbert and his brother Frederick William, together with nine tied houses. Five years later John Herbert died, aged 54, and the brewery carried on in the name of Frederick William Brown. But on Michaelmas Day 1898 the whole concern was sold to the Berkhamsted brewers Locke and Smith, and then, or very soon after, the Tring brewery was closed. Eventually in 1913 Locke and Smith's brewery in Berkhamsted was acquired by Benskins, together with all John Brown's old pubs such as the **Castle**, Tring, the **Pheasant** and the **Queens Arms**, New Mill, the **Greyhound**, Wigginton and the **Boot**, Long Marston.

Martyn Cornell



PUB OF THE MONTH

North Herts

White Hart, Puckeridge

October's Pub of the Month is as renowned for its excellent food as for its good ale. The **White Hart** in Puckeridge specialises in seafood and issues a challenge to customers: eat one of their seafood platters and receive a voucher for another meal.

According to landlord, Colin Boom, out of 300 to 400 customers who have tried it, only 20 or so have been able to eat the lot. This is perhaps not surprising: the platter includes cockles, mussels, whelks, jellied eels, Mediterranean prawns, smoked sprat, peeled prawns and a generous salad.

There is a wide range of other restaurant meals and bar snacks available, including vegetarian meals and a children's menu. The **White Hart** has been licenced since at least the early 1600s and is a delightfully intricate building with a beamed and panelled interior. The quality of the ale has merited inclusion in the Good Beer Guide. So why not pay a visit and try an excellent pint of McMullen's AK Best Mild or Country Best Bitter — and perhaps a saucer of jellied Eels?

The oldest pub in London Colney has re-opened with a new, olde worlde image. The **Bull**, in Barnet Road, owes its fresh look to the building skills of licensee Garry Ellis who took over the pub in November, in partnership with his wife, Jackie.

The building is 450 years old, with a core that goes back to the 14th century, so there are beams everywhere. The Ellises have knocked the cramped sitting and dining rooms into a more comfortable games area with room for darts, dominoes and shove ha'penny. Other changes include bringing the toilets in from the cold outside and opening up an ancient fireplace — which, it was discovered, had no less than five smaller, more modern fireplaces installed one on top of another!

The **Bull** offers Ind Coope Bitter and Burton Ale. There is also a tasty line in hot or cold meals at lunchtime and until 8p.m. in the evening.

The **Royal Oak**, Bushey, recently bought by Charles Wells, currently has four guest beers in addition to Wells IPA and Bombardier.

Pints 'n' Litres have opened a new off-licence at 169 St. Albans Road, Watford. They have up to six handpumped beers available: Ruddles Rutland Bitter and County, Adnams Bitter, Banks & Taylor Shefford Bitter and Glennys' Witney Bitter, plus a guest beer. Prices range from 72p for the Shefford to 89p for the County. Opening times are 10.30 till 10.00 Monday to Friday, 10.00 till 10.00 on Saturdays and 12.00 to 2.00, 7.00 to 10.00 on Sundays.

'RIGHT TO BUY' PLAN

A Labour Party member, Tony Earle from Essex, has called for licensees to be given the right to buy their own pubs from breweries in the same way council house tenants can buy their homes. The plan was dismissed as "a load of tripe" by the Brewers Society, but Mr. Earle hopes to get the plan adopted by Labour for its next election manifesto.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Tied houses

With the latest reference of tied houses to the Monopolies Commission, I hope that CAMRA will think before rushing in to support the end of the tie.

A local pub is so much more than a beer shop: it is a community centre at least as important as the local school or church. We already have the example of McMullens replacing tenants with managers as each pub becomes vacant, and I must admit that, in my opinion, only a very good manager is anything like as good in a local as a proper tenant landlord.

There is no way the Monopolies Commission (or the European Community) can force McMullens, or anyone else, to allow managers to sell other beers in their pubs. I fear the end of the tie could be the end of the local pub as we know it.

Ted Ovenden
Bengeo, Hertford

PUB AWARD ENTRIES

Three totally contrasting Hertfordshire pubs are among the 70 entries for this year's CAMRA Pub Awards, for good design and conservation work on public houses.

The **Two Bridges, Croxley Green** is an enormous 1950s roadhouse, which has been completely transformed into an open plan pub with several split levels, each in a different style. It has been entered by Inde Coppe Benskins Ltd.

Also entered by the same company is the famous canalside **Fishery Inn, Boxmoor**, which has been refurbished with bars at two levels, a terrace and garden.

The third pub was entered by CAMRA's Hertfordshire South Branch, and is Greene King's tiny rural **Woodman, Chapmore End**, which was given a redecoration and face-lift during 1985.

Each of the pubs has been entered for the Best Refurbishment Award, and CAMRA's Pub Preservation Group would be pleased to hear from readers with views about the quality of the refurbishment work, if you would like to write to them c/o 7 Sheppards Close, St Albans, AL3 5AL.

