



HERTFORDSHIRE'S

Pints of View

The bi-monthly publication for the discerning real ale drinker

August/September 2005

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No. 212

CAMRA's Festival Gift



Local charities proudly display their donations made from the proceeds of last year's **St. Albans Beer Festival**. South Herts CAMRA's gift of **£2,000** enabled St. Albans LEOs to distribute this amount to the charities, held at a special function at CAMRA HQ on Wednesday 6th July. *See page 2*

Also In This Issue:

- CAMRA Attacks Brewery Closure
- Celebration at the Southern Cross, Watford
- CAMRA's 2005 Pub Prices Survey Results

St. Albans Beer Festival Supports Local Charities

Proceeds of the **2004 St. Albans Beer Festival** totalling £2,000 were donated to charities at a function held in CAMRA HQ on Wednesday 6th July. Laura Dunks of St Albans Leo's and Phil Defriez, South Herts CAMRA Chairman were joint masters of ceremonies. Phil opened by thanking all those who had helped to make the 2004 Beer Festival the most successful ever, with **more people** attending and **more beer** sold than in any previous year.



Phil Defriez presents Laura £2,000

Laura then stated that the Beer Festival was the main source of funds raised by the Leo's each year, and thanked all those who had helped. She then made the following donations by presenting cheques to representatives of the organisations:

- £250 to ASBAH, the Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus, which supports and educates the parents of children with Spina Bifida in Hertfordshire.
- £500 to Grove House Hospice, who support patients and their families diagnosed with cancer and other life-threatening diseases.
- £400 to the Society for Huntington's disease in Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire; Huntington's disease is hereditary and a degenerative disorder of the brain which results in progressive mental deterioration. £500 was donated to the Gaddesden Place Riding for the Disabled Association, where

instructors work with physiotherapists to help people of all abilities.

- The final donation of the evening was £250 to St Albans Youth Talk, who provide confidential counselling to 14 to 25-year-olds.

The mathematicians amongst you will have realised that this does not add up to £2,000, but the Leo's also raise money in other ways, and had already made a donation to St Albans Mencap .

We look forward to another successful Beer Festival at the Alban Arena this coming September, and expect to be able to make another substantial contribution to local charities. The Festival could not take place without the help of a large number of volunteers, so please consider giving some of your free time, no experience is necessary. Even if you only have a couple of hours to spare (i.e. for one working session) it will make a big difference.

The Beer Festival will be running again this year from 28th September to 1st October at the Alban Arena. Full details are on the back page.

If you want to volunteer to help out please contact : John Schmitz on 07968 852024 or

E-Mail to: John.schmitz@hertsale.org.uk

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THE BITTER END

Greene King to Close Ridley's Brewery

The Campaign for Real Ale has attacked Greene King's plans to close the 163-year-old Ridleys Brewery in Essex this autumn. CAMRA claims that the acquisition of Ridleys threatens consumer choice as Greene King's dominance in Essex and East Anglia grows. Suffolk-based Greene King is paying £46m for Ridley's brewery at Hartford End, near Chelmsford, opened in 1842. Greene King is also buying Ridley's 73 pubs which are based in Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire.

CAMRA is calling on the Government to reinstate legislation to force brewers with more than 2,000 pubs to allow their pub tenants to take a guest beer from a supplier of their choice.

Mike Benner, Chief Executive, said, "This acquisition follows hot on the heels of the takeover of Jennings by Wolverhampton and Dudley in June. A new generation of national brewers (Greene King and W&DB) have over 2000 pubs each and would have been defined as national brewers under the Beer Orders legislation, which was revoked in 2002.

Takeovers rarely lead to benefits for customers and invariably lead to erosion of consumer choice and as breweries close and beers are axed." Ridley's has been family owned since 1842, brewing excellent local beers.

They also brew *Tolly Original* (since 2002), *Greene King XX Mild* under contract and *Pale Island* for Kelham Island Brewery - current holders of the **Champion Beer of Britain** Award. This proves that demand does exist for breweries which specialise in short-run craft beers.

In many cases Ridleys' 73 tied houses compete with other local Greene King pubs and some of Ridley's rural estate would not meet GK's viability criteria. Greene King are also

notorious for selling pubs de-licensed and as we know they are often worth more when sold for residential conversion. It is also difficult to believe that Greene King will continue to brew *Ridleys IPA*

for long as it clashes with its own IPA". Greene King closed Rayments at Furneux Pelham in 1987, Biggleswade brewery in 1997 and Morlands in 2000, and CAMRA has hit out at comments from Ridley's Managing Director, Bob Wales, appointed in April 2005.

Mr Wales said, "The Board and I are delighted with this announcement and look forward to the Ridleys business growing and developing. Ridley's is a good business with some excellent and dedicated people at the Hartford End Brewery site..."

Mike Benner CAMRA Chief Executive said, "One has to ask the question, 'what has changed?'"

Spirit Inns for Sale or Auction

The relentless consolidation of pub chains continues with the press reporting the sale of the Spirit Inns managed estate of 1,035 pubs, valued at £3 billion, to Punch Taverns in the latter part of June. If the takeover is successful Punch will be the largest pub owner in the UK with 8,600 pubs, having overtaken their nearest rival Enterprise Inns. This is yet another business acquisition that will do little for consumer choice or competitive pricing policies.

