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HERTFORDSHIRE'S

# Pints of View

The bi-monthly publication for every discerning drinker

October/November 2007

Circulation 7500

No. 225



## Beer Festivals Special Issue



**Special Reports on North Herts and South Herts CAMRA Beer Festivals – see pages 10/11 and centre pages**



**A Third of a Century of Campaigning** – It all started here 35 Years Ago

*See page 12*



**Regional Winners** –

The Land of Liberty Peace & Plenty is CAMRA's best Regional Pub *See page 26*

**PLUS: Features, news from around the county, branch trips, and a lot more!**



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## Drink Real Ale: Save the World!

*Local real ale in a pub is the sustainable choice*

**W**e're all becoming more environmentally conscious and drinking real ale from a local brewery in a local pub will help the environment.

As home-drinking hits record levels, CAMRA is calling on drinkers to swap their armchairs for the barstool at their local to enjoy a real ale produced by a local brewery. 46% of UK beer sales are in cans or non-returnable bottles, producing a huge amount of waste.

New research shows that 54% of adults would like to see at least one local beer in every pub, yet too many pubs still stick to the usual global beers offering no local alternative. Choosing local beers also helps boost the local economy as it has a multiplying effect, keeping money and jobs in the community and making companies more responsive to local needs.

Mike Benner said, "The real ale revolution means there are around 600 real ale breweries in Britain. That means there are few places without a truly local brewer on their doorstep, so why do we still see so many beers trunked up and down our motorways? The demand for local beer is clearly there, so the pub industry needs to act to deliver what consumers want and what the environment needs".

Local real ale enjoyed in a pub is the most sustainable choice because:

- It boosts the local economy creating jobs
- It reduces unnecessary 'beer miles'
- It boosts sustainability through promoting a sense of pride, provenance and identity to communities across Britain
- Acts as a counterweight to beers from huge distant global companies
- Reduces packaging waste through reusable casks which can last up to 20 years
- Reduces energy used in the pub as the beer is served naturally cool, not superchilled, through a handpull which requires no electricity
- Supports the principles of the Sustainable Communities Bill through promoting local pubs and brewers

- Shepherd Neame brewery in Faversham, Kent has recently installed a new PDX heating system for their brewery's copper boilers. The new heater has improved the brewery's energy efficiency by 19% and greatly cut down on water usage. Shepherd Neame's environmentally driven renovations have resulted in the brewery being amongst the seven companies to receive the Queen's Award for Sustainable Development last year.
- Westerham Brewery in Edenbridge, Kent, takes 96% of its hops from local producers and the malt comes from the nearest maltings in Warminster, Wiltshire. It has improved its water efficiency to three and a half pints of water for every pint of beer.
- Adnams has opened a new distribution centre in Southwold, Suffolk, which has a sedum roof that provides active insulation. The building harvests rainwater, has solar heating, and uses 55% less electricity and 30% less gas per square metre than their previous warehouse.

## Maiden's Head

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## Loss of Local London Pubs

The pub has traditionally been important for London's social culture.

Research carried out by *London Drinker* magazine listed a staggering 203 pub losses last year, and is part of a nationwide trend.

Jenny Jones, Green Party member of the London Assembly said: "Pubs are under serious pressure from cheap supermarket drink, the high cost of leases, and selling off for a fast profit for offices and residential accommodation. Without strong legislation, requiring planning permission for change of use, this cull of pubs will continue. Without more effective national legislation that requires planning permission for all change of use in pubs this cull will continue. More support and recognition from local authority planning departments and Mayoral strategies is also required to halt this trend".

Jenny added: "Not only do local independent pubs help the survival of small British breweries and real ale; they also provide meeting places and function rooms for community use. With the density of London's population set to increase by 700,000 by 2015 and drive towards high density housing there is a danger that leisure and other social meeting places such as pubs are overlooked alongside new developments and with the current trend of pub closures, London residents will struggle to find local pubs and be forced to travel longer distances"

**Ed Says:** These comments could be just as pertinent to any town in Hertfordshire, and let's face it, we are experiencing the same kind of pub losses. The danger these days is less to rural pubs which seem to have had their closure programme at least slowed down and it is the urban back street locals that are now seriously under threat. I'll say it again "Use them or lose them".

## Last Orders at the Bell

The **Bell** in Chequer Street, St Albans (pictured right) is one of the city's oldest pubs, and we have been informed that it will close as a pub and be converted it into retail premises, which will be part of the Maltings shopping precinct. Its name comes from a tenement called "La Belle" owned by Thomas

Haynes the local bailiff, which in 1452 was converted into an Inn. Of course the building which is there now does not date back that far and is 17<sup>th</sup> Century with a 20<sup>th</sup> Century rear extension. It is believed though that some of the timbers in the cellar are original and date back to the 15<sup>th</sup> Century. The boundary of St Peters and the Abbey parishes runs directly through the Bell's archway and is so marked on the entrance roof.



The Inn definitely sold real ale at one time but not since 1983 and Iain Loe, CAMRA's Research Officer, remembers doing his first TV interview outside the Bell in 1989 bemoaning the lack of real ale offered by Whitbread - the owners at the time.

This is not the first time the pub has been threatened, and was named P.J.Peppers at the Bell for a short period. It was later converted into a pizza parlour with bar. Fortunately the St Albans Civic Society and the Council as well as CAMRA persuaded the owners to keep the historic name. What the future holds is not quite clear, but it appears that we are about to lose a piece more of this city's heritage.

It seems that the whole character of drinking in St Albans city centre is changing; with the **Vintry** now reopened in a different guise, and the closure of the Bell and Harry Smiths along with the **Tudor Tavern** (goodness knows what's happening with that). One theory is that now we have flexible licensing the kids and louts who used to invade St Albans at the weekend no longer find **Batchwood Hall** and the **Adelaide** so attractive.

*Hertfordshire's Pints of View* is produced by the North, South Hertfordshire and Watford & District Branches of the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA). Views expressed are not necessarily those of the editor, CAMRA Ltd or its branches.

## Burnt Down Pub Reopens

Readers in North Herts may remember the events of October 2004 when the **Catherine Wheel** in Albury (north west of Bishop's Stortford, and pictured below before the fire) was completely destroyed by fire in a suspected arson attack. Just under three years and a whole lot of red tape later beer is flowing again in the brand new Catherine Wheel.



The original building was listed, with a thatched roof and many small irregular rooms. Here was where the problems started. As freeholders, Punch Taverns had several attempts at a new design before one met the approval of the Planning Officer at the council, and only then started the process of getting the site de-listed in order to get a new building erected on it. In between all this we had the slightly ludicrous situation of a planning application for extended opening hours for what at the time was a patch of weeds and some quarry tiles where the toilets used to be, surrounded by a mesh fence.

All the problems were eventually overcome, thanks in no small part to an enthusiastic group of locals who wanted their pub back, and made sure they did all they could to get Punch and the council past all the hold-ups. Part of this involved holding regular well-attended 'tinny vigils' in the pub car park just to show their continuing need for a focus point for community life in the village.

And so to the new pub. Built in traditional brick and tile, it is significantly larger than the original to allow for more dining areas; and of course to comply with current building regulations. Inside there is a bar area for drinking and a 75 cover restaurant area all decorated in a pleasantly understated modern style, while outside there are patios to both front and rear and a large

garden. There is even a horse trough for your trusty steed to refresh itself if you want to leave the car at home. This is definitely a country pub!

The pub is run by Louise and David Johnson and Vicki and Peter Roads who also have interests in the CAMRA **Good Beer Guide**-listed **Bull** in nearby Much Hadham. The business model is similar, with an emphasis on quality food, locally sourced where possible and a range of real ales kept in very good order. At present regular real ales are *Brakspears Bitter* and *Deuchars IPA*, with one or two guests including beers so far from Copper Dragon, Jennings and Theakstons. Cider lovers will be pleased to hear that *Westons Old Rosie* is available, and a perry might be coming.



*The bar area of the rebuilt Catherine Wheel*

Louise told us recently that they were delighted with how the first few weeks had gone. Plenty of locals had returned to their former haunt, but also many people had visited from further afield; with the vast majority of feedback being very positive. There had been one or two moans about how different the building is, but that is a fact of life in this over-regulated 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The old building would never have been built if it had to comply with modern legislation. And the village would have remained without a pub. It is to Punch's credit that they went ahead with a rebuild.

If you're in the area why not drop in and see for yourself? It's probably a good idea to phone ahead (01279 771191) if you want to eat.

*Graham Perry*

### Subscriptions for Pints of View

£5 for 18 issues. Send to: John Lightfoot, 66 Dryfield Road, Edgware, Middx., HA8 9JT. Cheques payable to: CAMRA South Herts.

## Rats Revitalised but What About the Kings Head?

Steve Evans opened the **Rats Castle**, St Albans after a full refurbishment on 30 July. The pub offers two real ales, *Brakspear Bitter* and *Fuller Hammersmith Special Draught*; (well one can't call it 'Horndean' now), with guest beers planned. Lunchtime food is available 12-3 with Sunday roast from 12-5. Out are the pool tables and in are padded benches and tables with stools or chairs. There is a small outside area for smokers. It is planned to heat this when the weather gets colder.

