

HERTFORDSHIRE'S

CAMRA Pulling Together

The online publication by Hertfordshire CAMRA branches

August / September 2020

Issue 3

Herts Essex Borders CAMRA Awards its Lockdown Heroes



**South Herts CAMRA Pub of the Year
Awarded to Old Cross Tavern, Hertford**

**North Herts CAMRA Pub of the Year
Awarded to Lordship Arms, Benington**



Was it really Super Saturday?

There was a lot of speculation following the announcement that pubs and restaurants could re-open on 4th July, and extensive regulations were issued to licensees. One of the instructions was that multi-user paperwork was not allowed, so sadly we have had to produce another online only edition of the newsletter. It is also against the regulations to organise or have meetings of groups of customers. We are trying to organise the presentation of outstanding CAMRA awards to give the pubs that won in the **Pub of The Year** competition some well-deserved publicity as soon as possible, and some presentations are covered in this online edition. Of course, none of us can predict what will happen next but we hope that the regulations will be relaxed and that local branch meetings and paper copies of *Pints of View* can resume before the end of the year.

Those of us who have made a visit to the pub are finding it a very different place to the one we left on lockdown. The screens and table service have taken a bit of getting used to but in general report backs have been good and people have been able to visit pubs on a casual basis (without booking in advance), and enjoy socialising with friends again. Like some shops, some pubs want cashless payment.

Not all pubs opened on 4th July and some are opening changed and reduced hours, so please refer to the CAMRA **WhatPub** pubs database to check the latest situation.

CAMRA's advice on returning to the pub

As pubs reopen, we're all looking forward to getting back to our locals, having a pint and enjoying the social aspects of pub going. Things are going to look and feel a little different. That's why we've put together our advice on what to expect, and how you can get back to the pub responsibly and safely.

Who you can go to the pub with:

- If you are sitting inside, members of your household and one other household (or support bubble).
- If you are sitting outside, members of your household and one other household (or support bubble), or you and up to five other people from different households

What you should expect:

- In most circumstances, order and be served at your table

- To see signs telling you where to go and how to use the pub safely.
- To give some details like your name and a phone number to help with contact tracing.
- For the moment, no live entertainment or loud music.
- If the weather takes a turn for the worse, you might not be allowed to shelter inside.

You can help by:

- Listening to the staff and following instructions on signs.
- Waiting patiently in queues.
- Washing your hands or using hand sanitising stations - especially when you arrive and leave, or use the toilets.
- Ordering remotely where you can - whether through an app or website.
- Staying in your allocated seating area as much as possible.
- Using contactless payments where possible

A few do's and don'ts:

- Do go back to the pub where you can - pubs need our custom to help them through this difficult time.
- Do plan ahead and book in advance where possible.
- Don't take your empties back to the bar - for the moment, this isn't helpful for staff.
- Don't come to the pub if you, or someone in your household or support bubble has symptoms of COVID-19 - stay at home and follow NHS advice.

Chancellor's Summer Economic Update - CAMRA's Response

Responding to the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Summer Economic Update, CAMRA's Chief Executive Tom Stainer said:

"While a six-month cut in VAT for food served in pubs and the 'Eat Out to Help Out' voucher scheme in August is welcomed, we are concerned that pubs have been left behind by the Chancellor's statement, which contained little support for community pubs. It is also disappointing to see no direct support for independent brewers and producers, who will not benefit from a VAT cut that specifically excludes beer and cider.

"CAMRA will continue to campaign for greater support for all pubs - including those that don't serve food. We are calling for long-term support measures

– business rate reform and a tax reduction for draught beer – to encourage people back to the supervised setting of the community pub.

“Lockdown has shown just how valuable our pubs are to local communities and the pivotal role they play in tackling loneliness and social isolation. It is absolutely right that they receive extra support during the difficult months ahead to ensure their continued survival”.

Planners – Don’t Be Pressurised on Pubs

We are all hopeful that the effects of the Coronavirus can soon be mastered and that pubs can re-open. A pint at the local or in a sunny pub garden certainly appeals after all this time.

But the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA) has growing concerns that some pub owners and developers may well see the current crisis, and its impact on pub businesses, as an opportunity to try and obtain planning permission on pubs for change of use to other purposes, which, in normal times, would likely be refused.

We will, of course, see the real lie of the pub landscape as they are allowed to re-open.

In the meantime, CAMRA has written to all

Hertfordshire Planning Authorities appealing for them to stand firm and adhere closely to the national and local policies that protect community facilities like pubs.