Punch, having bought out Spirit Inns last month, relegating Enterprise to second largest UK Pub Co, have continued their conquest, buying out Avebury Taverns based in Gerrards Cross, Bucks. They bought Avebury's remaining 409 pubs, took on their £125 million debt and £26million cash reserve for £219 million. This works out to about £300,000 per pub, something of a bargain. Punch spokesman Mr Thorley said "This transaction is relatively small. It doesn't change our appetite to make further acquisitions".



CAMRA Pub Prices Survey 2005

A survey of pub prices recently released by CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, shows the average cost of real ale has risen to £2.15 a pint, whilst the cost of a pint of lager has risen to £2.36. Whilst beer prices in pubs are up by over 4%, real ale remains the best value. CAMRA Chief Executive Mike Benner said; "Real ale is a natural, living product and full of taste. The fact that lovingly produced real ale costs less than mass-produced lager means that real ale really is exceptional value for money". Details of the survey are shown below:

Year/ % Change/ £ Extremes:	2005	2004	% Change	Cheapest	Priciest
Real Ale Prices per Pint					
UK Whole:	£2.15	£2.06	4%	£1.19	£3.00
East Anglia	£2.25	£2.15	5%	£1.45	£2.65
East Midlands	£2.06	£1.99	3%	£1.20	£2.55
London	£2.36	£2.24	5%	£1.30	£3.00
North	£1.96	£1.94	1%	£1.26	£2.34
North West	£1.84	£1.87	-1%	£1.19	£2.60
Scotland	£2.29	£2.12	8%	£1.84	£2.80
South East	£2.32	£2.22	4%	£1.35	£2.90
South West	£2.18	£2.11	4%	£1.65	£2.60
Wales	£2.05	£1.96	5%	£1.25	£2.55
West Midlands	£2.04	£1.97	3%	£1.40	£2.60
Yorkshire	£1.95	£1.88	4%	£1.19	£2.80
Real Ale Prices per Pint for:					
National Brewers' Beers	£2.04	£1.96	4%		
Independent Brewers' Beers	£2.20	£2.10	5%		
Micro-Brewers' Beers	£2.09	£2.04	2%		
Real Ale Prices per pint by Outlet:					
National Chain Pubs	£2.13	£2.02	5%		
Independent Brewers' Pubs	£2.18	£2.10	4%		
Free Houses	£2.15	£2.08	3%		
Lager Prices per Pint					
UK - Whole	£2.36	£2.25	5%	£1.43	£3.05
South East (this region)	£2.52	£2.42	4%	£1.59	£3.00
North West (cheapest region)	£2.11	£2.03	4%	£1.43	£2.63
London (priciest region)	£2.54	£2.41	5%	£1.54	£3.05
Other Drinks Prices per Pint					
REAL CIDER - UK	£2.28	£2.27	0.1%	£1.20	£3.00
KEG CIDER - UK	£2.38	£2.30	4%	£1.39	£3.25
NITROKEG - UK	£2.13	£2.03	5%	£1.15	£3.00
KEG STOUT - UK	£2.52	£2.41	5%	£1.51	£3.10
1,076 pubs of mixed ownership in total were surveyed by CAMRA during February 2005.					

So what can we see from the Price Survey on page 4?

- Real ale prices have increased by 9 pence (4.42%) to £2.15 a pint (inflation RPI = 3.2%)
- Lager prices have increased by 11 pence (4.57%) to £2.36 a pint.
- Cheapest region was the North West (as last year) where real ale cost £1.84 a pint and lager cost £2.11. Real ale prices have actually *gone down* in this region.
- The dearest region was London where real ale cost £2.36 a pint and lager cost £2.54.
- Hertfordshire in the South East remains the second most expensive at £2.32 a pint.
- Scotland experienced the largest rise in the cost of real ale. The price of a pint rocketed by 8.07%
- Wales experienced the largest rise in the cost of lager. The Price here also rocketed, by 5.55%
- Real cider has hardly changed in price and costs 10 pence less than the fizz keg product.

A pint in South East may cost £2.32, but numerous pubs here in the South Herts area do charge significantly less for quality ales. **CAMRA 2005 Good Beer Guide** listed pubs include; the **Carpenters Arms**, Harpenden - under £2.00 for Mild, the **Woodman** at Wildhill charges no more than £2.10 for all its guest beers. Other pubs not listed in the Good Beer Guide include; JD Wetherspoons pubs the **Cross Keys** (St. Albans) and **Admiral Byng** (Borehamwood) – virtually all ales are under £2.00, the **Spotted Dog** in Flamstead sells at least one of its bitters for £2.00, and the **Inn on the Green**, Harpenden sells *Greene King IPA* for £2.15.

Red Squirrel Celebrates its First Year's Trading

Gary Hayward, who unfortunately became redundant in 2002, has turned his skills as an industrial chemist to good use after setting up the **Red Squirrel Brewery** in Mimram Road, Hertford. It took six months to set up the plant, which included building work on the factory unit plus installing a brand new single mash infusion, whole hop, electrically heated, 10 barrel brewery.

Why call it Red Squirrel? Gary said - "There is already a 'Hertford Brewery' and if I name it after a person there can be problems with copyright law. We wanted an environmental, conservation image and 'Red Squirrel' just seemed right".