Steve has been at the **Kings Head** in London Colney, which owners Scottish & Newcastle Brewery have just sold to DB Reese builders, who wish to develop the land, although there is no planning permission sought at the moment. They haven't ruled out the continuation of the pub if it can prove viable and have allowed Steve a year's lease on the King's Head to see what can be done under different owners.

## Herts Wetherspoon's Makes it to the Guide

Congratulations to Mark Curtis, the landlord of the **Three Magnets**, Letchworth for managing to get Hertfordshire's only Wetherspoon's pub into the **Good Beer Guide 2008** – one of the vanguard of the new relationship between CAMRA and Wetherspoons! Mark has been Manager for a good few years now and has turned the pub around in terms of clientele, meals uptake and beer quality. Well done!  
*Colin Yates*

## Greene King Reels in Loch Fyne

Greene King, the Suffolk brewer famous for its takeover and closure programme, paid £68M to take over seafood restaurant chain Loch Fyne, in early August as it looks for growth opportunities to offset the impact of the smoking ban.

Greene King plans to double the size of the 36-strong restaurant chain over the coming years and intends to convert a number of its own pubs into more flashy seafood bistros. Greene King

already makes around one-third of its profit selling food. Analysts applauded the deal and the plan to convert a number of its existing outlets into new restaurants as Loch Fyne's outlets are much more profitable than the average Greene King pub. Dresdner Kleinwort, the investment bank, said the average Loch Fyne outlet earns about £278,000 compared with around £177,000 for an average managed pub in their estate.

Loch Fyne, named after the lake in the West of Scotland, grew out of an oyster farm of the same name and still sources seafood from its sister company, which supplies oysters to restaurants across the UK.

The company opened its first restaurant in 1987 before expanding south of the Scottish border. The private equity company Hutton Collins bought a majority stake in the chain less than two years ago in a deal that valued Loch Fyne at around £30m. **Harry Smith's** bar in St Albans (pictured below) is rumoured to be one of the Loch Fyne conversions, although a Loch Fyne restaurant is situated next door but one.

The deal follows Laurel Pub's takeover of La Tasca, the Spanish-themed Tapas restaurants (there is one in Watford High Street). Pub operators such as Greene King are looking for ways to diversify their businesses toward the fast-growing casual dining market.

*From The Independent, 8 August 2007*

**Ed Says:** The problem is will these newly converted pubs to Loch Fyne bistros serve real ale? The average managed Greene King tied estate pub does. Also, will drinkers not wishing to enjoy the pleasures of a seafood platter be welcome to come in and enjoy a pint of IPA? I think we should be told.



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## Women Drinkers 'are the Future of Ale'

New research by CAMRA suggests that 8 out of 10 women have never tried real ale in a pub, and CAMRA suggests that brewers and pubs should consider targeting their marketing at women drinkers.

Reports suggest the ale market is in recovery - ale sales are up 8% on the previous year.

After a dozen years of decline, consumers are increasingly turning away from global brands in favour of

local and regional real ales.

At present 25% of CAMRA's 87,000-strong membership are women. CAMRA's first lady Chairman Paula Waters (pictured below) said: "Beer is marketed at men, and therefore there has been very little to interest women. When is the last time you saw any press or TV advert for beer which is meant to attract women? At best they are inoffensively aimed at men and at worst they are downright patronising to women. More and more we see products that have been traditionally aimed at one gender – such as skincare products or cars – increasingly aimed at the other sex with great results. If breweries and pubs were to involve and educate women drinkers then they can tap into a massive market and further the real ale revolution".

### **Stylish Glassware.**

Research has shown one in three women believe that drinking from a pint glass is unfeminine. In addition 37% of women pubgoers aged 18 – 24 said they would drink real ale if it was served in a more stylish glass.

Paula Waters commented: "Nowadays people care about their image when they are out, as well as what is in the glass. Stylish glassware has boosted the sales of imported Belgian beers and there is no reason why a similar approach could not work for British real ale".



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# Champion Beers of Britain 2007

**H**obsons *Mild* from Hobsons Brewery in Shropshire was judged to be the best beer in Britain by a panel of brewers, beer writers and journalists at the 30<sup>th</sup> Great British Beer Festival, held at London's Earls Court in August.

The beer is described in the 2007 edition of CAMRA's Good Beer Guide as: "A classic mild. Complex layers of taste come from roasted malts that predominate and give lots of flavour".

The Shropshire-brewed beer was chosen as the overall winner from over fifty finalists in eight categories including beers from tiny micros to major regional brewers.

Roger Protz, one of the finalist judges and Editor of the Good Beer Guide said: "It's a great victory for a traditional British beer. Although only 3.2% abv it's bursting with flavour and, unusually for a mild, it's got plenty of hop character. It's great to see a classic copper coloured beer take the top award".

The Silver award went to Mighty Oak brewery in Essex for their Maldon Gold. The Bronze was awarded to Green Jack brewery in Suffolk for Ripper.

**CATEGORY WINNERS** – Note: The winner of the Champion Winter Beer of Britain ("Ripper" from Green Jack Brewery in Suffolk) was already in the final after being entered in February at the National Winter Ales Festival.

## **Milds**

**Gold:** Hobsons *Mild* (Clebury Mortimer, Shropshire)

**Silver:** Nottingham Rock *Mild* (Radford, Nottingham)

**Bronze:** Brains *Dark* (Cardiff)

## **Bitters**

**Gold:** Castle Rock *Harvest Pale* (Nottingham)

**Silver:** Twickenham *Crane Sundancer* (Twickenham, Middlesex)

**Joint Bronze:** Surrey Hills *Ranmore Ale* (Guildford, Surrey)

**Joint Bronze:** Fyne *Piper's Gold* (Cairndow, Argyll)

## **Best Bitters**

**Gold:** Purple Moose *Glaslyn Ale* (Porthmadog, Gwynedd)

**Silver:** George Wright *Pipe Dream* (Rainford, Merseyside)

**Joint Bronze:** Fuller's *London Pride* (London)

**Joint Bronze:** Nethergate *Suffolk County* (Sudbury, Suffolk)

**Joint Bronze:** Station House *Buzzin'* (Ellesmere Port, Cheshire)

## **Strong Bitters**

**Gold:** York Centurion's *Ghost* (North Yorks)

**Silver:** Inveralmond *Lia Fail* (Inveralmond, Perth)

**Bronze:** Brains *SA Gold* (Cardiff)

## **Speciality Beers**

**Gold:** Nethergate *Umbel Magna*, (Sudbury, Suffolk)

**Silver:** Little Valley *Hebden's Wheat*, (Hebden Bridge, West Yorks)

**Bronze:** St Peter's *Grapefruit*, (Bungay, Suffolk)

## **Golden Ales**

**Gold:** Mighty Oak *Maldon Gold* (Maldon, Essex)

**Silver:** Oak Leaf *Hole Hearted*, Gosport, Hampshire)

**Bronze:** Otley *O1* (Pontypridd, Mid Glamorgan)

In CAMRA's Champion Bottled Beer of Britain Competition, the awards went to:

**Gold:** O'Hanlon's *Port Stout* (Devon)

**Joint Silver:** Titanic *Stout* (Staffordshire)

**Joint Silver:** Wye Valley *Dorothy Goodbody's Wholesome Stout* (Herefordshire)

**Bronze:** Wapping *Baltic Gold* (Merseyside)

## 15,000 Pints Stolen on Way to Festival

**O**n Sunday 4th August a lorry packed full of real ale was stolen from a hauliers yard in Lincoln, on its way to satisfy the 60,000 thirsty beer drinkers expected at the Great British Beer Festival at London's Earls Court. Luckily CAMRA, with the help of the Small Beer Agency and several brewers sourced replacement beer. Marc Holmes, Organiser of the Festival said, "We knew it was going to be popular, but we've never had the beer stolen before! 15,000 pints is a lot of beer, but no one was disappointed as we had another 335,000 pints already there and succeeded in getting alternative supplies by Monday morning". Tony Eastwood, Managing Director of Small Beer said, "Crisis averted, we pulled out all the stops and got the beer to London by Monday morning. I'd like to thank Dave Scott and Glyn Williams at Small Beer for working so hard to the find replacement beer and the brewers for rising to the challenge and to Tom Wood of Highwood for letting us borrow a truck and driver to replace our stolen vehicle".

# North Herts Letchworth 2007 Beer & Cider Festival

Visitors to September's **Letchworth Beer and Cider Festival** had a variety of comments – all in the “very good” to “excellent” range and I can honestly say that I didn't receive a single negative one. Many CAMRA members, of course, attend Festivals regularly, me included. We of course are more interested in the local people from Letchworth, Hitchin, Baldock and Stevenage who are not members. Some visitors new to CAMRA Festivals are surprised to find themselves paying for entry and glass hire before even seeing a beer! When we explain about the “Sale or Return” on festival glasses, all is well again. The entry fee only applies to non-members of CAMRA - which is always a recruitment opportunity.