The reality is that, before the virus struck, the pub trade was in its healthiest state for many years. The annual survey of pub numbers by the Office for National Statistics found that they had increased by around 300 in 2019 – chiming with CAMRA’s own findings which identify new openings outstripping closures.

The public’s enthusiasm for pub-going will surely return once life is back to normal - we need to keep our pub stock intact. We ask all members to keep an eye of what is happening in their locality. Please report any concerns to your CAMRA Branch – details under **Branch Contacts** on page 20.

CAMRA’s Public House Viability Test is just one of the tools that can be found on CAMRA’s national website:

https://camra.org.uk/campaign_resources/saving-your-local-pub/

which also contains the guide “Saving Your Local Pub” providing in-depth support and advice on the practicalities of saving a pub. It explains how to use the planning system to combat unwarranted change.

Les Middlewood

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Marston's and Carlsberg UK announce £780m merger

Brewer Marston's is to merge with Carlsberg's UK arm, in a joint venture valued at £780m, with Marston's holding a 40% stake in the merged firm.

The deal involves Marston's six breweries and eleven distribution depots, but not its 1,400 pubs. The six breweries are Marston's – Burton-on-Trent, Banks's - Wolverhampton, Wychwood Witney - Oxon, Jennings – Cockermouth in Cumbria, Ringwood - Hampshire and the Eagle Brewery in Bedford. The six employ 14,000 people. Carlsberg will put its Northampton brewery, London Fields brewery, and national distribution centre into the joint venture.

The deal gives Carlsberg access to Marston's pubs to sell a wider range of their products. The down side is that we have seen rationalisation following mergers with Carlsberg in the past and CAMRA has asked for assurances that breweries will not close and the cask ale range reduced.

Carlsberg are running a strange advertising campaign on TV starring Dane Mads Mikkelsen (the latest actor to play Hannibal Lecter the deranged cannibal), admitting that their lager was not as good as it could have been. He then suggests that the person responsible for brewing the sub-standard lager had been weighted down and dumped in a Danish lake to drown.

Although when the deal was struck pubs were shut and sales significantly down. Marston's share price made major gains following the announcement.

Steve Bury

Wetherspoons welcomes back customers with a price rise

Wetherspoon hiked the price of a pint when its pubs reopened; increasing its beers, spirits and wine by 10p, and the cost of food increasing by 20p.

Wetherspoon spokesman Eddie Gershon said: "Prices have gone up. All we can say in this area is that we try to keep prices as competitive as possible. From time to time there will be price rises but we always try and minimise them".

"Even with price rises, the entire pub industry, including Wetherspoon, will be less profitable than before pubs closed, because costs will be so much higher."

I think what Eddie is really referring to is the social distancing limiting the number of customers is

reducing profits, all the other factors wages overheads etc have stayed the same.

Heineken to sell tenants previously out-of-date beer

On 11th June *Publicans Post* reported that they had been made aware that Heineken UK had decided to extend the best before dates on their kegged beers, lagers and ciders .

Heineken announced this change is being applied to stock in warehouses 'to support the re-start' but this did not been applied to stock currently in pubs. Heineken claim they can do this because of the quality of storage conditions in warehouses during lock-down.

Heineken said that they have 'historically shortened best before dates to assist with stock rotation' but that in light of recent events 'it will in the future be moving permanently to shelf lives of 6 months on beer and lager and 9 months on cider'. Heineken gave an assurance that this will have no impact on quality.

Tied pub tenants will have no option other than to accept this stock. It will be easier to offload this changed sell by date stock to tied tenants than to free trade accounts where it is well known that shorter shelf life beer commands a reduced price.

Without actually tasting and testing of the product there is no way of knowing whether the quality will suffer.

This raises the question as to why the old 'best before' date was actually chosen? There was obviously a good reason and we don't accept that the quality will not have declined.

Heineken's actions have been exposed I wonder how many other Keg stockpiles are having their sell by labels changed as the pubs re-open.

It now seems clear that the customers will be the only judge so let's just hope they don't notice the difference when drinking a 6-month-old pint of Fosters.

Hertfordshire's Pints of View is produced by the Herts & Essex Borders, 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.

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Around the Herts Cask Breweries

To coincide with the pubs re-opening at the start of July, we spoke to our local Hertfordshire brewers – what have they been doing during lockdown and how are they looking forward?

3 Brewers of St Albans

At the advent of lockdown 3 Brewers launched a home delivery service of bottled beer and mini-kegs which has gained much popularity as did the launch of a new beer – Blonde (ABV4.2%) in aid of the Save St Albans Pub Campaign. Selling out in a fortnight a new batch was quickly brewed and the light and fruity beer is now permanently part of 3 Brewers bottled beer range. A number of virtual Meet the Brewer events also took place. 3 Brewer's Mark Fanner said "Since I started our home delivery service I've been overwhelmed and humbled by the support and goodwill shown by local beer lovers. In fact, we've gained a small army of new fans just through word of mouth recommendation. I can't wait till we're able to put on a bit of a 'do' at the farm to thank everyone who's supported us through these tricky times".

