

FREE



THE CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE SOUTH HERTS. NEWSLETTER

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NUMBER 17

Whitbread worse than Grotney's



The news has reached CAMRA this month that Whitbread, the company that thinks it's a brewer, plans to close down yet another brewery, next April. Execution orders have gone out for the company's Rhymney brewery in South Wales; its pubs are, in future to be supplied from the keg-only brewery in Ely, Cardiff. It is not known whether any cask-conditioned ale is to be produced at the Cardiff plant to replace that from Rhymney,

however, there is a strong possibility that it will be all keg or bright beer. The closure of this brewery must surely put the future of many of the other Whitbread real ale breweries in doubt. Their ostrich-like attitude to the real ale revival and their fanatical keg-only policy make the danger even greater.

High Prices

What makes it worse is that when they are prepared to supply real ale, as they are doing in Hertfordshire, they are charging some of the highest prices in the county. Whitbread's Marlow bitter, called 'Draught Bitter' in Hertfordshire, is possibly the worst value-for-money beer, on a price-for-strength basis, in the whole area.

Surveys

The company's recent surveys in the national press, asking for people's views on pub and licensing hours look more and more like a smokescreen to cover their obvious disregard for their customers wishes. This must be fought. Even Watney's, once arch-villains, have begun to listen and have found that giving the customer what he wants can bring rewards. It's about time that Whitbread began to realise that too.

DAVE BURNS.

Hertford

Good news, this month, for real beer drinkers in Hertford, where three new brews are available. The Two Brewers in Port Vale has recently installed two hand-pumps which are now dispensing Courage bitter and Charrington's Crown bitter. Bottles Wine Bar is now selling Fuller's E.S.B - but you can only drink with a meal.

Pub Swops

In a reply to the branch's letter to Courage on the subject of the forthcoming pub swops between Ind Coope and Courage, Mr Bostock, Retail Trade Director for Courage (Eastern) said 'We have every intention of making an appropriate selection available for sale where in individual cases each beer is individually viable in the houses we are acquiring, as we do throughout our existing estate' and 'It is not our policy to pressurize people to do things that are not acceptable and where handpumps are appropriate they will undoubtedly remain.'

As handpumps are fast appearing in pubs all over Hertfordshire, it wouldn't be too presumptuous to say that they would be 'appropriate' in most, if not all the pubs they are acquiring.

Real Ale?

The respective landlords of the Sun, in Lemsford (which is in the 1977 Good Beer Guide) and the Midland Railway in St. Albans, two pubs due to swop from Ind Coope, want Courage cask-conditioned beers for their handpumps and seem to be confident of being able to get them.