When it came to the week of the Festival, our small intrepid band of committee members worked from Tuesday spending many a happy(?) hour assembling the racks, shelves, posters etc. that were needed to get the show on the road. From then on, it was relatively plain sailing – all we had to do(!) was man the bars, merchandise sales, door, glasses bar, check the beers, mop up spillages,... and other such fun things! Any readers wanting to help at future festivals please say! Contact details are on

our website: [www.camranorthherts.org.uk/festivals](http://www.camranorthherts.org.uk/festivals) ...But the votes from visitors eventually let us come

to a decision about the **Beer of the Festival**; the beer which finally gained the award was *Dark Star Hophead*. The Best Cider/Perry was *Janet's Jungle Juice* and the Best Foreign Beer was the *Draught St Louis Kriek* from Brouwerij Van



Honsebrouck, a Belgian Cherry fruit beer.

*Above – also at the festival, Howard & Wendy of*



*Decisions for the tasting panel for the Champion Beer of East Anglia Golden Ales Category*

A number of the first-timers that I chatted to said they intend to join CAMRA in the next few weeks, possibly suggesting membership as a Christmas present for themselves! You know the idea, “Well, dear, did you like getting rid of me for a whole evening? For only £22 you can repeat the experience lots of times...!”

Of course, even when we opened we do have to do some work..... the brainwork being the most tricky, as you can see, with some more experienced tasters shown here helping to decide our entry for the Golden Beer of East Anglia.



*the Half Moon in Hitchin receive the Community Pub of the Year Award from Andy Rawnsley, North Herts CAMRA Branch Chairman.*

As a matter of historical fact, at one of the previous Festivals, Lindsey and Andy Brockhurst – pictured right - joined because of one of our “bargain” deals. They are now both active members of the North Herts CAMRA Branch Committee and help with all our Festivals, in addition to organising the beers, the website, writing lots of copy for the programme and contributing to Pints of View! Just as well we made Andy an offer he couldn't refuse....



One really good point about this Festival: there was still a reasonable choice of Cask Ales at the end! Possibly because I'd had to leave to go to another CAMRA member's wedding....!

Story: Colin Yates  
 Pictures: Graham Perry and Andy Brockhurst

**Environment and Sustainability**

This year we sourced all our beers in a very special way. Instead of ordering directly from brewers via nationwide distributors, we ordered all our non-local beers through swap schemes in place at our local breweries. This has considerably cut the food miles and carbon footprint for sourcing our beers.

**THE HALF MOON**  
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# 35 Years on the Wings of the Campaign



On Tuesday 20 November, South Herts Branch celebrates its 35<sup>th</sup> year of real ale campaigning, with a special social evening back where it all started - at the **Farriers Arms**, Lower Dagnall Street, St. Albans. We remain Britain's oldest branch. It will be brilliant to see as many of you as possible - members old and new. And if there are any younger readers out there that teeter on the brink of getting involved - now would be a great time to take the plunge.

## *The Land We Lived In*

Thirty five years ago local drinkers gathered at the Farriers to discuss beer and the appalling direction that Britain's big brewers were leading us in - to a land of frozen fizz, characterless pubs and soup-in-the-basket. In this new country, cask-conditioned beer would be axed and replaced with heavily-advertised tasteless keg pond water, historic pub interiors would be sacked, small brewers would be sitting targets for big brewery takeover and closure and East Anglian villages would be pillaged and left publess.

## *Bloated into Submission*

Social responsibility was anathema to the brewing giants - it seemed that only the smaller brewers had pangs of conscience about communities, a pride in the quality of their ale and a sense of modernity strictly balanced by the strengths and traditions that had embedded them in their heartlands.

The inexorable road to blandness was having its effect here too - many smaller brewers losing confidence in their products and trying to stay alive by sheltering in the slipstream of the brewing giants. All too often top-pressure was being used on their beers as they tried to emulate the taste and consistency of the newfound keg concoctions. British ale had reached its lowest ebb in the over-arching spirit of post-war change where everything new must be good and where British drinkers had been conned into ditching taste and tradition. Abroad people were proud of their brewing heritage; in Britain it was expendable. Only four home-brew pubs remained in the entire country.

## *Call This Beer?*

Let us remind ourselves of the terrifying things that were lurking in our midst; Watney's Red, Double Diamond, McEwan's Export, Younger's Tartan, Courage Tavern (pictured left), Worthington E and Whitbread Tankard. Home gatherings were awash with Party Fours or Party Sevens. Three-bar 1930s pubs were bludgeoned into single-bar plastic

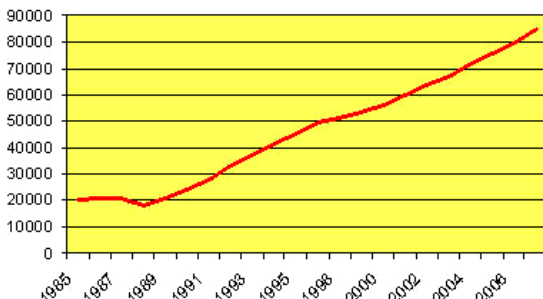


imitation barns, Centuries-old settles were evicted and supplanted with the grooviness of formica and plastic. Themed pub chains like Schooner Inns (Watneys), Trophy Taverns (Whitbread) and Toby Inns (Bass Charrington) - the corporate "modernised décor" - were brimming with poor taste. Blandness "Worked Wonders" and the beer that "Thinks It's A Quart" was, most definitely, "What We Wanted". So dictated the big brewers.



## *CAMRA to the Rescue*

Something had to happen and at the eleventh hour in it strode. The Sixties had taught us that protest could achieve results and soon this newfound confidence locked on to the brewers. Much to their annoyance, CAMRA was born. So quickly did



*On the rise - CAMRA membership 1985 to present*

CAMRA's membership grow that within a year, scores of branches had been born, campaigning was rife and our early somewhat direct tactics were upsetting the brewing establishment. Initially seen as an irritating, quaint and noisy rabble, CAMRA's motives and persistence started to change

perceptions - no longer a group to avoid but a group to accommodate. Its Beer Festivals showed the public what they were missing, beer became talked about, newsletters and beer and beer guides spread the word. New breweries and new beers sprouted and succeeded.

### ***National Treasure v National Pleasure***

Today, traditional cask beer is considered a national treasure. The varieties are legion with small brewers all over the land. CAMRA works with all brewers where it can. But is it all good news? Whilst keg beer has been defeated and sits brooding in the margins, CAMRA has been unable to counter the spread of lager – two generations of drinkers uninterested in traditional beer and buried under the all-consuming glacier. Too many mid-sized breweries have been lost to the giants. Some have become giants and now act like them. Pub Companies now own a huge proportion of Britain's pubs – controlling choice. A booze-cruise around Britain's towns and villages shows that the number of pubs has declined as lifestyles have changed and cheap imported drink has beguiled the masses. There's still too much tinkering with pub interiors.

### ***Eyes on the Road Ahead***

So what must we do? The battle for real ale has been hard fought and we must keep at it. We need a strong membership and a young membership. We need to get more and more people drinking real ale – more people asking for it – and to make real ale a popular contemporary beer that has an increased share of the beer market and will still be here in fifty years. We need to support our brewers, to persuade them to brew the beers we like. We need to get more people into our community pubs for them to survive and thrive. To achieve these aims, in South Herts we hold one of Britain's best provincial beer festivals (annually in St Albans), we operate a pub database for all the branch's pubs (find it at [www.hertsale.org.uk](http://www.hertsale.org.uk) – where you will also find a branch CV outlining our achievements in the last 35 years), we produce this bi-monthly newsletter and beer guides, we hold branch meetings and socials, have brewery visits, stand up and fight brewery closures and brewery and

pub company indiscretions at pubs – closures, re-namings and inappropriate refurbishments, promote our local breweries, support Community Pubs, Week and responsible drinking and use all avenues we can to put real ale where it ought to be – right at the top of every beer drinker's list of priorities.



If you fancy any of that - and the fun and good beer that goes with it – pop along to the Farriers on the 20th November, or to one of our subsequent branch meetings. Here's to another 35 years. Here's to the ale.

***Les Middlewood***

**Ed Says:** The Farriers Arms (McMullen's) which is in Lower Dagnall Street, St Albans is accepted as the birthplace of Herts CAMRA, which is why it has this blue commemorative plaque on the outside. It was unveiled in 1982 at the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary by Steve Warne, the first Chair of the Branch. Although the anniversary falls on a Tuesday, some of us, including myself, may well be making a day of it, so check our web site.

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# Pints of View Beer Name Prize Sudoku

		L			B			X
D				O		U		
X			L		S		O	
		O					U	D
			X		U			
I	U					L		
	L		B		O			U
		X		I				E
B			D			S		

Fill in all the squares in the grid so that every row, column and each of the nine 3x3 squares contain all the letters of Fernandes brewery beer: **DOUBLESIX**.

Completed entries by 1 December 2007 to: Steve Bury, 14 New Road, Shenley, Herts, WD7 9EA.  
1<sup>st</sup> winner drawn wins a CAMRA 2008 Good Beer Guide.

Your Name: .....

Your Address: .....

Postcode: .....

Winner of our Brewery Names WordSearch in Edition 223: Karen Belchere, Northwood Middx. Wins a **2008 Good Beer Guide**.