Bog Brew, Stevenage

The Stevenage brewer has used the lockdown to make major changes. The brewery (pictured below) has been moved to a newly acquired property next to the Bog Brew micro-pub, the



Broken Seal in Stevenage Old Town which has remained open during lockdown selling take-out beers and delivering to homes in the



town. The new building will also feature a snooker club with a range of Bog Brew beers and busy owner and brewer, Paul Clinton, has also created an outside space for drinking. During the lockdown, with many wholesalers shutting up shop, Paul has created direct accounts with the likes of Abbeydale, Siren and Yonder whose beers have featured regularly and this will continue. Paul says "I'm knackered! With staff furloughed moving the brewery took up much of my

time, but the lockdown has strangely given me the chance to move forward by taking on the new building and moving the brewery which now gives us new opportunities. Things feel positive. People who can adapt and change can often survive and do OK – I hope all the hard work will prove that this is the way for us. Cask brewing is back up and running with favourites like *Barking Spider* (ABV3.8%) back at the bar.

Buntingford Brewery

Brewing at Therfield near Royston,

Buntingford have brewed throughout lockdown with their *Polar Star*

(ABV4.4%) blonde American hopped summery beer

proving to be a huge hit with local drinkers who have been able to collect from the brewery or take advantage of the brewery's home delivery service, which is set to continue post lockdown. A new link with Cam Valley Ciders has also provided excellent ciders for customers. Buoyed by the new strong home customer base that has been gained, the core range of beers were available on a rotating basis with around three available at any one time. A new beer has now been added to the range - look out for *Riwaka Station* a New Zealand hopped *Pale Ale* (ABV4.4%) which has been a huge success receiving fantastic feedback. Buntingford's Tony Liversidge says "We have been really pleased with the home delivery take-up - it has meant we have brewed throughout. In recent times we've had a torrid time at the brewery but those days are past and we have gained new pub accounts. Being a perfectionist at heart, I can say that we now have beers of great consistency and quality and we are instilling that into all of our brews". A July seasonal beer has been the golden ale *Sun Star* (ABV4.1%) and expect the re-appearance of some familiar autumn beers. "I'm planning a black cherry chocolate porter and for the first time in many years we are planning for a Christmas brew."

Farr Brew

Based near Wheathampstead, Farr Brew have continued brewing during the lockdown period and the beer take-away service at the brewery and some of its pubs have shot ahead - Saturdays have attracted large queues at the brewery, stretching around the block. We spoke to Farr's Matt Elvidge who says



"The lock-down period has been a tough and stressful time behind the scenes but we've been heartened by so much goodwill and positivity from our customers – our



customer base has actually increased during the lockdown! We have been really keen to look after our staff and brewer Jason Moylan has been doing a great job, even introducing two new beers – Farr Apart (ABV4.8%) a dry-hopped light-coloured beer brewed with mosaic hops and Farr And Away (ABV4.5%) which is a double dry hopped craft keg beer utilising Amarillo and Cascade hops. We are excited and looking forward to fully bedding in and re-opening our fifth pub acquisition, the **Elephant and Castle** at Amwell, where we have spent the lockdown making improvements both inside and out. We open with three Farr Brew cask ales plus two handpumps for national ales – one being Greene King *Abbot* - and a traditional cider. We have massively increased our lines at the pub and there is now a large and diverse range of whiskies and gins – some locally distilled. Our food offering majors in locally-sourced ingredients. To top it all, the pub garden has been tidied and further improved to cater for children with newly-installed equipment. At the **Red Cow** in Harpenden pub take-aways have been flat-out. Lock-down has been a difficult time to endure but we have been hard-working and innovative and are feeling very encouraged and positive for the remainder of the summer and the future."