Initially there were some yeast problems, and after six brew changes had to be made on two different strains; one for



the light and one for the dark beers. The beers are named after their brew style: IPA, Wheat Beer, Stout, Bitter Mild, Honey Porter etc. The most successful beers are *Conservation Bitter* 4.1% and *Gold* 4.2%, with at least twelve other beers brewed in rotation to support them.

Organic Ale? The next venture being explored by Gary is the possibility of converting the whole product range to organic ingredients. We will report on the progress of this in due course.

The free-trade cask conditioned beer market is very competitive; quality and market image is everything, and it has been very pleasing to see Red Squirrel beers well received in a variety of outlets, large and small, including the J.D.Wetherspoon group. It is a real challenge with new demands on both quality and regulation, but Gary knows that it is a challenge that Red Squirrel can meet.

Ian Philp, Brewery Liaison Officer

www.redsquirrelbrewery.co.uk

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Celebrities Write – Reflections on Beer

Sometimes when I reflect on all the beer I drink, I feel ashamed. Then I look into the glass and think about the workers in the brewery and all of their hopes and dreams. If I didn't drink this beer, they might be out of work and their dreams would be shattered. I think, "It is better to drink this beer and let their dreams come true than be selfish and worry about my liver".

Babe Ruth (American baseball player)



An intelligent man is sometimes forced to be drunk to spend time with his fools.

Ernest Hemingway (Author)



When I read about the evils of drinking, I gave up reading.

Paul Hornung (American football player)



When we drink, we get drunk. When we get drunk, we fall asleep. When we fall asleep, we commit no sin. When we commit no sin, we go to heaven. So, let's all get drunk and go to heaven!

George Bernard Shaw (Nobel literature prize winner)



Beer is proof that God loves us and wants us to be happy.



Benjamin Franklin (Scientist, writer and inventor. Coined the maxim "early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise".)

One night at Cheers, Cliff Clavin explained the "Buffalo Theory" to his buddy, Norm. "Well ya see, Norm, it's like this. A herd of buffalo can only move as fast as the slowest buffalo. And when the herd is hunted, it is the slowest and weakest ones at the back that are killed first. This natural selection is good for the herd as a whole, because the general speed and health of the whole group keeps improving by the regular killing of the weakest members.

In much the same way, the human brain can only operate as fast as the slowest brain cells. Excessive intake of alcohol, as we know, kills brain cells. But naturally, it attacks the slowest and weakest brain cells first. In this way, regular consumption of beer eliminates the weaker brain cells, making the brain a faster and more efficient machine! That's why you always feel smarter after a few beers....." (*whether you can actually act smarter is another issue - Ed*)

Contributed by John Clark

Ted Ovenden (26.02.1932 - 22.05.2005)



It is with great sadness that we have to report that Ted Ovenden, a long-term CAMRA member and branch activist, passed away suddenly in May.

Ted was well known in many East Hertfordshire pubs as the face of CAMRA, tirelessly delivering *Pints of View* far and wide from his home in Bengeo. His favourite locals included the **Old Cross Tavern** and the **White Horse** in Hertford, the **Woodman**, Wildhill and the **Rising Sun** in High Wych.

Ted was a connoisseur of real ale and, in particular, porter - which was his favourite type of beer. There was nothing finer than engaging with Ted on the subject of beer – his rich knowledge laced with anecdotes was always entertaining and thought-provoking.

Before retiring in 1991 Ted was a Customs & Excise officer, once having responsibility for local breweries – so a familiar face, then, at McMullens.

His love of Morris Dancing joined seamlessly with his love of real ale. For 29 years he danced, or played the melodeon, for Standon Morris and was even known to sing a folk song or two. Sons, son-in-laws and grandsons followed father into the team.

Music was another passion – Ted had mastered a number of instruments – and his love of England and the English tradition was strong – he was never tempted to leave these shores and never owned a passport. His interests covered local history and railways - he was one of the last passengers on the Buntingford line before it closed in the 1960s.

But above all, Ted was a warm and generous family man enjoying almost 50 years of marriage to Pam who he first met in class at school when aged 11. We would like to pass on our deepest sympathies to Pam, her children and grandchildren.

Ted - it goes without saying that you will be greatly missed by your friends in the South Herts Branch - here's to you!

Government Ignores Public Opinion and MPs on Short Measure

Although the Government has made numerous pledges to end rip-off Britain and put Short Measure Legislation as one of it pledges in the election manifesto of 2001, they have again ignored public opinion and 287 MPs by **not** putting the legislation recommended in the Early Day Motion 331 (see editions 210/211) into the Queen's Speech, to be dealt with in this session of parliament.

It is hard to explain the disappointment felt but we are not giving up, and the campaign for a full pint continues.

Following the General Election a new all-party Early Day Motion (EDM) has been tabled in Parliament opposing a 95% pint, and calling for legislation to put an end to short beer measures. An EDM is a petition that MPs can sign to ask for legislation on an issue.

The new EDM is 404, so if you are against a "short measure" e-mail or write to your MP asking them to sign.