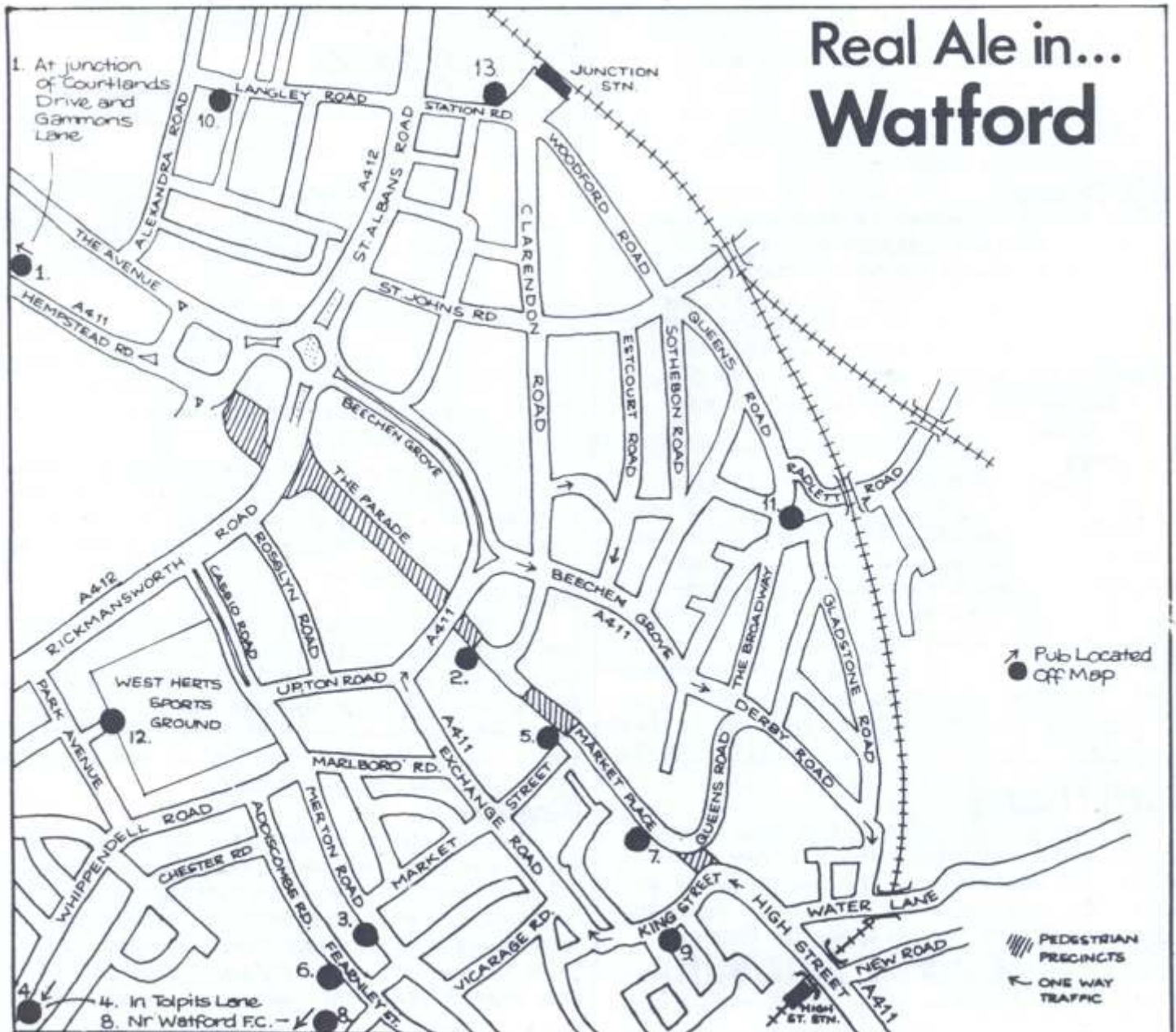
Directors

The brewers often are willing to supply their stronger and more expensive products in this case it would be Courage Directors Bitter, but are reluctant to supply their more reasonably priced beers. We would like to see not only Directors but also the Best Bitter and Dark Mild available.

Watford: getting better, but slowly

Watford now has over a dozen real ale outlets, of which ten are Ind Coope, a proportion which reflects the monopoly Ind Coope hold on the town. Ind Coope took over Watford's Benskin brewery in 1957 since when real ale totally disappeared until the early 1970s when the enterprising West Herts. Sports and Social Club introduced hand-pumps to the club bar (at present offering Brakspears and Youngs amongst others). The Eaton and Keys Wine Stores sell Greene King Abbot Ale and the Southern Cross Hotel sells Ruddles County and Bitter; Ruddles being one of the early standard-bearers of the real ale revival. The success of Ind Coope's introduction of Burton Ale around July 1976 has encouraged some landlords to install handpumps for the company's Bitter and Mild. The following pubs sell real ale:(for location see map):

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|---|--|
| 1. The Beaver (Ind Coope) O o | 12. West Herts Sports and Social Club (Brakspears, Youngs and others which are often subject to change) - Temporary membership is available for a small fee. |
| 2. The Coachmakers Arms (Ind Coope) O | |
| 3. Eaton and Keys Wine Stores (G.King) | |
| 4. The Highwayman (Ind Coope) O | |
| 5. The Joseph Benskin (Ind Coope) O | |
| 6. The Oddfellows Arms (Ind Coope) O o | 13. The Pennant (Ind Coope) O o • (formerly the Clarendon Hotel). |
| 7. The One Bell (Ind Coope) O o | |
| 8. The Red Lion (Ind Coope) O | |
| 9. The Sir Robert Peel (Ind Coope) o | Key: |
| 10. Southern Cross Hotel (Ruddles) | O Ind Coope Burton Ale |
| 11. The Victoria Tavern (Ind Coope) O o • | o Ind Coope Bitter |
| | • Ind Coope KK Mild |



What's New

Apart from the changes in Hertford, there is another crop of new real ale outlets this month. In Potters Bar, the latest pub to revert to real beer is The Robin Hood in the High Street selling Ind Coope Burton Ale, Bitter and KK Mild. Landlord, Mr Jack Ellis, is no stranger to real ale, having previously run the Stratford Arms also in Potters Bar. Meals are available at lunchtimes.

St. Albans gains yet another real ale pub, The Black Lion, in Fishpool Street, which is now selling Sam Smith's Bitter.

In Bishops Stortford, The Wheatsheaf has recently introduced real ale from Rayment's, while the Old Maltings (Triad Leisure Centre) is now selling Ruddle's County, Bass and Charrington's IPA.

Other changes this month are:

Hitchin The Sir John Barleycorn is now selling handpumped Ind Coope Bitter

Letchmore Green The Three Horseshoes is now selling Ind Coope Bitter and Burton.

New Barnet The Hadley Hotel, in Hadley Road, has recently installed Watney's Fined Bitter

Brent Pelham The Black Horse is now selling Adnam's Bitter (gravity), Abbot Ale and Rayment's BB, both on handpumps.

No to Air

At the October Hertfordshire South Branch Meeting it was decided that the branch would not accept beer served under air pressure as real ale - this follows last month's EGM in Manchester, when the meeting voted to leave it up to the branches as to whether the air pressure system was acceptable.

New Chairman

CAMRA's new chairman is James Lynch, following the unexpected resignation of Chris Bruton, who has served as Chairman for the last eighteen months.