Garden City, Letchworth

Cask brewing continued at a fairly normal pace during lockdown at Letchworth's micro-brewery and pub. Although the pub has remained closed at the bar it has been open for take outs and local deliveries in Letchworth. Garden City's Holly Rolfe says "Like many small businesses we had to adapt to survive very quickly. We have been open reduced hours throughout and since lockdown for walk-in takeaways, pre-ordered collections and local deliveries and have seen enormous support for these services, which has grown over time and shows no

GARDEN CITY
BREWERY

real sign yet of abating. We've gained many new customers following recommendations from friends and neighbours and have a real sense of community which has continued throughout this period - many people expressing thanks to us for staying open, delivering and giving them a 'slice of normality' (as well as some great beer) during those odd, distanced months of April & May especially. We have been brewing on average once a week - all our beer goes directly to local drinkers. Our copper bitters have sold well - *Garden City Bitter* (ABV4.3%) and *Old Git* (ABV4.2%) - as have our pales from our session beers like *Holly's Comet* (4.2%) to several very popular batches of *1903 IPA Chinook* (ABV5.4%). Our dark beers have a big following and we did a one-off session pale *Brew 250* (ABV4.0%), our 250th brew! We even celebrated our 4th Birthday in early June via a Socially Distanced Cider Festival which was also a celebration of us winning the CAMRA North Herts Cider Pub of The Year".

Gold Bear

Hertford-based but brewing at Green Jack brewery in Lowestoft, Gold Bear ceased brewing cask ale during the lockdown. This position is now sadly likely to be permanent, with Gold Bear now producing craft keg canned beers. Gold



GOLD
BEAR

Bear's Steve Millburn explains "We have taken stock of our situation and decided to withdraw from the cask ale field. However, we are still brewing and currently have a citrusy craft keg *American IPA* (ABV4.2%) called *Klondike*, available in cans."

Hadham

Brewing continued at Little Hadham throughout the lockdown – *Dragonfly* (ABV4.2%) a popular golden beer June/July favourite. Hadham cask beers were available in many of the local pubs that remained open for take-away beer during the period. A takeaway shop at the brewery is open for cask and bottle-conditioned beers.



Mad Squirrel

At Potten End cask beer brewing was initially put on hold during the lockdown and Squirrel needed to urgently conduct a total re-think of their business model. After a couple of weeks, the on-line facility

for ordering beer somewhat unexpectedly began to take off and now sales have almost tripled. In April a click and collect service was opened at the brewery and arrangements were entered into with some big supermarkets. It has



been a boon for Mad Squirrel having its own canning line – and canned beers are now available in local branches of Waitrose, Morrisons and through Ocado. Mini-kegs and cans have been the mainstay of lockdown production – Squirrel's popular *Sumo* (ABV4.7%) produced almost totally in can. Cask beer production slowly returned – available in containers at the brewery and by July Mad Squirrel favourites *Resolution* (ABV 4.2%), *London Porter* (ABV5.0%), *De La Crème* (ABV4.5%) and *Hopfest Gluten Free* (ABV2.8%) were available. Other cask beers appear in forthcoming brewing schedules. Mad Squirrel's Sarah Blossom said "When the lockdown hit, we really had to think on our feet, to be flexible, innovative and adaptable - to reposition our business model overnight. We quickly understood that to get to the customer we needed to go *directly* to them. With click and collect, home delivery and new opportunities with supermarkets and beer shops we have gone a considerable way in achieving this. We knew we had a good brand and following, based on quality and consistency, and backed ourselves in these developing areas. We hope the pub trade can recover quickly. It's going to be tough and time will tell how quickly people regather their confidence to return. But we are being positive. Our own tap and bottle shops and brewery bar all opened for on-site drinking in July with distancing and safety measures in place including an ordering option from the bar via a new app. They are doing well".

New River

Brewing ceased in Hoddesdon during the lockdown and the popular New River beers were certainly missed during the closure period. So, it was marvellous news when we heard from the brewery that a first brew of the pale ale, *London Tap* (ABV 3.8%) was on its way. In the second week of July, joint-owner John Bourdeaux said "I'm glad to say we are back in action. We've just brewed our first batch of beer since lockdown – it's a gradual process but if the demand is there, we'll extend our range over



the coming weeks". Judging by the large amount of encouraging support shown locally and in Social Media to the news of New River's restart, we

Paradigm Brewery

It took the first fortnight of the lockdown for the Sarratt brewery to readjust itself – like everyone, Paradigm were stunned with a new abrupt reality. There was no income and pre-orders were being cancelled.

Some time was spent on essential maintenance but soon a new demand materialised and a new income – a whole new market for bottled beers – home delivery. In true Paradigm style, humour soon came to the fore – the boys being dubbed the Dirty Milkmen. Deliveries soon expanded to bag-in-a-box draught beers and the normal bottle trade doubled. After a first month cask beer inactivity, brewing recommenced, always allowing for a good range of Paradigm beers at any one time. Sales of *Fake News* (ABV3.8%) were brilliant and the two spring specials, *Panic Buy* (ABV4.1%) and *Stir Crazy* (ABV4.2%) were snapped up. As we went to publication a new galaxy-hopped special brew – at ABV4.2% – is on the way. It has no name as yet but expect one that will mark the end of the lockdown, looking forward. Joint-owner Neil Hodges says "Come lockdown, our business model had ceased! We have worked long extra hours to find our way through the difficulty, a worrying time it has to be said, but slowly things turned around and overall, we can't complain. It feels like we've won a battle, but can we win the war? We'll have to see what all this trouble has caused to the pub trade and I really hope the damage is as short-lived as possible and still gives everyone opportunity".