CAMRA has set up an online webpage to enable you to send a letter or e-mail to your local MP. The system uses your postcode to find your local MP. To use this system please visit:

www.camraactionnetwork.org.uk/full_pints

Parliamentary procedure means that usually only backbench MPs sign EDMs, but you should not be put off contacting your MP if they are not a backbencher. MPs with official jobs will often be well placed to pass on your views to those who take the decisions. In the last session of Parliament a record 287 MPs signed an Early Day Motion calling for a full pint. This was the third highest number of signatures of the 1,100 EDMs which were tabled, and a remarkable achievement.

Demand Full Pints

The key message to get across is that the Government's proposal to define a pint as not "less than 95% liquid" will make the problem of short beer measures worse. Ask your MP to sign EDM 404: Measures of Pints of Beer. As in edition 210 we will name and shame those who don't! You may find it helpful to include some of the following points.

- A 95% minimum would easily become a 95% norm.
- A 95% minimum endorses the practice of short beer measures.
- A 95% minimum gives the green light to pub companies to put systems in place to systematically rip off consumers.
- Why should the consumer be obliged to pay 100% of the price of a pint, yet only be entitled to receive 95% of a pint?
- Small brewers who don't own pubs are hit by short measures as it means they sell less beer
- Short beer measures cost consumers over £400 million a year.
- 8 out of 10 pints are short, and 1 out of 4 pints are short by over 5%
- It is common practice in some pub companies and chains to attempt to serve 185 pints from a cask containing 176 pints.
- As less beer is being sold less tax is being paid (levied as the beer leaves the brewery, not at the point of dispense).

And, above all:

- A 95% minimum would not result in consumers being guaranteed a minimum 95% of a pint. The proposed 5 per cent tolerance will be added to the existing deficiency threshold normally applied by enforcement agencies, which will result in licensees being able to serve pints of substantially less than 95 per cent liquid.
- Don't allow the situation to get worse.
- Don't allow short measure to continue unabated.
- Act now for a Full Pint.

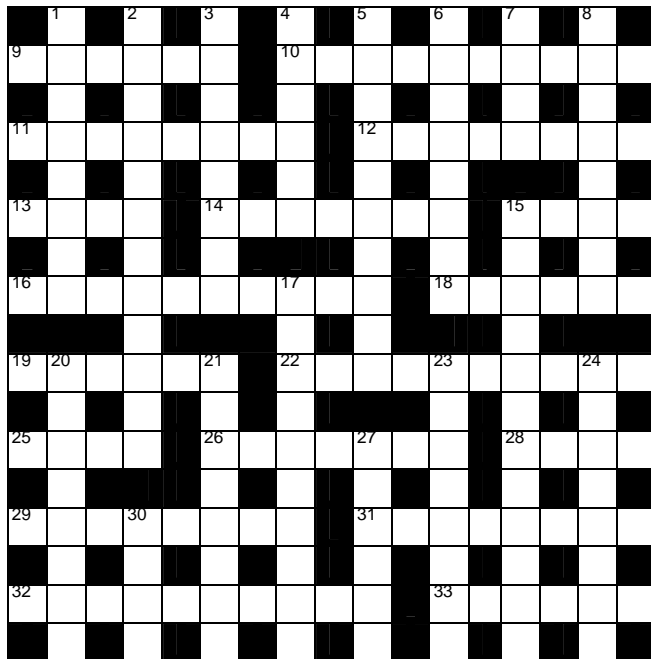
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Prize Crossword

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The winners of our previous newsletter's 'Cryptic Brewery Names' competition are:

A. Smith of London Colney, who wins a 2004 St. Albans Festival Polo.

Steve Nye of Knebworth, who wins a 2005 Good Beer Guide

After completing the crossword, you must highlight in the grid a forthcoming event (4 words, one an abbreviation).

Send Entries to: J. E Green, 63 Green Lane, St. Albans, Herts, AL3 6HE

Name:

Address:

Postcode:

The Solution to Catherine Wheel Cryptic Brewery Names Competition in Newsletter 210

1	A	B	B	E	Y	D	A	L	2	E	V	E	R	A	R	D		
	R	I	D	E	A	8	N	A	G	S	H	E	A	9	D	3	S	
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6	S	N	E	D	B	O	5	H	C	E	R	B	S	E	L	G		

CLUES ACROSS

- 9 Something spotted which could take one for a ride (6)
- 10 The old care about being deaf through inattention (5-5)
- 11 After end of barrel, one team switched to a different drink (5, 3)
- 12 He leaves the toilets vandalized – what a heel! (8)
- 13 People imbibing need this for starters (4)
- 14 Skin lines? (7)
- 15 It's thought innkeepers don't encourage ales to produce heads (4)
- 16 Replace corn, endlessly cultivated , with anything similar (6, 4)
- 18 Breaking the law might reduce this (6)
- 19 Brewing family is relatively loaded (6)
- 22 Present storms in east including considerable winds (10)
- 25 It's an advantage being in Hedgerley (4)
- 26 Living dangerously around east in hiding (7)
- 28 This one of 34 here (4)
- 29 Bill in advance of supply causes poor farm to be demolished (3, 5)
- 31 Comedian entertains a churchman (8)
- 32 Back soldiers in coaster in preparation for war (10)
- 33 Visit restaurant for tea, literally? (3, 3)

CLUES DOWN

- 1 Behind which service takes place (8)
- 2 Why black ink used unexpectedly? (3, 2, 3, 4)
- 3 Pleased that the fire's well stocked? (8)
- 4 Cake made from ale and rice, mostly (6)
- 5 This sucker spits crudely on hat (10)
- 6 Pubco noticed this powerful tool (8)
- 7 Way in which ale is drunk around north (4)
- 8 In this clothing is a suitable place for money (8)
- 15 Unable to communicate until I trace a problem (12)
- 17 With difficulty, as Sir Peter breathes (10)
- 20 Supervised by G-men, hungry? (8)
- 21 Going back, several right to be worried (8)
- 23 English had a party, cut (8)
- 24 Submarine made from usual tin (8)
- 27 Encourage location of pub, we hear (6)
- 30 Plant providing iron to the navy (4)

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British Beer too Hot to Handle

Hundreds of pubs are serving real ale which is too warm to be refreshing, an inspection has revealed.