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**LEFT - Winners of the Prize Crossword in Edition 224:**  
A G Southgate - Hitchin, F D Bateson - St Albans, Peter Anderson - Welwyn. Each won 1 pair of tickets to the St Albans Beer Festival and £10 of beer tokens. Solution left. **Thanks to all who entered.**



## *The Signs are good but not in every case!*

It is very good to report, following my correspondence late last year on the sad state of pub signs in general, and St Albans' signs in particular, to see a complete transformation at the **Rats Castle** (the nearest pub to CAMRA HQ) during the third week of July. The pub, which has come in for some withering comments, has just smartened up its exterior with several new painted wall plaques, hanging baskets, new lanterns and - wait for it - a splendid new hanging sign (the first for years) featuring a grey stone castle tower with an enormous rat perched on top, its tail hanging out through the tower's portal. The background to all is a rich, dark maroon. The quality throughout is very fine. What a pleasant surprise and what a shock that this pub, above all, has decided to buck the general trend to do away with inn signs. I congratulate all concerned and wish them well. Perhaps someone will next update us on the beer quality?

Additionally, in French Row, the **Fleur de Lys** has come to a good compromise hanging a sign which, although quite new and modern, keeps its faith with local history. It just leaves CAMRA's second-nearest pub, Greene King's regrettably named and corporately signed **Old Speckled Hen**, to get up to speed with the signs issue. That may not happen but the Hatfield Road, Fleetville, has a new jewel in its crown anyway and I am very happy to see it.

*Tony Billings*

## *No Sign at the Inn*

Another pub for your list: **The Doctor's Tonic** (right) at Welwyn



Garden City has a 'green' GK sign displayed prominently outside. I spotted it on Friday while distributing beer festival leaflets.

*Tim Holma*

**Ed Says:** Thanks Tim, the pub is named "The

Doctors Tonic", previously the "Cottage" as the building was at one time the Cottage hospital, replaced by the QE2. Exactly what you would put on a pictorial sign I do not know, but I am sure a picture of prescription bottles would be a vast improvement on the faceless corporate image that adorns the pub now. All editions to our sad sign list gratefully received.

## **Roaring Mad?**

I was having a meal just yesterday (Mon 30<sup>th</sup> July) in the Harvester Pub at an area named for many years as "Roaring Meg" in Stevenage when I noticed the large quite tall (25 ft)? sign outside the pub with "Harvester" prominently displayed on it being taken down, it did not appear to be damaged in any way. I was then astounded to see a replacement sign hoisted up and put into place again with the name of the "Harvester" on it but underneath in equally large letters the name "Roaring Meg" on it.

*Don McCrimmon*

**Ed says:** The Ancient Briton is named after the oldest recorded settlement of Britons, which is on or near the site of the pub in St Albans. The words 'The Ancient Briton' do appear in the stone plaque (above) situated in front of the restaurant, and has done so for some time now. The Ancient Briton does have an area where you can partake of a drink separate to the restaurant area and therefore do not have to eat. The Roaring Meg is a



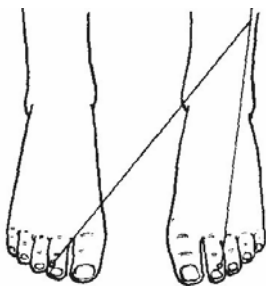
an enormous siege cannon from the English Civil War which was last used in 1646 by Parliamentary forces in the siege of Goodrich Castle, Herefordshire where it is now on display.

There is a very good picture of the Roaring Meg on the web

## *Hangovers Something New?*

I don't move in really serious drinking circles, but occasionally friends complain of hangovers and I offer them acupuncture which has often worked quickly over the years.

This cure is from "First Aid at your Fingertips" by D & J Lawson-Wood, 1963, under 'Indigestion and 'Hangover"', where there is just a sketchy diagram (see below).



Find point Li-Toe (Stomach meridian, 'metal' point) as follows. On your own left little toe find the left corner (or, if your toenail is rounded, 8

o'clock on the cuticle). Hop over the cuticle in a backwards direction (towards your leg) a tiny amount (one tenth of the width of your finger if you want to be precise). You will find a sensitive spot on the skin. (The right index toe will also work - think mirror image of the above.)

Do not use any needle or pin - there is no need. Press with a finger tip or finger nail at right angles to the skin - it should not be more than slightly painful. Bore in the finger with a circular motion. I find that ten seconds is enough, but the book says half a minute to four minutes.

Of course, if you have more of a poisoning, as with scrumpy cider in olden days, then there are points for this as well in the same book - if you are really ill, do see a medical practitioner.

For anyone who prefers taking a pill, I could suggest some homoeopathic remedies, but these may not be practicable if you wake up on a strange floor with a terrible head and stomach, and don't feel like dragging yourself to the nearest Boots or other chemist who stocks them. Good cheer!

*W Jim Howarth AIPT*

### **Bar Billiards Then and Now**

Long ago when I was young I had a job at DeHavillands at Hatfield, which is near the village of Lemsford. Here there were two pubs and each had a bar billiards table. Lunchtimes would see a few of the lads rush down for a game or two usually at the **Rising Sun** as this was fractionally the nearest to our workplace.

*Herts Readers Write continues on page 17 after The St Albans Beer Festival Special Supplement.*

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# St Albans festival goes from strength to strength

**T**he biggest pub in Hertfordshire re-opened its doors for the 12<sup>th</sup> St Albans Beer Festival last month at its spiritual home, the Alban Arena. This year's event saw a number of innovations to complement the tried and tested formula that has made St Albans one of the country's premier beer festivals and is now the largest celebration of the holy trinity of hops, yeast and water in the South East, outside the annual CAMRA Great British Beer Festival at Earls Court.

Over 350 real ales were available for guests to enjoy, spread over five bars.

New for 2007 was the Hertfordshire Bar, in the upper foyer of the Arena, where guests could enjoy up to 20 local beers from most of the county's leading micros and major brewers.

Fullers sponsored the main bar, and decorated it in their distinctive red

livery while the stage bar received a similar treatment from *Wells & Youngs*, who also sponsored this year's festival pint glasses.

In a bid to provide additional seating for guests a large marquee was erected, with access direct from the building. Here drinkers could escape the

hustle of bustle of the festival, but with the wet and windy weather that prevailed during the early part of the festival, it was not in full use until the Friday night.

While the bars were kept busy upstairs, downstairs in the lower foyer, staff were kept busy in the Foreign Beer Bar, again sponsored

by *Budvar*, the beer list this year was even more comprehensive with bottled and draught beers from right across Europe and beyond.

This year there was even beer from Mauritius.

The festival was officially opened on





the first night by St Albans Mayor, Kate Morris. She congratulated CAMRA on making the St Albans Beer Festival one of the premier events in the city's calendar attracting large numbers to the city during its four-day run.

Also attending the opening ceremony was St Albans MP Anne Main, who spoke briefly on pub preservation and her belief that pubs are not the cause of the excessive drinking problems that allegedly exist today among young drinkers.

Although numbers on the first night were a little down, this picked up on Thursday, with the Friday and Saturday sessions seeing staff at full stretch behind the bars.

Our annual Beer of the Festival Competition saw brewers, publicans and

## BEER OF THE FESTIVAL

This year's winners were

- 1st **Grand Union**, One Hop (Simco)
- 2nd **Crouch Vale**, Brewers Gold
- 3rd **Hobsons**, Mild



assorted CAMRA diehards sampling a short list of 18 beers from the stage bar to find the festival champion. Their eventual choice, *Grand Union's One Hop* (Simco), a golden beer, was a popular choice. The CAMRA products stand welcomed

*Above: The Festival crowd enjoy the nightly auction in the main arena*  
*Below: "Nine Below Zero" rocked the Arena on Saturday night*  
*Left: Bar staff at full stretch on the Friday night*



Roger Protz, Editor of "The Good Beer Guide" who was kept busy signing copies of the recently published 2008 edition.

The stand also signed up 140 new members, a fine achievement and sales of festival polo shirts was brisk.

The Verulam School Big Band returned on the Thursday night for a programme of big band favourites. The youngsters were in good form as usual and every year more and more guests choose to come along for the Thursday night session to see the band.

Another popular event at St Albans Festival is the nightly brewiana auction, run by "Pints of View" editor, Steve Bury. Steve sold everything from bar mats to pump clips and bids were brisk. All the money raised at the nightly auction goes to local charities. Our annual Festival Quiz, organised by John Bailey, is a regular Saturday afternoon favourite and this year was no exception, helped possibly by the free gift of two free bottles of beer - *Fullers ESB* and *Harviestoun Bitter & Twisted*, to everybody taking part.

The stage was now set for the festival finale and R&B legends Nine Below Zero, who, surrounded by drinkers on the stage wowed the crowd during their ninety-minute set, with many old favourites.

*Below: St Albans Mayor, Kate Morris, raises a glass to toast the success of the festival on opening night.*

*Bottom: The Verulam School Big Band played on the Thursday night*



Sixpence (two and a half pence to you) placed in the slot would buy us a game over our pub lunch.

If you were lucky, "Cats Eyes" Cunningham, the company's famous chief test pilot, would come in and buy us a half pint apiece." Can't have you drinking too much or you will not be fit for work when you go back."

Then there was the undertaker. He appeared one day in a heavy Astrakhan overcoat. Like all those in his line of business he seemed to wear it permanently whatever the weather, along with a smile that declared that he would never be redundant. When we asked him if he would like to play a game he said he'd give it a try although he could not remember when he had last had a go. Still failing to remove his coat he lined the balls up incorrectly to break off, leading us to believe that he would be easy meat. One of us put the red in the correct position for him and thereafter, to coin a



phrase, he buried us. None of us were in his class.