Pope's Yard

Brewing in Apsley carried on during lockdown but mainly for a range of established bottled beers which are available to home delivery in the Hemel Hempstead and Watford area. Brewing of cask beer recommenced in the run-up to the re-opening of pubs and Pope's Yard beers can be found at the



Monks Inn in Hemel Hempstead, the **White Lion** in Apsley and the **2 Brews Café Bar** in King's Langley. Cask beers (also available in bottles) include *Lacerta* (ABV3.9%) infused with American hops, *Quartermaster* (ABV4.4%), a best bitter, and *Luminaire* (ABV3.9%) a golden ale. Pope Yard's Barbara Leenan says "It's been a tough time but our local support has been fantastic. We are looking forward - as long as people drink our beers, we'll keep on brewing them!"

Tring

Brewing continued throughout the lockdown, with Tring beers slaking many a thirst, the beers featuring at many of the pubs serving take-away beers in the 3½ months of lockdown and pub closure.



The brewery's smaller 8-barrel plant was utilised to its maximum and a full range of Tring beers has been produced in that period with Ridgeway (ABV4.00%) and Side Pocket for a Toad (ABV3.6%) proving to be the most popular beers. The brewery shop was temporarily closed to be replaced with a popular drive-thru' takeaway service and click and collect. Tring will be assessing when to re-open the shop and pare back on the drive-thru' but with brewing firing ahead, Fanny Ebbs (ABV3.9%) will be available until the end of August, then to be replaced by Squadron Scramble (ABV4.00%), between September and November. The additional monthly specials brewed in conjunction with Tring's partnership with Chilterns Dog Rescue will be delayed until the New Year. A new brewery website is imminent and will allow visitors access to the web shop and the Brew2You platform. Tring's Jared Ward-Brickett said "During the lockdown, feedback from people about our beers and what we were doing has been great – our staff have worked hard, in one case brewing six



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days in a fortnight. We have picked up new pub accounts and are hoping the pub scene can recover well in the coming months – we look forward to providing beers to pubs all over Herts."

Hertfordshire's Brewers have been doing their very best to brew and provide beers for us all during lockdown. There's a lot of positivity being shown. Now that pubs have re-opened, we would like to encourage our publicans, drinkers and readership to seek out their beers – *a local pint in a local pub!*

McMullens, Hertford

Mac's stopped brewing their cask beers during the lockdown but continued brewing to replenish their McMullen and Rivertown bottled beers.



Cask brewing has recommenced initially with AK and the monthly special *Normality*

Les Middlewood

Windmill, Charlton Update - Summer 2020

The Windmill pub in Charlton was a vibrant village pub, but unfortunately the pub along with its car park was sold to a developer, and closed in 2015. The pub and car park are now neglected and at risk of redevelopment. Local residents and supporters have formed a community benefit society, with the aim of buying back the pub and car park for the benefit of the local community. This update is written by The Windmill Community Pub Ltd.

Our application for the **Windmill** pub and car park to be registered as an Asset of Community Value (ACV) has been successfully renewed for a further 5 years! We were delighted to receive this news from North Herts District Council (NHDC) earlier this week.

Renewing an ACV listing for a pub that has been closed for a lengthy period of time is by no means a straightforward process, and the success of this application rests heavily on the fact that we were able to demonstrate that you and the wider public continue to value The Windmill and car park, and that many continue to visit this location and enjoy the health and recreational benefits that lead from this wonderful place. Indeed, during the period of the COVID-19 restrictions many more have visited The Windmill site and discovered the benefits (in terms of countryside walks and rides) that lead from it.



ACV status places restrictions on the owner if they decide to sell, and gives community

groups greater opportunity to purchase the asset. It is also a material planning consideration should any application be made to change the building or its use. It therefore provides security and validation for our campaign and we hope will persuade the owner to work with us to bring this asset back to the community.