The recommended temperature for a hand-pulled pint is from 11C to 13C but assessors found 44% of pints bought in 2,000 UK pubs exceeded 13C.

Publicans in London, Essex, Middlesex, Cambridgeshire and the West Midlands all pulled pints measuring between 25.9C and 28.1C, said Cask Marque.

But the worst offender was in Kent, where an inspector found a pint at 35C.

The report was conducted by quality assessors from Cask Marque. Each of the inspectors' unannounced visits were carried out in the nine months up to February this year.

Director Paul Nunny said many customers were confused about what makes the perfect pint.

"There is a common misconception that cask beer is intended to be warm.

"Proper beer is cool, refreshing and thirst quenching."

Iain Loe, from the Campaign for Real Ale, said warm beer should never be served.

"We have invested tens of thousands of pounds to keep our beers cool at beer festivals because we recognise that real ale is best appreciated at about 11C."

BBC News, 21 June 2005



Ale experts say beer is supposed to be cool and refreshing

Ed says: The other extreme can be equally as bad with flash cooled beer turning your teeth on edge.

CAMRA Good Beer Guide 1997 - 2005 Cask Marque Certification



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DOWN YOUR WAY

This pub news section has been enlarged to cover the whole of Hertfordshire. The information comes from a large number of sources, and from time to time errors may occur. Some of the information in the North Herts area included for the first time in this edition may be slightly out of date. Any additional information will be gratefully received.

Aldenham: The **Roundbush** Thai restaurant has closed and has been replaced with a Portuguese/ Mediterranean menu.

Ardeley & environs: News from the **Jolly Waggoner** (Ardeley), **Bull** (Cottered), **Moon & Stars** (Rushden). Pay attention as this gets complicated! And we now have more information from a reader. Thanks for the update Nadine. Darren Perkins is the tenant of The **Bull** and he has been for the past 12 years. Darren was the tenant of both The **Bull** and the **Jolly Waggoner** for about 14 years. Darren gave up his tenancy recently at The **Jolly Waggoner** to concentrate on operating The **Bull** as it had been under trading. He has relocated all his staff from The **Jolly Waggoner** to The **Bull**. The chef who used to work for Darren at The **Bull**, Neil Martin, has taken a tenancy out on The **Moon & Stars**. However, the regional and national food operator award was made to Darren Perkins personally for HIS cooking abilities and NOT to Neil Martin. This award is thus awarded to the Chef and not the pub, and would follow Darren wherever he decided to produce food. Neil is opening the **Moon & Stars** seven days a week.

Aston: The **Pig and Whistle** has new owners and has been given a major refurbishment. The pub now sells *Bass* and *Greene King IPA*, with food on sale lunch and evenings.

Baldock: The **Victoria** now sells *Deuchars IPA*, which seems to be getting everywhere these days.

Buntingford: The **Jolly Sailor**, now owned by Punch, has been painted outside, with new signage. Inside there are now two real ales, *Spitfire* and *London Pride*. The smoke content seems to have gone down as well. The **Chequers** is to reopen again shortly; rumour has it that the new owners are looking for younger clientele. The **Railway** is now a Chinese restaurant as well as a pub, landlord Nick also runs the **Yew Tree** in Walkern.

Chipping: The **Countryman** doesn't sell *Bass*

any more. Along with *GK IPA*, the second pump now has rotating guest ales.

Dane End: The new licensees took over at the **Boot** at the end of May, have got rid of the pool table, and will be concentrating more on food. Real ales are *GK IPA* and a weekly guest, recently *Adnams Bitter*, *London Pride* and *Adnams Broadside*.

Frogmore: The **Red Cow** has become the offices for Bio Sculpture and not returned to a pub - as rumoured in our last edition.

Furneux Pelham: Congratulations to all at the **Brewery Tap** which has reached the regional final of Greene King's *Community Pub* competition.

Great Hormead: The new people are settling in at the **Three Tuns**. *Speckled Hen* may be removed due to poor sales, and be replaced with something else. Note: all beers are currently on cask breather, but the IPA may be taken off if sales volumes continue at current levels. The food menu is not as dear as the previous incumbents.

Hare Street: The **Beehive**, shortly after having a pretend sign while it was acting as the **Horse and Groom** in the movie version of 'Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy', has a brand new sign. Locals in the know say it can be seen from as far away as Braughing and Barkway.

Harpenden: The **Old Bell** has a planning application on it (posted on the fence as you drive into the pub) and it is a listed building. We think the application is quite extensive but we don't have the full details. Also there is some disquiet in the local paper about the **Engineer** having an extended licence. The **White Horse** at Hatching Green has been sold and is closing in August for refurbishment. Watch this space for future news.