In those days the playing of bar billiards was not permitted on Sunday and so tables were covered with a cloth or sheet of plywood to make sure the law was upheld.

Some tables had four rather than three skittles and I have always believed that this constituted Russian billiards and the three skittle arrangement was bar billiards. The four skittle set-up limited the possible shots and was, I thought, less fun to play. The time limit that the "bar" enforced meant that it would inevitably end, unlike snooker which can go on indefinitely when played by two incompetent players.

Whereas a bar billiard table only needs cue access from one end and therefore takes up less bar room, the game was really ousted by the more space consuming game, pool. Were there commercial interests involved here? I always preferred bar billiards and have bought

myself quite cheaply, a second hand table, on which I play matches with my grandchildren. It helps keep me out of the pubs, at least until they are old enough to buy me a beer!

*John Austice Brown*

**Ed Says:** This was obviously inspired by Les Middlewood's article in the last newsletter. One of my memories is on a visit to Jersey in 1972. We visited the **Smugglers Inn** and there was a player in there who could start a game by sinking the red avoiding the mushroom, which was always raised and replaced on the spot. They then continued to do so until the bar dropped minutes later, their opponent never being able to approach the table. I have never been a fan of pool; I suppose it is because I used to play snooker and billiards and always subscribed to the opinion that pool was a game with small balls and big pockets to ensure that even the most useless player could sink something. The game of pool was imported from America where in general it is played with striped and plain coloured balls, all of which are individually numbered. The UK version with just red and yellow heralded the surge in popularity.

Les says it seems that last month's article stirred an interest in the game, with a number of people contacting us to register the whereabouts of other tables. So if you're up for a game, get down to the **White Swan** in St Albans, the **Chequers** at Woolmer Green or the **Strathmore Arms** at St.Pauls Walden. Now, how about a bit of cross-pub competition?

**See also: North Herts v East Beds Bar Billiards, p22**

### **Cold Hands?**

John Crowhurst made a good point about hygiene in pubs. (POV 223)

What annoys me is no hot water in toilets. Surely this is a legal requirement?

Those failing to provide it don't deserve CAMRA awards. Hint! Hint!

*John Dean*

**Ed Says:** The issue of toilet facilities has not been raised for many an issue; it is normally much more of concern to ladies rather than gents. In so far as the CAMRA awards selection, toilet facilities do not feature prominently in our criteria, though if they were bad it would definitely go against said pub. Which pub is being referred to I could not possibly speculate.

### **Oversized Glass Myth Exposed**

In denouncing certain pubcos (pub companies) pub operators and breweries for their short-measure policies (POV224), John Crowhurst reminds us of their fallacious argument that drinkers would have to foot the bill for introducing new over-sized glasses.

We all now have the opportunity to witness this twaddle in real time, "thanks" to a recent EU directive.

The more alert of POV readers might have noticed over the past few months, that many of our pubs have introduced new glassware for our beer. Not new in size - since the "pint" and "half-pint" measures are still clearly marked. But new because the traditional crown stamp, the assurance of a full measure since 1699, has been replaced by a CE code number. CE, by the way, is an abbreviation for Communauté Européenne or Communauté Européenne, French for European Community or Conformity. Our pints are now defined in French.

Supposedly this was to synchronise with the rest of the European Union. One wonders how long it will be before the same argument is used to get rid of the pint itself - be warned!

The point is, where are all the cries of horror from the pubcos et al. that they have to put up the price of our beer because the EU has insisted that these new EU glasses be used? I for one, a guarded sentimentalist rather than a cynic, might be tempted to think they are quietly and honourably absorbing the costs. Hmmmmm - not! In fact, I am surprised that they haven't used this as an excuse to put up beer prices anyway. (OK, yes, forget the sentimentalist bit - I am a cynic.)

The fact is, there are no extra costs. Replacement is simply "as and when" new glasses are needed to replenish damaged stock, as we are all witnessing right now in real time. And this is already included into the price of our pints, as it always has been.

*Ian Boyd*

### **More Short Measure?**

"Take it to the Top?" Oh dear its déjà vu all over again, as Sam Goldwyn said.

I have been asking for - not demanding - a full pint all my drinking life (46 years so far). In the better class of pub, very much a minority now, you don't even have to ask.

The simple answer is that the froth is an emulsion of gases in beer, and is not part of the "pint"; it is an indication that the beer is not dead and flat. *Cont/d*

*Peter and Katie give you a warm welcome to -*

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A very quick resume of recent years is indicated. Wetherspoon pubs, virtually alone, introduced oversized lined glasses, including mugs (or jugs), by way of backing the private members bill in the House of Commons. This was "talked out" by the disgusting Eric Forth MP. Wetherspoon's shrugged their shoulders and promptly put all their lined glasses into storage, rejoining the deceitful publicans. The only place that I have seen lined glasses since that debacle was at the **St Albans Beer Festival**, and CAMRA are to be congratulated for that. Until Westminster encourages or coerces pubs, I fear that nobody is going to follow your admirable lead.



Two other points affect the issue: Firstly, the Exchequer would automatically collect more duty if a full pint was served each time, as the froth is not analysed; secondly the use of odious "sparkler" encourages a false head to develop, and this is also ensuring that less actual beer is being served. To my taste it also ruins the texture and flavour of the beer, and I am very surprised that CAMRA condones their use, while discouraging a CO<sub>2</sub> blanket, which can hardly be carbonating the beer as in the Keg system.

So this "take it to the top" slogan is fatally flawed. There are only two ways to get a full pint, either in lined glasses, or serving it brim-full, which makes life difficult if you want to carry it away from the bar. Take your pick

*Ken Crawford.*

**Ed Says:** Thanks for the history lesson, which was useful. CAMRA only supports the use of the Swan Neck and Sparkler service when the beer is specifically brewed to be served in that way. So Greene King and Fullers for example should most definitely not be on a "Sparkler". As for the CO<sub>2</sub> blanket I assume that Ken is referring to the Cask Breather, which CAMRA does not support. But it is, lets face it, in common use and very hard to detect. It is also a fact that fluids absorb gases under pressure.

A final point is that brim measure glasses are slightly oversized and so can accommodate a small head. If so, treated with care it should not cause spillage when a full 20 fluid ounces of beer is inside.



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*The Sir John Barleycorn*

Dear Sirs, I am writing in response to your comment in Pints of View 224 regarding the **Sir John Barleycorn**, Hitchin. Re 'The Barleycorn is NOT being sold...allegedly (!)'. Firstly it would have been nice to have actually been asked as the landlord if this was the case, and secondly, several of your members who attend the meeting actually stated it was definitely not the case. SO TO CONFIRM - THE BARLEYCORN IS NOT UP FOR SALE!! The Barleycorn is one of the oldest 'PUBS' (not Inn or Hotel) in Hitchin, IF not the oldest; with records going at least back in early 1800's, and to this day is probably the most community based pub in Hertfordshire: We have teams of darts, crib, dominoes and pool. We have 2 x Sunday League football teams - HTS Barleycorn. We sponsor HItchin Cricket Club & Blueharts Hockey Club, and have recently been involved in organising fund raising days for them. We have live music every Friday supporting local bands; we also hold quiz nights on Tuesday. So you can see that this is a thriving community pub. I hope this clarifies the situation and I would be grateful if you could indeed clarify this in your next issue. Here's to the Barleycorn being around for another 200yrs!!

*Ron Piper - Licensee*

**Ed Says:** North Herts CAMRA apologise unreservedly for any misrepresentation resulting from the remark made. As per the disclaimer notice at the top of our Down Your Way section, errors can occur from time to time, and we are happy to correct any mistakes accordingly.

**Ware Summer Saunter**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> **Ware Summer Saunter** took place over the evening of July 17<sup>th</sup>. Thirty or so Ware and Hertford brave South Herts CAMRA members (+ guests!) sauntered along 4 hostelrys, each offering something special for the occasion. First point of call was The **Crooked Billet** on Musley Hill, followed by **High Oak** in High Oak Road, then **Waggers** in Kibes Lane, then finishing at **The Vine** in the High Street. A great night was had by all; ales included *Woodforde's Wherry*, *Harveys Best*, *Mauldon's Blackadder*, *Palmer's Dorset Gold*,



*Left: Stuart and Sue - mine hosts at the Crooked Billet*

and something called *Otter Ale*! All in superb nick - a fine array of ales. Many thanks to all who came along and to all of our hosts for looking after us so well.