On this subject we had previously rejected an offer from the owner to reinstate the pub in return for us not objecting to two houses being built on the car park. On professional advice, we firmly believe that any loss of car park space would threaten the future viability of the pub. We also previously reported that the NHDC Conservation Area Character Statement for Charlton listed 'the retention of The Windmill Pub as a community facility' as an 'opportunity for improvement'. In addition to this we can now tell you that a recent planning application by a Charlton resident on a site similar to The Windmill car park was refused on appeal because NHDC planning

policy prevents any residential 'limited infill' development within Charlton as it is not classified as a 'village' under National Policy rules that define appropriate development within the Green Belt. Our understanding therefore is that any planning application for new development on the Windmill car park would be refused because it would be considered inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

We recognise that these are challenging times for the pub sector, but those with outdoor hospitality space like The Windmill are better placed to weather the storm! We hope that the owner of The Windmill Pub and car park will in time come to recognise the opportunities that lie ahead for The Windmill to become an outstanding country pub and to flourish. Our onward strategy will therefore continue to centre on building and maintaining our 'share interest register' in readiness for any opportunity to purchase. It has been pleasing to see this register continue to grow and to welcome dozens more to our mailing list.

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Welcome to new members!

May we finally welcome those of you who have registered your interest and become community supporters since our last update! It is most heartening to see our share interest register continue to grow and to see so many new walkers and cyclists enjoying The Windmill location since COVID-19 restrictions began

We wish you well.

Phil Jarvis, The Windmill Community Pub Ltd

Orange Tree, Baldock

It is an understatement to say that the recent corona virus lock down has been tough for pubs as well as so many businesses. However, in times of adversity there are also opportunities and one business to take advantage of this was the CAMRA **Good Beer Guide** listed **Orange Tree** in Baldock.

On the morning of 21st March, the first day of enforced pub closure, landlord Rob Scahill decided to keep the pub open for takeaways under his off-sales licence. A customer asked him if he had any spare vegetables in the kitchen which were initially given away. This led to more requests and after contacting several local suppliers one of the bars was then converted into a grocery shop. Additionally, beer was being provided by Titanic, Brewsters, Tring, Burton Bridge and New River which we are pleased to add were served in excellent condition.

With the shop now trading successfully, it appeared on the local television news. Rob also decided to donate profit to local musicians as they were unable to perform during the lock down and formed the Baldock Musicians Support Fund with local artist G La Roche, the man behind the successful 'Balstock' events. On top of this, take away food evenings, on - line bingo and a weekly quiz were arranged.

The Orange Tree re-opened as a pub again on 4th July. Rob is understandably proud to say that since he took over on 1st November 2010, the pub has opened every single day and has weathered the corona virus storm. In the 15 weeks that it became a shop / takeaway, £22,119 was raised for local musicians - which is a fantastic achievement.

This article is based on a posting made on the Orange Tree's Facebook site dated 6th July, which gives full details of the support provided by local people and businesses.

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Gold Award again at the Old Cross Tavern, Hertford

This year's South Herts CAMRA Branch Pub of the Year is the **Old Cross Tavern**, in St Andrew Street, Hertford. The selection process took place in early in 2020 - how strange, then, that celebrations would soon have to be put on hold as Britain's pubs faced an indeterminate closure period under government Coronavirus lockdown measures. The Tavern is a serial winner of the Branch Pub of the Year award – Gold, six times; Silver three times and bronze three times - not at all bad for a pub that only opened in 1999.

The pub has always remained close to its founding principles – a community Free House with beer quality at the fore – the provision of a great selection of cask ales including a mild, stout or porter and allowing good conversation, banter and laughter to emerge unhindered by piped music or gaming machines - fully justifying the Tavern motto "A Pub The Way They Used To Be". A winning formula indeed.



Our picture above shows joint-owner Mary Gianoli with the South Herts Pub of the Year shield along with members of staff (l-r) Graeme McKendry – with plaque, David Kirby and Joe Leggett.

Mary says "It's been a strange year for pubs and I must thank our staff, customers and CAMRA for their commitment, help and support".

During lockdown Mary and the team operated a weekend take-away service for beer, cider and snacks which soon became a hit with regulars and passers-by. She is keen to thank Tring, Mighty Oak and Redemption breweries who particularly helped the pub provide a strong range of cask ales during the period. And, of course, there was the pub's ever-present beer – Timothy Taylor *Landlord*. The team used early July to carefully assess and implement the pub's re-opening plan and regulars can be assured of

the pub's future, if with a few changes to reflect the changing times.