Hitchin: The **Half Moon** now stocks real cider. The **Millstream** has been refurbished.

Lemsford: A belated welcome to Chris & Alan who took over at the **Long Arm and Short Arm** in March. They moved from the **Fox** at Woolmer Green.

Puckeridge: The **White Hart** has been decorated inside and partly opened out, and has a very nice

feel to it now. The small standard menu is backed up by a wide choice on the specials board. Try the *Ultimate Burger* or the huge cod and chips - at only £6 each for excellent food at a very good price. The stuffed hart's head in the bar didn't survive the decorating.

Preston: Congratulations to all at the **Red Lion** who have won the **Hertfordshire Pub of The Year Competition**, and will now be going forward into the national **Pub of the Year Competition**, East Anglian Section. Shortly after its cameo appearance in ITV's 'Foyle's War' the Red Lion had planning permission approved for an extension to the restaurant area, improved disabled access and re-siting of the toilets. The price of the original works has proved prohibitive but revised plans for improvements are being investigated.

Redbourn: We are pleased to announce that the **Chequers**, badly damaged by fire, has been completely repaired and has re-opened.

Ridge: The **Old Guinea** re-opened on 8th July after being closed for a month for structural work, which included renewing the sewers and moving the bar. The pub has now been redecorated in a tasteful maroon and white inside (to celebrate Arsenal's centenary year) and blue and white outside (to appease the Tottenham supporters). The pub is now non-smoking in the eating area and will be serving a Thai/Malaysian menu in the evenings, with an English lunchtime menu. Beers are *Greene King IPA* and *Shepherd Neame Spitfire*.

South Mimms: The **White Hart** was closed for several days in June to replace flooring attacked by woodworm.

Shenley: The **William IV** changed hands again on 16th June and was closed for two weeks for a re-decs. and to have the toilets upgraded. The pub now has a much more open plan feel with light colours and the tables and chairs replaced. The pub re-opened 1st July and is selling *Greene King IPA* on hand pump. We welcome Erica and Steve Pringle, the new tenants who previously lived next door to the pub. The **Queen Adelaide** is unfortunately no longer selling real ale, reportedly due to lack of demand.

Stevenage: The **Two Diamonds**, a McMullens pub in the High Street in the Old Town has

changed to a tenancy and has been closed for a refurbishment. The **Marquis of Lorne** also in the Old Town has a new landlady, who started earlier this year.

St Pauls Walden: Summer must be here as real cider and perry are back at the **Strathmore Arms**. Also the *Fullers Chiswick Bitter* has been replaced with *Woodforde's Wherry*, which is proving very popular.

Watton-at-Stone: At the **Waggon and Horses**, *Martsons Pedigree* and *London Pride* are regulars, with a guest available, often *Black Sheep Bitter*. Real ale sales have tripled in the last year so they are clearly getting it right. The licensee at the **Bull** which sells *Greene King IPA* and *Abbot*, and three guest ales, has won a cellarmanship award from Punch Taverns.

Welwyn: The **Wellington** has undergone a major refurbishment that entailed closing the pub.

Westmill: The **Sword Inn Hand** has been painted outside, has a new sign, now does 'luxury B&B', and has acquired an extra 'n' in it's name.

Watford and District News:

Heronsgate: Congratulations to Martin Few and Gill Nicoll at the **Land of Liberty, Peace and Plenty**. They celebrated serving their 100th beer variety on the 4th July with *Grand Union One Hop Willamette* (fittingly an American hop variety). Martin and Gill have reached this milestone after taking over at the pub in February this year.

Leavesden: The application to demolish the **Hare** in Leavesden, as mentioned in the last edition, has been withdrawn.

Rickmansworth: The **Western Inn** has reopened under the name **Druids**. There's a rugby theme and cask ales include *Brain's SA* and *London Pride*.

Sarratt: John and Maggie Moir, formerly licensees at the Land of Liberty, are now in charge at the **Cock** on Church Lane.

Watford: The handpumps have been removed from **Flynn's** (formerly Reid's) in Estcourt Road.

Hertfordshire's Pints of View is produced by the South Hertfordshire and Watford & District Branches of the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA). The views expressed are not necessarily those of the editor, CAMRA Ltd or its branches. Any articles or letters for publication should be sent to: Steve Bury, 14 New Road, Shenley, Herts, WD7 9EA.

Watford and District Feature

The Southern Cross Celebrates its 500th Guest Ale

Over the last few years the *Southern Cross*, in Langley Road, has become the key pub in Watford for drinkers seeking a varied and well-kept range of real ales.

Licensees John Ross and Joan Bayliss took over the running of the pub four years ago and are managing a great example of a new style of modern, suburban pub that appeals to a wide cross-section of the community; as well as to those making their way home from the

nearby Watford Junction station. The pub itself is a large, road house-style building that has served as a hotel in the past and retains eleven rooms for visitors. A major internal renovation by owners Orchard Inns has opened up a single, large drinking area around a central island bar. The roomy bar area is decorated in bold but warm colours with a mixture of modern and classic pub furnishing to go along with the discreet ornamentation. Good, traditional pub food is offered, as is to be expected in a large neighbourhood pub these days, and that modern favourite the pub quiz is not forgotten. There are three quizzes a week: general knowledge on Sundays and Thursdays, and a pop quiz on Tuesdays.