Buy a Ticket

There are ten prizes in this year's branch Christmas raffle - first prize being a 'real draught Christmas kit', consisting of a pin of Old Ale, a bottle of malt whisky and a fresh turkey - that's the whisky to ease the Christmas Eve hang-over, the Old Ale to put you back on the right tracks and to whet your appetite, and the turkey for Boxing Day (lets face it, after 36 pints of Old Ale and a bottle of whisky you won't be feeling like it on Christmas Day). Other prizes include more Old Ale and malt whisky, Vintage Port, Sherry and various CAMRA publications, including that best-seller 'Beer Naturally'. Tickets are 5p each.

Tale of Ale

Free Reed's double LP, The Tale of Ale provides a unique history of beer in this country and the people who drink it.

Following the recent spate of books on the subject, it is a welcome departure from the norm and the LP, in the form of ballads, drinking songs and readings, is well worth the £6 asking price - especially if you are interested in traditional music and song.

Featured are many folk club favourites such as 'Hey John Barleycorn' and 'Nottingham Ale' along with many rarer songs. 'Don't go out tonight dear father', a temperance song sung in the music hall style, with mock seriousness, is a particular gem and 'London's Ordinary' is a sort of spot-the-pub listing of London's seventeenth century pubs in song.

The readings which intersperse the songs are often amusing eg: 'The Porter Scene from Macbeth' or factual - 'Meux's Porter Vat', which tells the story of how the company's porter vat burst and many people drowned in the stuff (what a way to go!).

Also enclosed is an informative booklet on the history of beer and all matters surrounding it. All in all, this is an excellent LP and with Christmas coming...

EDITOR



Social

Last month's branch social with Herts. North branch, at The Old Rose and Crown in Ware proved to be a great success and winning the darts match 5 - 2 put the icing on the cake and also ensured a 'revenge' match in Herts. North territory in the not too distant future. The evening ended in an impromptu 'Conker Championship' which after a good hour's worth of hitting no one seemed to win - but by that time it didn't seem to really matter.

The branch would like to thank Mick and Jean of The Old Rose and Crown for their hospitality - and a great evening.

Join for £1

If you have often thought of joining CAMRA, but have been dissuaded by the £4 membership subscription (remember this is only 8p a week), why not enrol as an Associate member. The new scheme will cost you just £1 to join. With your membership card you will receive the current issue of What's Brewing (CAMRA's monthly newspaper), a guide to the brewing process, a history of CAMRA and a letter of introduction from the Chairman. Further details from Adrian Green, 104 Selborne Rd, Southgate, London, N14



MEMBERSHIP FORM

CAMRA is an independent organisation fighting to improve the quality of beer and pubs throughout the country. Why not join and help us improve the lot of the drinking person?

For your £4.00 subscription you will receive a copy of the monthly 'What's Brewing', CAMRA's newspaper on what is going on in the world of beer.

SOUTH HERTS NEWSLETTER

I wish to become a member of CAMRA Ltd.

I agree to abide by the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Campaign. I enclose £4.00 as my annual membership subscription (Any additional amount will be welcomed as a donation).

Name

Address

Signature

Date

Please send to: The Membership Secretary, The Campaign for Real Ale, 34 Alma Road, St. Albans, Herts. AL1 3BW.

Diary

HERTFORDSHIRE SOUTH BRANCH

Nov 15 November Branch Meeting

The New Crown (formerly The Crown), Shenley Road, Borehamwood. (Ind Coope) 8.00pm. We are hoping to have a speaker from Ind Coope at the meeting.

Nov 29 All Hertfordshire and Essex branches social at The Ash, Burton End, near Stansted Mountfitchet. (Rayment's) 8.00pm.

Dec 3 Just for interest - British Rail are running an 'Awayday' train from Hatfield Station to York. 'Awaydays' are normally very cheap compared to the usual fare and York is a good place to sample some of the northern beers. Cameron's, Tetley's, Bass, Sam Smith's and Theakston's are available and York has over 40 real beer pubs. Details from British Rail.

Dec 20 A.G.M and December Branch Meeting
The Garibaldi, Albert Street, St. Albans (Ind Coope) 8.00pm. The Christmas raffle will be drawn at the meeting. Everyone welcome - let's see you there!

Jan 6 Branch New Year Party at Bramfield Village Hall. 8.00pm. £2.50 - Tickets from Adrian Green, 104 Selborne Road, Southgate, N14.

Hertfordshire North Branch

Nov 20 Sunday Lunchtime Social at The Chequers, Woolmer Green (Ind Coope) 12 noon.

Herts/Essex Borders Branch

Nov 22 Branch Social with Chelmsford and Mid-Essex Branch at The Flich of Bacon, Little Dunmow (Charrington's) 8.00pm.

Nov 21 Branch Meeting: The Bull, Station Road, Theydon Bois (Ind Coope) 8pm.

Newsletter

This Newsletter is produced monthly by the Hertfordshire South Branch of the Campaign for Real Ale. All contributions should be sent to the editor by the first day of the month: Les Middlewood, 81a Linden Way, Southgate, London, N.14.