'Bev' Bevis, joint-owner of the Tavern, said "We are committed to the future. Over the past 21 years the Tavern has thrived and grown with the support of the people who have worked here, our customers from near and far and CAMRA. I would like to say a special thank you to all the staff past and present. Our ideals remain the same. The heart of the Tavern will continue to be a commitment to British Real Ales. Our beers come from an amazing range of British breweries of an exceptional quality and diversity of styles. The Tavern is sticking to the founding principles of conviviality, choice and quality. It has been our ethos and will continue to be, to support small and artisanal brewers as well as family brewers. The upcoming period will possibly bring in a new era in the pub trade as the nature of pubs continue to evolve as they have over the past two to three decades. The Tavern, as a pub, will retain a traditional community spirit and carry on promoting excellent ales. To CAMRA and South Herts Branch in particular, we'd like to say thank you very much for your support over 21 years starting from our very first year, 1999, when we were awarded the Branch Pub of the Year title".

Customers, as always, can look forward to a warm and friendly welcome, an admirable range of British and Belgian beers and tasty pies and scotch eggs at the bar. To keep abreast of news, consult the pub's Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/oldcrosstavern/>

Les Middlewood

Silver Award for Crooked Billet Colney Heath

The presentation of South Herts CAMRA Pub of the Year Silver award at the **Crooked Billet** was arranged for 14th April but the lockdown on 20th March stopped that happening. The 2020 CAMRA Pub of the Year Competition has now been brought to a close for this year and as the regulations stop organised gatherings in pubs, we felt it only fair to make the presentations and give the winners the credit and publicity they rightly deserve.

In 2018 the Billet received an award for being in 25 consecutive editions of the **CAMRA Good Beer Guide**. Wally and Julie Kasprak bought the pub in 1992 when it was in a very dilapidated state and undertook a major clean-up and redecoration. There was a vast improvement in the beer which won them a place in the CAMRA Good Beer Guide which they

hold to this day (they have now raised that figure to 27 as they are also in the 2020 edition).

When you visit the pub today you could be excused for thinking nothing had changed for hundreds of years but this is not the case. The bar has been moved and proper cellar facilities provided, plus an extension on the rear of the pub allowed for new toilets to be provided. In 1993 there were four pubs in Colney Heath, the demise of the other three was covered in my article "Last Pub in the Village" in *Pints of View* Nos 290 and 297.

There are some pubs (well not many) that have had twenty-seven entries in the guide but what is exceptional is that at the Crooked Billet they have all been under the same licensee.

CAMRA's POTY competition in South Herts is fierce with three hundred pubs to be considered and the search is for the best of the best, looking at hospitality, facilities, support for the campaigns ideals as well as excellent beer. The Crooked Billet for as long as I can remember has always been in the last eight, and they have previously received a "Highly Recommended" award. This year Wally and Julie (pictured below with their award) and their team have improved their position again fully deserving our "Silver" award.



For those of you who don't know the Crooked Billet it has been a pub for over 200 years with low ceilings, genuine oak beams and three different drinking and eating areas. Good pub meals are available and at present they are offering hot and cold snacks lunchtimes.

Sunday roasts were due to restart on 26th July booking essential. It is a genuine free house stocking three cask beers from national, regional and micro-breweries. The Billet is a favourite stop-off for walkers on the many local footpaths. Families are welcome in the large garden where there is play equipment this area has been a bonus with social distancing in place.

Wally is an incurable Arsenal supporter and there are many old photos of the team around the walls. The pub has a good local following and before the lockdown supported traditional pub games with darts and cards played.

Let me congratulate Julie and Wally again on their

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award and good stewardship the Billet is a genuine British country pub.

Steve Bury – South Herts CAMRA

Six Up for the Hertford Club

The Hertford Club has again won the title **South Hertfordshire Branch Club of the Year** – for the sixth year running! The club occupies the Grade II* listed Lombard House on the banks of the River Lea in the centre of Hertford, its home since 1897. Whilst activities, like everywhere, have been seriously curtailed in 2020, planned events were beer festivals, monthly quizzes and music events and a second weekend arts festival.

The club's many attributes include the selling of three locally and nationally sourced real ales, Hertfordshire ciders and perries, monthly quizzes and music events - and a second weekend summer arts festival – all in the beguiling atmosphere



of a 16th Century timbered building, pleasant walled grounds and a riverside terrace. Now re-opened after lockdown, a presentation will be made in the coming weeks.

South Herts Cider Pub of The Year – Mermaid, St Albans

Not for the first time, the **Mermaid** in St Albans has been awarded South Herts CAMRA's **Cider Pub of the Year**.

The photo shows John Cusworth of the Mermaid accepting the South Herts Cider Pub of the Year for 2020. The pub re-opened on 4th July and trade is building up. The Mermaid is no stranger to being the top Cider pub in South Hertfordshire, having won the award on several previous occasions.