Such a pub, of course, won't necessarily stock a range of quality Real Ales, so what makes the Southern Cross so special? After a successful beer festival a few years ago three changing guest ales took their places on the bar to

supplement the regular beers. Since then the pub's policy of backing Real Ale has gone from strength to strength. The owning company were initially doubtful that cask beers would be profitable, but their scepticism was short lived and increased

sales resulted in John and Joan being given access to a greater range of ales. It's not unusual now to find patrons walking into the bar and straight up to the guest ale pumps to see the day's selection. In addition to the changing guest beers, former CAMRA Champion Beer of Britain *Caledonian*

Deuchar's IPA was introduced as a regular on the bar recently, which came as a welcome change for Watford. The quality of the beers ensured that the pub gained a listing in the Good Beer Guide 2005 and reports are that success of the pub has led to

John being called in as a consultant for other pubs in the chain, so clearly he's doing something right. The prosperity of the Southern Cross reinforces the belief, held by CAMRA and much of the pub trade, that a pub serving quality cask beer will be a quality pub in all other ways.

As evidence of the success of the pub's Real Ale policy the Southern Cross recently celebrated

its 500th guest beer, and Watford & District branch were there to toast the pub's continued success and to enjoy a cask of *Inveralmond Ossian* (actually beer number 501!); which is another brew, like Deuchar's IPA, from John's home country of Scotland. So here's to many more years of fine beer and fine nights at the Southern Cross!



The Southern Cross, Watford



John Ross (second left) celebrates the pub's 500th beer with members of the Watford & District CAMRA branch

Andrew Vaughan

The Best Pubs in the County

Now the summer days are with us, I decided to visit as many of the Hertfordshire CAMRA branches' '2004 Pubs of the Year' (POTYs). Three could be done on a Sunday – until 25 September 2005 – by local bus. This is my itinerary with additional information for those starting from places other than St. Albans. Catching a 321 from Luton Bus Station at 10.50, St. Albans, to Watford Market Place at 11.53 allows an easy connection to the W5 at 12.00 to the Watford POTY, '**The Sportsman**' in Croxley, arriving there at 12.14. For those coming from the eastern side of the county there is a 724 from Harlow which picks up at Hertford Bus Station

at 09.50 direct to Croxley Met. Station, arriving there at 11.15. The Sportsman is about ¾ mile further on at the roundabout. As the name suggests, the pub has a sporting theme with many artefacts displayed around the large bar.

To get to our next POTY, Mid Chilterns' '**King's Head**' Tring, a W6 picks up outside the Sportsman at 13.16 back to Watford

Market Place, at 13.44 to connect with a 500 at 14.00 through to Tring, arriving there at 14.53. There is usually time for a quick comfort stop half way in Hemel bus station, but have a word with the driver first. The **Kings Arms** in King Street is a comfortable back street local regularly offering *Brakspear's Bitter*.

There is time for food in Tring before catching the 327 from the main bus shelter at 16.31 takes us through Aldbury, where two more good pubs can be found, and on to Dunstable. Get off in West Street at 16.56 and there is time for a quick pint in The **Victoria**, which is South Beds Branch's POTY. The Victoria offers an excellent range of beers including one from Tring Brewery, and hosts regular beer festivals. Sadly, there isn't time to linger here too long and it is necessary to walk through to the square to catch the last 343 back to St. Albans at 17.28, which drops off in St. Peter's Street at

18.15, allowing comfortable time to catch the 321 from approx. 100 yards from Tesco at 18.39 up to Harpenden. Alight at the **Plough & Harrow** and walk past the first mini roundabout, then turn right at the next mini roundabout into Cravells Road and the **Carpenter's Arms** is just up on the left, you should arrive at 19.00. This is South Herts' POTY, and has a strong motoring theme and a warm welcome. *Courage Best* and *Adnams Bitter* are always available along with two guest beers, of which one is often a mild.

Getting home is now the final part of the day's tour. 321s continue to Luton at 19.53 and 20.53 or to St. Albans at 20.25 and 21.25, allowing those from the east to catch the last 724 at 22.30.



The Red Lion at Preston

All the above can be achieved on an Explorer ticket from the driver of the first bus. This £7 ticket allows two adults to travel together – with 2 children if the family is coming too. There are two more POTYs which are not covered in the above tour, simply because there wasn't time, or a Sunday bus service to include them.

Herts. & Essex Borders' winner, the **Rising Sun** in High Wych near Sawbridgeworth is a fine old hostelry offering all its beers on gravity. The *Mighty Oak* beer I sampled on a recent visit was stunning! The other pub which couldn't be fitted in to our itinerary was the **Red Lion** at Preston, which is North Herts' POTY, and also the county nomination to go forward to the regional and, hopefully, the national selections. Congratulations! This pub can be reached on Mon-Sat, except evenings, by the 88 bus between Hitchin and Luton.

Fuller details of travelling to the Hertfordshire Good Beer Guide entries, including all the above, can be found in the public transport guide to the Hertfordshire pubs, a CAMRA publication. Detailed bus times are available from the traveline on 0870 608 2 608 or www.traveline.org.uk. Happy pubbing!