*Right: Helen from the High Oak pulls a pint of Otter ale - one of the world's finest beers!*

Here's looking forward to Hertford's Autumn Ale Tour later this year (see article below). Cheers

*Jan Ordon*

**Hertford Autumn Ale Quest**

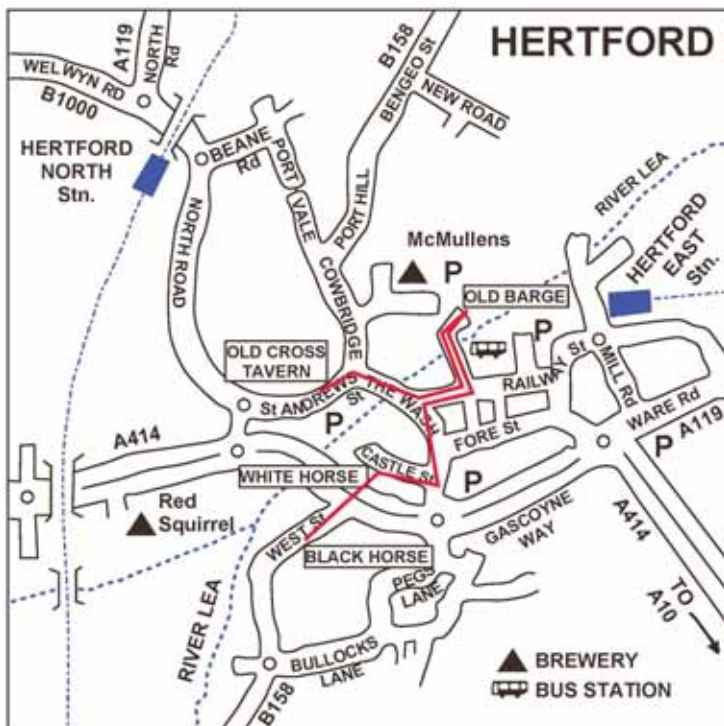
For one night only – Tuesday 30 October - an evening breeze around four brilliant Hertford pubs to sample beers that complement the browns, ambers and golds of Autumn. As usual,



readers are welcome to join Hertford and Ware CAMRA members as we seek out the beers that have been especially gathered in for the evening. Starting at the **Black Horse** in West

Street at 8pm, it's on to the **White Horse** in Castle Street for 8.45pm, the **Old Barge** on The Folly at 9.30pm and, finally, the **Old Cross Tavern** in St. Andrew Street at 10.15pm. We look forward to seeing you. **See the route on map next page.**

*Les Middlewood*



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## North Herts v East Beds Bar Billiards

Representative from the North Herts and East Beds branches of the Campaign met recently to play the first in a series of sporting encounters with a pub theme. The venue was the **Strathmore Arms**, St Pauls Walden, with round one being bar billiards. Journalistic integrity forces me to report that East Beds gave us a sound 5-0 thrashing, with only one game being anything like close, but the afternoon was played out in a good spirit with plenty of fine ale to lubricate the social intercourse.

In the last issue of POV it was stated that there are very few bar billiards tables in the county. There actually are a few more than was reported. Obviously the Strathmore has one, The **Chequers** in Woolmer Green, and the **Crown and Falcon**

Puckeridge, although theirs is currently enjoying a prolonged holiday in the loft. Bring back bar billiards



*Above: East Beds v North Herts in Puckeridge!* Interestingly, even the four tables in North Herts have different layouts, skittle styles, and subtle differences in the house rules. It's always a good idea to agree the rules with your opponent before play starts. It saves aggro later.

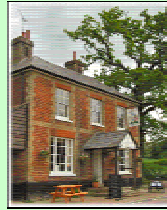
Event number two is Northamptonshire Skittles at the **John O' Gaunt**, Sutton on October 10<sup>th</sup>, so if we have any ex-world champions (or even people who have played it before!) in our midst please contact the North Herts Social Secretary asap. See page 30 for contact details.

Future events may include darts, dominoes, cribbage, pool, petanque, pub quiz and conkers, but a punch-up in the car park was ruled out due to a lack of qualified personnel on both sides. If you fancy yourself at any of the above (except the punch-up) get practising and make yourself known. Other branches are welcome to get involved too.

Graham Perry

## The Strathmore Arms

St Pauls Walden, Nr Hitchin, SG4 8BT  
01438 871654  
[strathmorearms@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:strathmorearms@tiscali.co.uk)



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# North Herts Mini Bus Rambles

It's quite amazing how time passes and no sooner is one ramble over than the second Saturday of the month comes around and it is once again time to visit the rural and 'difficult-to-get-to' pubs.

September found us mainly in Walkern, which has not yet succumbed to being a suburb of Stevenage New (or not so new), Town. However, en route for Walkern we called at the **Rising Sun** (below) at Halls Green, half way between



Weston and Walkern. When I first visited this pub in 1975 the beer was dispensed by 'gravity' from behind the bar. The pub has had a chequered history

in the last 30 years, but it seems to be settling down and was quite busy. It used to be an 18<sup>th</sup> Century cottage, but nothing was known about it until 1866, when it was owned by Baroness Dimsdale and kept by Ann Smith who was a shopkeeper. Being a McMullen's pub, there was *AK, Country* and their new beer, *Cask Ale*, which was in very good form as were the others.

Leaving the Rising Sun, we ventured to Ardeley, slightly nearer to Walkern, but not quite there yet! There used to be three pubs in Ardeley, but the Goose and the Chequers (both well out of the village) have been closed for a long, long time. Therefore, the only pub in the village or hamlet is the **Jolly Waggoner** (below). This pub has stood there since about 1786 and may have been called the Fox and Duck. It was owned by Simpson's of Baldock before Greene King took that brewery over. It used to be a regular GBG entry, but not now for quite a few years. *Greene King IPA* and *Morlands* (yeah that'll be right), *Old Speckled Hen* were on sale and both were in good condition. At one time, *Abbot* was served on gravity from a 'stillage' to the side of



the bar. Back the way we came and into the long straight village of Walkern and to the first of the three pubs. The first one we ventured into was the **White Lion** (left). It used to be called the Rose and Crown until about 1786 when the name was changed. Greene King owns the pub and *IPA, Abbot* and *Old Speckled Hen* were on offer. I tried the IPA and that was good. The next pub was the **Yew Tree** (right), which goes back to 1737. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a blacksmith's shop was attached to the pub and there used to be a 'brewhouse'. It's a McMullen's pub now and *AK,*



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All day Sunday opening, with full menu available plus traditional Sunday Roast.

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Children's play area in our large beer garden,

Plus a real log fire in the winter!

Only a 5-minute drive or 20-minute walk from Great Ashby's Community Centre.



owns the pub and *IPA, Abbot* and *Old Speckled Hen* were on offer. I tried the IPA and that was good.

The next pub was the **Yew Tree** (right), which goes back to 1737. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century,

a blacksmith's shop was attached to the pub and there used to be a 'brewhouse'. It's a McMullen's pub now and *AK,*



Country and Cask Ale were available. All the beers were in good delete condition and I tried the AK.

By now the mini bus 'gang' were getting 'merry' (wait for it) so we ventured into the **Robin Hood**, (sorry about that). This was built about 1810 and



reaching Greene King, it was owned by Fordham of Ashwell and then Flowers. The Greene King IPA and Wadworth 6X

were there to be tried. I tried the IPA, which was once again good.

We had time to spare, so to round off the evening and also on our way home, we meandered into **Our Mutual Friend** in Stevenage (below). This pub as been run by CAMRA

members for over five years and is a beer oasis on the outskirts of Stevenage. The beer menu



changes quite regularly, so there is no point in listing any. I tried *Oakleaf Wholehearted* and *Mighty Oak Goldfinger*. What a pair to finish off the evening, not to mention the author. After that, we left Our Mutual Friend and wended our way home until the second Saturday comes around again. Why not check our web site and join us the next time and the next time.....? *Brian Mason*

[www.pubs.hertsale.org.uk](http://www.pubs.hertsale.org.uk)

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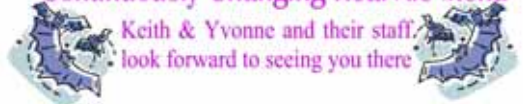
**Photographs of pubs also wanted!**

# Our Mutual Friend

Broadwater Crescent, Stevenage, 01438-312282



Friendly atmosphere, 2 bar pub  
North Herts Pub of the Year 2006/2007  
Continuously Changing Real Ale Menu



Keith & Yvonne and their staff,  
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## More Accolades for the Land of Liberty

The awards continue to stack up for Martin Few and Gill Gibson at the **Land of Liberty, Peace & Plenty** in Heronsgate. The pub was named CAMRA's **Hertfordshire Pub of the Year** for the second consecutive year and, to go one further, has now been named **East Anglia Regional Pub of the Year**; another step on the way to the coveted **National Pub of the Year** title.

When I spoke to them Martin and Gill were about to embark on a well earned holiday. They were understandably delighted at the recognition the pub had received after the efforts they and their staff have put into making the Land of Liberty a genuine beacon of a pub for real ale fans (or anyone who finds themselves on that part of the M25).

When I was there the pub had just marked up its 557<sup>th</sup> guest beer to go alongside the regular ales of *Red Squirrel Conservation Ale* and house beer *Tring Liberty Ale*. Don't expect that number to stay the same for very long; the Land of Liberty gets through new beers quickly. Favourite breweries include Dark Star, as well as the local beers of Gary Hayward at Red Squirrel – apparently not an endangered species in this part of Hertfordshire. Innovation and diversity are popular themes at the pub; and not just where the beers are concerned. Martin and Gill are continually coming up with new schemes to entertain their regulars and get the punters in. The latest plan is an attempt to revive the pub games of the past,

such as rope quoits, petanque (see article next page) and Aunt Sally, an outdoor game in which players must throw sticks at a wooden dolly in an attempt to knock it off its post (anyone can get to grips with the rules to this game!). The latter is especially ambitious as Aunt Sally has recently been isolated to parts of Oxfordshire, where there are still pub leagues in existence. There are a couple of pubs in Hertfordshire that still play Aunt Sally, and the hope is to form a league or join one of the nearer leagues in Oxfordshire.