CAMRA members feel, or so it appears, that everyone should drink real ale. Although CAMRA stands for choice, this tends to mean that they should be given the choice of real ale in all pubs. However, a choice should mean that people can choose what they want to drink, be it lager, G&T or real ale. This utopia is upset by the brewers who advertise certain beers, usually national beers and lagers, on TV and create a market by convincing people this is what they want to drink. The brewers deny it, but if this is not the case why do they spend vast sums on advertising? Unfortunately, CAMRA cannot match the brewers in money terms and advertise real ale, so that is to be done?

Different

Try to get people to try real ale. A lot of drinkers under 24 have never tried real ale, or if they have they did not like it on the occasion they tried it. The thing about real ale is that every one is different and unfortunately you may be unlucky and have an indifferent pint, or possibly a certain brew does not agree with your taste buds.

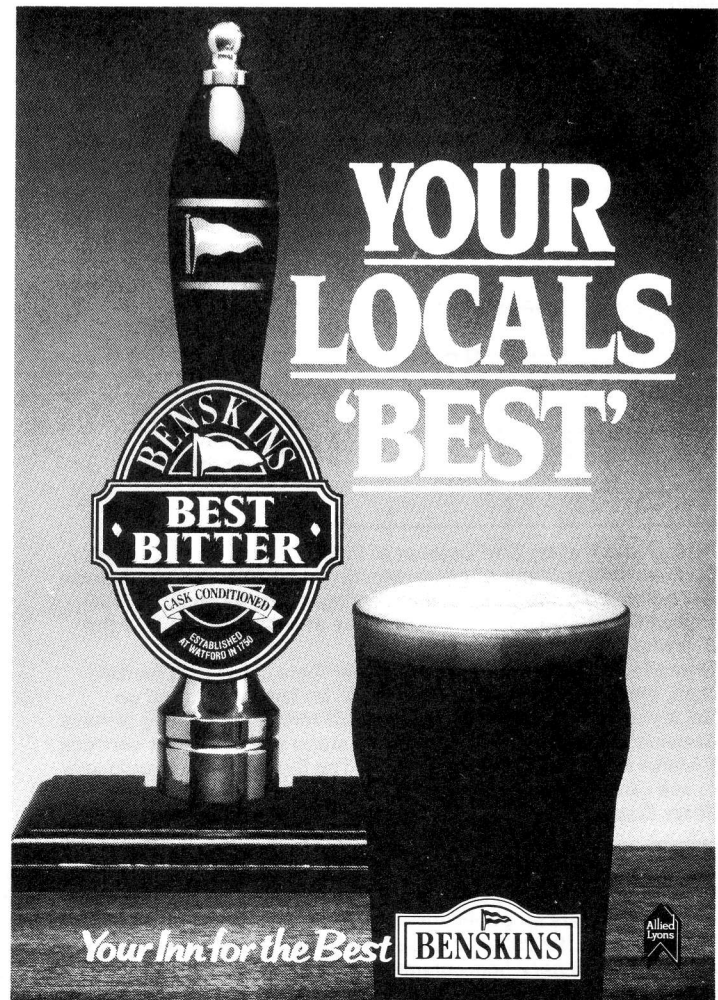
Change

While chatting to a Benskins manager recently, he told me that the new Benskins Best Bitter, brewed at Burton-on-Trent, was a much better beer than the old, in fact so good that he had had several customers change to it from lager and John Bull keg. He had helped the change by suggesting that they try it and now he had a lot of Best Bitter drinkers. His turnover has increased and as far as he was concerned he had done his job. As Benskins has only one house name product, Best Bitter, it seems a pity that more Benskins landlords do not emulate this governor.

Morlands

A regular feature of this column will be my pub of the month; everyone has one. This one is the **Red Lion** at Stoke Talmage in Oxfordshire. If you want to try it out its just off the M40, last but one, follow the old A40 and then the signs to the village. A splendid country pub with farm attached, it is a free house selling Morlands Mild and Bitter at prices in the 70s. Darts and Ring the Bull are available inside and Aunt Sally outside, but don't challenge the governor! There is also a ferocious cockerel outside, so don't venture into the vegetable garden. The landlord and his wife are both getting on in years, but their son helps run the pub. A very friendly atmosphere with loos from a bygone era, but no food.

Rambler



HERTFORDSHIRE NORTH BRANCH

Thursday 2nd October

Social at the Plough, Ley Green, 8p.m.

Thursday 16th October

Pub of the Month Social at the White Hart, Puckeridge, 8p.m.

Thursday 23rd October

Extraordinary General Meeting at the Bull, Watton-at-Stone, 8p.m.