John Crowhurst

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BRANCH DIARY

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE:

Wed 3 Aug: Branch Social - **Great British Beer Festival**, Olympia.

Wed 10 Aug: Branch Social, Baldock Crawl - **Engine** 8pm, **Old White Horse** 8:45pm, **Victoria** 9:30pm, **Rose & Crown** 10:15pm

Sat 13 Aug: *Branch Mini-bus Ramble* - **Robin Hood**, **White Lion**, **Yew Tree** (all Walkern), **Rising Sun** (Halls Green), **Red Lion**, **Cricketers** (both Weston) 10:15pm. £5 per person. **Pick-ups:** Baldock 6:15pm, Hitchin 6:30pm, Stevenage 6:45pm, drop offs close to home. Please book by 3rd Aug.

Wed 17 Aug: Branch Social, Hitchin Crawl - **Highlander** 8pm, **Coopers Arms** 8:45pm, **Corn Exchange** 9:30pm, **Kings Arms** 10:15pm.

Fri/Sat 19-20 Aug: Branch Trip - **Leeds to Manchester** by train. Drinking in station pubs in Leeds, Dewsbury, Huddersfield, Marsden, Stalybridge and Manchester. Overnight in Manchester, and then back home. Approx. cost: rail tickets £50, accommodation £50 - twin room. To register interest, please email: diary@nherts-camra.org.uk

Wed 31 Aug: Branch Social, Stevenage Crawl - **March Hare** 7:30pm, **Swan** 8pm, **Marquis of Granby** 8:30pm, **Squirrel** 9pm, **Our Mutual Friend** 10pm.

Fri 9 Sept: Branch Trip - **Chappel Beer Festival**. Further details nearer the time.

Sat 10 Sept: *Branch Mini-bus Ramble*, **Lilley Arms**, **Silver Lion**, (Lilley), **Gloucester Arms**, **Green Man**, **Red Lion** (Great Offley). £5 per person. **Pick-ups:** Stevenage 6:15pm, Baldock 6:30pm, Hitchin 6:45pm, drop offs close to home. Please book by 31st Aug.

Wed 14 Sept: Branch Meeting - **Red Lion**, Preston, 8pm

Letchworth Beer Festival – See page 13

Tue 20 Sep: Set up Day, **Thu - Sat 22-24 Sept:** Beer Festival, **Sun 25 Sept:** Festival take-down Day. Beer drinks in **Our Mutual Friend** afterwards. **Volunteers are needed at all times.**

Wed 28 Sept: Branch Social, Stevenage Old Town Crawl - **Prince of Wales**, 8pm, **White Horse**, 8:30pm, **White Lion**, 9pm, **White Hart**, 9:30pm, **Standing Order**, 10pm.

*Members only club requiring sign-in. Ask Branch Contact for further details.

WATFORD & DISTRICT

Fri 5 Aug: Social at the **Great British Beer Festival**. Meet at the membership stand at 6pm and hourly thereafter.

Tue 9 Aug: Pop Quiz Social: **Southern Cross**, 8.45pm for 9pm start.

Wed 17 Aug: England vs Denmark social at the **West Herts Sports Club*** from 7pm. *See footnote.*

Mon 22 Aug: Committee Meeting. **Estcourt Arms**, Watford, 8.15pm. All members welcome.

Thu 25 Aug: Annual Branch Darts Tournament at the **West Herts Sports Club***, 8pm (meet at 7.30pm). *See footnote.*

Sat 27 Aug: Social at the **Clarendon Arms**, Chandler's Cross, 1pm.

Tue 6 Sept: Bushey social. **King Stag**, 8.30pm; **Red Lion**, 9.15pm; **Swan**, 10pm.

Fri 16 Sept: Croxley Green Social. **Coach & Horses**, 8.30pm; **Artichoke**, 9.15pm; **Sportsman**, 10pm.

Mon 26 Sept: Committee Meeting. **Estcourt Arms**, Watford, 8.15pm. All members welcome.

Tue 27 Sept: Pump House Open Mic Night social, Colne River Room, **Pump House**, Local Board Road, Watford from 8.30pm.

Thu 6 Oct: Watford social. **Essex Arms**, 8.30pm and then on to the **Beaver** and the **Southern Cross**. Contact branch for details.

Wed 12 Oct: London social. **Lamb**, 6pm; **Swan**, 7pm; **Night & Day**, 7.45pm; **Square Tavern**, 8.30pm; **Head of Steam**, 9.30pm.

Branch contact: Andrew Vaughan. Phone: 01923 230104. Email: branch@watfordcamra.org.uk
Website: www.watfordcamra.org.uk

SOUTH HERTFORDSHIRE

Tue 16 Aug: Branch Meeting **White Horse**, Castle Street, Hertford, 8pm.

Wed 24 Aug: **Peterborough Beer Festival** social. Bus leaves St Albans station at 6pm.

Tue 13 Sept: Branch Meeting **Green Man**, Sandridge, 8pm.

Beer Festival Publicity Pub Crawls: (+see page 20)

Sat 17 Sept - Harpenden (Meet 6.30pm in **Harpenden Arms**), **Sat 24 Sept** - St. Albans (Meet 6.30pm in **Farmers Boy**)

Tue 28th Sept - 1st Oct St Albans Beer Festival
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