One of the potential setbacks English pubs have had to deal with this year is the ban on smoking introduced in July. Like many pubs the Land of Liberty, at considerable expense, has had an outdoor shelter erected; and it's a beauty. The pavilion, as it's come to be called, is suitable as a shelter for smokers in bad weather but would also make an excellent outdoor seating area for anyone else in the good weather. It looks to me like you could hold a small beer festival there;

or even a dance (although I'm not sure if the floor is sprung!).

It only remains for me to congratulate Martin and Gill once more and to wish them luck in the next stage of the Pub of the Year competition. I don't think this is the last time I'll be writing about this pub.

*Andrew Vaughan*



**Pictured above:**  
Martin, Gill and another innovation, 'pub dog in training' Duchess, with their Herts Pub of the Year award.

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East Anglia Region  
Pub of the Year!**

**Day of Celebration  
& Award Evening  
Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> October**



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**The Land of Liberty, Peace and Plenty**

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R4 Bus Direct from Watford & Rickmansworth

2/3 mile M25 Junction 17, Follow sign to Heronsgate; 1 mile Chorleywood station

## Pieds Tanques (or) Petanque

Following on from the last two editions of Pints of View, where we reported on the threat to darts then bar billiards, it is good to be in the ascendancy – the traditional game of Boules or Petanque. Twenty years ago this game would have been as hard to find as bar billiards is today, but over 40 Hertfordshire pubs now boast a pitch and there are leagues which are quickly spreading the word.



In North and East Herts pubs such as the Woodman (Chapmore End), Rose and Crown (Ware), Green Man (Royston), Crown (Buntingford) Blind Fiddler (Anstey) Moon and Stars (Rushden) and Farmers Boy (Brickenden) have put down a pitch, their league teams competing across county borders with sides from Essex and Cambridgeshire. Not a bad range of beers between that lot. The game is, of course, an import from across the Channel, first taking

hold in England during the 1960s with the formation of a league in Braintree. But surprisingly it wasn't until 1974 that the British Petanque Association was founded. Boules, bowls – they both originate from ball games played in Europe down the ages. Drake was hurling cannonballs across Plymouth Hoe but,

in the UK, the game developed into the well-ordered game of bowls played on manicured lawns, with wooden bowls made of lignum vitae. Elsewhere metal balls prevailed. Petanque, a derivative of the

game Jeu de Provençal is thought to have been invented in 1907 at La Ciotat, near Marseilles, by Ernest Pitiot and Jules Lenoir – the latter a master of Boules Lyonnaise. Frustrated with suffering from arthritis and in his later years, Jules found the running and throwing difficult to handle whilst maintaining accuracy. So that they could still share a game together, the pair devised a game where you stood with your feet together in a circle, so with no run up. Petanque was born. The game is played by

*Cont'd*

first placing a jack, the object of each end then being to get more of your boules closest to the jack than your opponent (each one that is closer scores one point) and the team to score 13 points first wins the game. Pointing and Shooting are the main disciplines. "Petanque" means feet tied – describing the position players must adopt with their feet as they bowl. A pitch must not be so flat that a player can roll a boule dead straight -



"Frejus la petanque" by Michele Gallego

nor does it sink into the surface. The game's great benefit is that it can be played by all people and on equal terms – age and gender offering no advantage - and if you don't want to join a pub team that's just fine. The new found popularity has spawned a number of specialist shops where boules can be purchased - just get out there and enjoy a game accompanied by some very fine ale.

*Les Middlewood*

## CAMRA North Herts Great British Beer Festival Trip

Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> August saw a party of CAMRA North Herts stalwarts leave Hitchin for the biggest pub in the world – CAMRA's **Great British Beer Festival** at Earl's Court, London.

Rucksacks, themed T-Shirts and shorts were the order for the day out and having travelled together we then mysteriously split up. Some of us headed straight for the Exhibition Centre while others thought it could be more fun to do a walking tour right round the outside of the tube station first. But they found us eventually:

As CAMRA members, we were in the shorter queue and immediately deployed three of our party to take command a table and chairs, while others hurried to beat the bulk of the queue to the Glasses Stall.

Even with the larger venue chairs and tables are in demand and we protected ours whilst drinks were replenished from the hundreds of choices

at the dozens of bars. It was a fantastic experience for those of us who hadn't been before. You're obviously spoilt for choice about which beer to sample next.

Eventually, we had to face the music... though our table was effectively round the back of the stage so it never got too loud to be able to hold down a conversation with a very enjoyable musical background.

For newcomers to the GBBF, the most amazing sight is the sheer number of beers available. Here is just a small fraction of the pumps



at just one of the bars → That's in addition to all the barrels behind the bar! A true taster's dream. Most

people were buying beers by the half or third of a pint, though quite often in a pint glass – all pint glasses at CAMRA's GBBF are triple-lined.

It's an amazingly popular event, as you can see from the picture below, which can only give you a vague impression of the crowds who congregated there by the middle of the afternoon.



Remembering that this is midweek, albeit in August, anything that can draw crowds like this can only be rated a phenomenal success!

We had a fantastic day. The food, memorabilia & book stalls, the traditional pub and more modern games all added to the superb atmosphere. It was so good that some members of the North Herts party returned again... and again!

In the words of one famous soul, "I'll be BACK!!!"

*Words: Colin Yates, pictures: Steve Barber*

# DOWN YOUR WAY

*This section contains information from a large number of sources and occasionally errors may occur. Comments or additional information should be sent to our contact details on page 17.*

**Baldock:** The **Goldcrest Hotel** has been closed for some while now, and may be turned into flats. The nearby **George and Dragon**, also currently closed is reported to become a hotel/restaurant.

**Barley:** The **Fox and Hounds** car park has been resurfaced following the great Barley flood of 2007.

**Barnet: Bar Square**, (previously the George) has reopened as the **Hadley Oak**, and is serving *Caledonian Deuchars IPA*. (Previously no real ale).

**Bricket Wood:** The **Black Boy** remains closed following flooding. Work to restore it is in progress.

**Bushey:** The **Horse & Chains** has reverted to its original name after an ill-fated period as **Snapper's** fish restaurant. A premises licence is being sought which, once secured, should see this listed building re-open as a pub.

**Bushey Heath:** A planning application to demolish the **King's Head** on Little Bushey Lane has been withdrawn. It is believed that the company involved will submit new plans that will still involve demolition.

**Goffs Oak:** The **Prince of Wales** has been refurbished.

**Hertford:** The **Sportsman** has been closed by the East Herts Licensing authority for persistently selling to under age drinkers. The pub had been cautioned on a number of occasions. The 3-month enforced closure will end in October. A sign in the window says that the pub will be refurbished. There are moves afoot to make Hertford town centre a street drinking-free zone. But paradoxically, al fresco drinking in Parliament and Salisbury Squares has been popular and enriched both the daytime and evening experience in Hertford. Let's hope that common sense prevails and that any scheme's boundaries will not be drawn so tightly as to affect outside drinking at some of the town's more considerate pubs, such as the **White Horse**, where since time immemorial responsible drinkers have peacefully enjoyed a fine weather's evening pint to no detriment to the town. Congratulations to the **Old Barge**, winners

of the pub category in the annual Hertford in Bloom contest. Second was the **Harts Horns** and the **Old Cross Tavern** was highly commended. McMullen's **Baroosh** now offers both *Cask Ale* and *Country Bitter*. There's an addition to the cask beers at the **Saracen's Bar and Eatery**, with *Charles Wells Bombardier* now sitting alongside Greene King ales. And an about turn at the **Bridge House**, where the new incoming management is keen to attract families, thus reversing the over 21s policy reported here last month.

**Hoddesdon:** A notice last seen on 5<sup>th</sup> August outside the **Salisbury Arms** says it will close for refurbishment. It didn't say for how long. The **Bell** is also closed. There is a notice on the front saying "Admiral Taverns, Pub Business Opportunity".

**Hinxworth:** We welcome Stu Parsons, new licensee of the **Three Horseshoes** pub/restaurant.

**Hitchin:** The **Half Moon** won the Ted and Josie Arnold Memorial Community Pubs Award from North Herts Branch. The certificate was presented at the **Letchworth Beer and Cider Festival**. The **Highlander** is shut for refurbishment. We understand it will reopen as a gastro pub with a French theme.

The **Well** is closed again. Has the curse of the Punch six month tenancy struck again? Ron Piper – Licensee of the **Sir John Barleycorn** near Hitchin has recently advised us that his pub is definitely not up for sale. See page 20.

**Hoddesdon:** In the last edition of POV we reported (on page 28) that the **Bull** is selling *London Pride*. The Bull in Hoddesdon actually closed in 1960 and was demolished soon afterwards. Possibly a transcription error somewhere along the line, as it was actually the **Boar's Head** in Hoddesdon selling London Pride.

**Letty Green:** The **Cowper Arms** has reopened following a refurbishment. It is reported as being food orientated but serving no real ale.