Thursday 13th November

Social at the Star, Furneaux Pelham, 8p.m.

Contact Peter Clarke ☎ Stevenage 65957

WATFORD & DISTRICT BRANCH

Wednesday 8th October

Two pub social at the Kings Head and the Rose & Crown, Abbots Langley. 8p.m. at the first pub.

Tuesday 14th October

Branch Meeting at the Windmill/Harvester, Bushey Heath, 8p.m.

Wednesday 22nd October

Two pub social at the Black Boy and the Kings Head, Bushey. 8p.m. at the first pub.

Sunday 26th October

Committee Meeting at the West Herts Sports & Social Club, 8p.m.

Contact Tony King ☎ Garston 672587

MID-CHILTERN BRANCH

Tuesday 7th October

Social at the Three Horseshoes, Winkwell Pier, 8.30p.m.

Tuesday 21st October

Pub crawl starting at The Bugle, The Lee, 8.30p.m.

Tuesday 28th October

Pub crawl starting at The Royal Oak, Bovingdon, 8.30p.m.

Contact Peter Freeman ☎ Hemel Hempstead 69773

HERTFORDSHIRE SOUTH BRANCH

Monday 6th October

Committee Meeting at the Duncombe Arms, Hertford, 8p.m.

Wednesday 15th October

Conker Match: South Herts v. Rest of World at Plough, Datchworth, 8p.m. Everybody welcome.

Tuesday 21st October

Branch Meeting at Townshend Arms, Hertford Heath, 8p.m.

Tuesday 28th October

New outlet social at the Candlestick, Essendon West End, (McMullens), 8p.m. Ring contact for directions.

Contact Adrian Jolliffe ☎ St. Albans 69675

HERTS/ESSEX BORDERS BRANCH

Branch Meeting at the White Lion, Sawbridgeworth, 8.30p.m.

Contact Steve Marlow ☎ Harlow 30450

NORTH HERTS BRANCH E.G.M.

A reminder that on 23rd October at the **Bull**, Watton-at-Stone at 8p.m. an Extraordinary General Meeting of the North Herts Branch will be held. The purpose of the meeting will be to ascertain the possibility of electing a new committee at an A.G.M. to allow the Branch to continue.

Should the apathy among CAMRA members in the area persist then, after eleven years the Branch will be formally wound up. So, if you think there is more to life in CAMRA than reading 'What's Brewing' once a month, please come along and offer your services. CAMRA is only as strong as its roots. The Big breweries would love to see CAMRA disappear; do not let it be you that is the cause.

Peter Clarke.

3rd October: **Crown, Stanstead Abbots**, 8p.m. Singaround at Hoddesdon Folk Club.

5th October: **Brewery Tap, Ware**, 8p.m. Scotch Measure at Ware Folk Club.

10th October: **Crown, Stanstead Abbots**, 8p.m. The Crows at Hoddesdon Folk Club.

12th October: **Brewery Tap, Ware**, 8p.m. Tim Laycock at Ware Folk Club.

17th October: **Crown, Stanstead Abbots**, 8p.m. Tim Laycock at Hoddesdon Folk Club.

19th October: **Brewery Tap, Ware**, 8p.m. Singers Night at Ware Folk Club.

24th October: **Crown, Stanstead Abbots**, 8p.m. Johnny Coppin at Hoddesdon Folk Club.

26th October: **Brewery Tap, Ware**, 8p.m. Brian Peters at Ware Folk Club.

31st October: **Crown, Stanstead Abbots**, 8p.m. Singaround at Hoddesdon Folk Club.

2nd November: **Brewery Tap, Ware**, 8p.m. Rosie Hardman at Ware Folk Club.

7th November: **Crown, Stanstead Abbots**, 8p.m. Bonnie Shaljean at Hoddesdon Folk Club.

Listings in the What's On column is FREE. Send details for December and January to the Editor by 1st November.

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

CAMBRIDGE REAL ALE GUIDE

Stand up for your rights

A guide with much to say about beer quality is the new "Real Ale in and around Cambridge". This is seen as a local priority through a catchy section in the weighty 24-page editorial entitled "How to complain".

This tells customers about their basic rights and how to go about getting bad beer changed, and invites readers who have still met with no satisfaction to contact the branch with details.

But where this guide scores best is with its clarity. It is spaciouly laid out, to great effect — you could read this at night in Dirty Dicks after ten pints of Abbot! Though the maps are a little disappointing, there is a handy pull-out map tot he entire area at the rear.

There is a nice theme to the guide with a series of photos of pubs and drinkers of yesteryear. Overall, it is very professional and appealing, and at only £1.50 for 96 pages represents good value. Copies are available, price £1.75 inc. p&p, from Paul Ainsworth, 9 Willingham Road, Over, Cambridge CB4 5PD (cheques payable to Cambridge CAMRA).

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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