**Newgate Street:** The **Coach & Horses** has been staging open air live music events during the recent good weather.

**Patchetts Green:** The **Three Compasses** re-opened 17<sup>th</sup> August. It is under the same management team as the **Duke of Marlborough** in St Albans. The pub

# DOWN YOUR WAY

has lost all its old carpentry equipment and now has a light open contemporary feel to it. There is no doubt that they are more interested in eaters than drinkers, but two real ales are available; *Adnams bitter* and *Ruddles County*, and there is no problem if you just wish to pop in for a pint.

**Puckeridge:** A new sign has now been erected on the **Crown and Falcon** and redecoration is ongoing.

**Rabley Heath:** The **Robin Hood and Little John** is now being run by well-known 'locum landlord' Steve Nye, former landlord of the nearby **Lytton Arms**.

**Redbourn:** The **Bull** was closed for just over a week following a fire on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> July. The fire cause by an electrical fault destroyed the living quarters of the manager.

**Shenley:** The **White Horse** closed on 23<sup>rd</sup> September for alterations which were agreed over a year ago, and it was thought would not now be undertaken. It is a classic example of change by stealth and we cannot see what the owners Mitchells & Butlers will gain by the changes planned to this grade II listed building. We will be commenting when the pub re-opens.

**St Albans:** Following the article on bar billiards in the last edition can we bring to our readers' attention that the **White Swan** has a table. The **Horn Reborn** was shut for a week in August for a refurb. and will be open all day in future. We are informed that the **White Hart Tap** has been taken off the market. The **Three Horseshoes** in Hatfield Road, Smallford has reopened after a major refit by Mitchells & Butlers. No longer Brewers Fayre/Whitbread. – it needs surveying! A licence application for the **Tudor Tavern** in George Street was made on the 13<sup>th</sup> August under the name of Thai Square. The applicant was Capital Start Limited. A response was due on 10<sup>th</sup> September. The **Vintry**, (Mitchells & Butlers) has applied for a variation to their licence. The main thing seems to be to allow children in.

**Stevenage: Our Mutual Friend** – CAMRA North Herts **Pub of the Year** - goes from strength to strength with 7 beers available and plans for 9. On a busy Saturday a firkin goes in six hours. Following the article in our last issue regarding Great Ashby having no pub, the **Emperor's Head** of Chells Manor Village contacted us to say that

it is its nearest pub selling real ale - *Greene King IPA*.

**Therfield:** The **Fox and Duck** has a new bar manager, formerly running the **Cabinet** in Reed.

**Watford:** **Mac's Bar** has reverted to its original name, the **Oddfellows Arms**.

**Watton-at-Stone:** the **Wagon and Horses** has been sold by Punch to Admiral and is reportedly to re-open as an Indian restaurant.

## BRANCH DIARY

### NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE

*Event times are approximate + subject to demand.*

*Confirm with Socials Contact - Graham Perry.*

**Wed 10 Oct:** Branch Crawl – Stevenage: **Standard Bearer** 8pm – **Hogshead** 8:45pm - **Yates's** 9.30pm - **Poachers** 10pm.

**Sat 13 Oct:** Branch Minibus Ramble – Codicote. Pickups near rail stations: Stevenage 6:15, Baldock 6:30, Hitchin 6:45. Drop-offs close to home

**Sat 20 Oct:** Cider Month Event. Minibus Minibus trip to Cassells Cider in Cambridge plus some cider serving pubs in the Cambridge area. For bookings and details of pickups, phone GRAHAM PERRY 07956-564606

**Wed 24 Oct:** Branch Social – Puckeridge: **White Hart** 8.30pm, **Crown and Falcon** 9.45pm.

**Mon 29 Oct:** "Thank-You" event for Helpers at the Letchworth Beer Festival, **3Magnets:** from 7pm on.

**Wed 7 Nov:** Committee Meeting - **Red Lion**, Offley 8pm.

**Sat 10 Nov:** Branch Minibus Ramble – Watton-at-Stone. Pickups near rail stations: Stevenage 6:15, Baldock 6:30, Hitchin 6:45. Drop-offs close to home.

**Wed 21 Nov:** Branch Meeting, GBG Nominations - **Fox**, Pirton 8pm.

**Fri 23 - Sat 24 Nov:** Letchworth Beer of Festival Presentation. Details to be finalised, but it will be a visit to Dark str Brewery.

**Wed 5 Dec:** Committee Meeting - **Brambles**, Buntingford 8pm.

**Sat 8 Dec:** Branch Minibus Ramble - Lilley and Offley.

**Wed 19 Dec:** Branch Social - **Half Moon**, Hitchin 8pm.

### North Herts Branch Contacts:

**Chairman** - Andy Rawnsley, Tel 01438 816938.

**Email:** [chairman@camranorthherts.org.uk](mailto:chairman@camranorthherts.org.uk),

**Socials Contact** - Graham Perry, Tel 07956 564606.

**Email:** [secretary@camranorthherts.org.uk](mailto:secretary@camranorthherts.org.uk)

**Website:** [www.camranorthherts.org.uk](http://www.camranorthherts.org.uk)

**CAMRA members are welcome to all Herts branches' meetings and events.** →

## SOUTH HERTFORDSHIRE

**Tue 16 Oct:** Branch Meeting – **Red Lion Hotel**, Radlett 8pm

**Thu 18 Oct:** Herts Liaison Meeting – **Wenlock Arms**, London N1 7pm

**Tue 30 Oct:** Hertford Autumn Ale Quest – see page 20.

**Tue 13 Nov:** Branch Meeting – **White Horse**, Hertford 8pm.

**Tue 20 Nov:** Branch 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Party – **Farriers Arms**, St Albans. CAMRA Members old and new alike are welcome. Starts at 7pm

**Tue 11 Dec:** Branch Meeting – **Lower Red Lion**, St Albans 8pm.

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## WATFORD & DISTRICT

**Thu 11 Oct:** Beer Festival Publicity Crawl - Bushey starting in the **Black Boy**, Windmill Street, 8.30pm.

**Tue 16 Oct:** Beer Festival Publicity Crawl - Watford starting at the **Estcourt Arms**, St. John's Road, 8.30pm.

**Mon 22 Oct:** Branch meeting - **Estcourt Arms**, St. John's Road, Watford, 8.15pm. All members welcome.

**Fri 26 Oct:** Cider social - **Land of Liberty, Peace & Plenty**, Long Lane, Heronsgate, 8pm.

**Thu 8 to Sat 10 Nov:** 13<sup>th</sup> **Watford Beer Festival** - **West Herts Sports Club**, Park Avenue, Watford, WD18 7HP. **See back page for details.**

**Thu 22 Nov:** Post-Beer Festival Social - **West Herts Sports Club**, Watford, 830pm. **Mon 26 Nov:** Branch meeting in the **Estcourt Arms**, St. John's Road, Watford, 8.15pm. All members welcome.

**Thu 29 Nov:** Annual Breweriana Auction - **West Herts Sports Club Function Room**, Park Avenue, Watford,. Viewing from 730pm for an 8pm start.

**Thu 13 Dec:** Social - **Watford Town & Country Club**, Rosslyn Road, 8.30pm. Note that this is a members club and visitors may have to be signed in.

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## Seven in Ten Would Drink Real Cider and Perry in Their pub

**CAMRA urges licensees to capitalise on the growth of the cider market by selling real cider and perry.**

As the cider market enjoys unprecedented growth, the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA) is asking pubs to stock real cider and perry in October after new research revealed that 69% of pub goers will drink them if they are available at the bar.

CAMRA carried out the research to mark the beginning of **National Cider Month** in October. Real cider is a long-established drink which is produced naturally from apples and is neither carbonated nor pasteurised. As cider is made from apples, perry is made from perry pears.

The online survey revealed that:

- 69% of pub goers will be inspired to drink real cider and perry in a pub when it is available.
- 81% of women pub goers said they would drink real cider or perry in a pub when it is available.
- 22% of people that have tried real cider did so because they heard it was tastier than fizzy, mass-produced ciders.

Gillian Williams, CAMRA's Chair of Cider and Perry campaigning, said: "This research proves that people are keen to seek out the delicious multilayered taste of real cider and perry, but unfortunately it is hard to find in many pubs.

"The overall cider market grew by a phenomenal 33% in the last year and an opportunity exists to build on that success with real ciders and perries. Licensees that want to attract customers by offering something truly original, tasty and natural should forget fizzy, chilled humdrum ciders and make real cider and perry a feature in their pub".

CAMRA has put an online resource for licensees to source real cider and perry suppliers on its website at [www.camra.org.uk/cidermonth](http://www.camra.org.uk/cidermonth).

Gillian Williams added: "In the pub beer was traditionally drunk by men, and wine by women, however in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century cider and perry are enjoyed equally by everyone. Frankly, licensees that do not take advantage of this demand for real cider and perry are doing themselves and their customers an injustice. A locally produced, real cider or perry makes a welcome addition to any bar".

**CAMRA members are welcome to all Herts branches' meetings and events.**



Thurs 8th - Sat 10th November 2007

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***West Herts Sports Club***

*Park Avenue, Watford, WD18 7HP*

Opening Times are...

Thurs: 4pm - 11pm

Fri: 11am - 11pm

Sat: 11am - 11pm



with Food Available...

Thurs: 5pm - 9pm

Fri: 12pm-3pm / 5pm-9pm

Sat: 12pm-3pm / 5pm-9pm

**£2 entry**

free to CAMRA & West Herts Club Members