The Mermaid is also known for having a sense of humour emanating from their signs displayed outside, but the photo (right) of the pub sign featured is inside – customers, of course for obvious reasons are not expected to wear masks.

For those not familiar with the pub, the Mermaid is a friendly, welcoming community local free house catering for both regulars and the after-work crowd. Oakham *Citra* and five ever changing guests are always available including a stout or porter, and not forgetting of course its **15 real ciders and perries**, plus its selection of bottled foreign beers.



Iain Loe

North Herts CAMRA Branch Pub of The Year

The North Hertfordshire Branch Pub of the Year for 2020 is the **Lordship Arms** in Benington, a small village located a few miles from Stevenage. Once the pub was reopened following lockdown, we were able to present the landlords Alan and Daphne Marshall with the certificate and trophy. Because of the social distancing regulations, we were unable to open the event up to branch members, instead the presentation was made in front of a small group of customers.



Congratulations to Daphne and Alan Marshall (pictured above left and centre receiving their award from North Herts CAMRA's Jeremy Kitson) plus the rest of the Lordship Arms team for winning the North Herts POTY. Alan and Daphne have run the pub since they bought it from McMullen's and re-opened it after refurbishment in 1993 and it has been in the good beer guide continuously since then. The Lordship always offers a range of nine cask ales which are served in excellent condition. They last won the POTY award in 2002, so it has been a long wait for them to win it for a third time.

Sadly, due to the pandemic, the county, regional and national stages of the POTY competition have been cancelled. So, the Lordship Arms will not have the opportunity to emulate the achievement of last year's winner, the **Red Lion** in Preston, which made it to the last four pubs in CAMRA's national Pub of the Year competition.

Jeremy Kitson – North Herts CAMRA

Herts Essex Borders CAMRA honours its lockdown heroes

During the recent lockdown, some pubs and brewers managed to keep open supplying off-sales of beers & ciders. Some also became small community shops. To show our appreciation for this our branch are issuing Real Ale Hero Awards to record these efforts.

The breweries and pubs that kept thirsty ale drinkers going in Herts and Essex CAMRA branch will be awarded certificates shortly. Orderly queues formed at the pubs, with people bringing assorted containers for their take home beers.

The breweries that managed to keep going and supplying the pubs were:-

Hadham - The Belgian Brewer and Redchurch.

Left – Right: Mark King, Will Compton (Head Brewer), Matt Dixon:



Pubs able to open for takeaways were:-

Queen's Head, Allens Green – below: Presented Thursday 16 July:

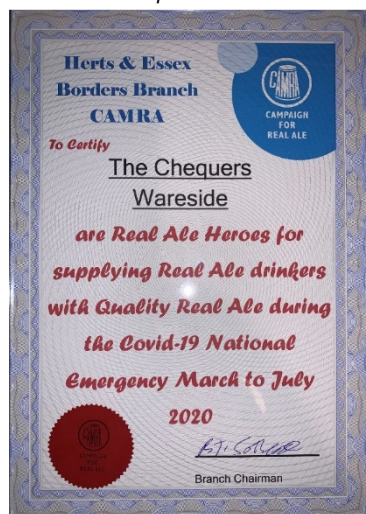
Left: Cliff Caswell (Landlord) and Right: Roger Witherick (Cellar Manager)



Chequers, Wareside - picture below. Left Steve, centre Julie and Right Doug Cook (Landlord):



Below: Certificate presented to the Chequers



A presentation was also made to the Belgian Brewer Brewery in Bishops Stortford. Pictured below: Brendan Sothcott (left) Herts Essex border Branch Chair presenting award to brewery and owner Nik Lemmens,



Also awarded, the **Wheatsheaf** in Bishop's Stortford.



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High Barnet Pub Tour

By Thomas Drake

High Barnet is in Hertfordshire and the tour below is of the remaining pubs in an area that at one time supported at least twice as many. In the late 60's early 70's I used to drink in the area when between Hadley High Stone and the top of Barnet Hill there were twelve pubs plus six others down the side streets. As you will see from the tour this has now reduced to seven. The tour follows a circular route starting and ending at Barnet underground station, the only debate is whether you visit the **Black Horse** or the **Nelson** first.

1. YE OLDE MITRE INNE - 58 High St, Barnet

Owner - GREENE KING

My favourite pub in Barnet is the one we are starting with. The oldest coaching inn in Barnet, there has been a pub on this site since 1553. Beams, exposed brickwork, wood panelling and an open fire gives an authentic feel. Four regular beers always available including Adnams *Southwold Bitter*, Greene King *Abbot*, Timothy Taylor *Landlord* and Tring *Side Pocket for a Toad*, along with four guest real ales and some guest real ciders too, with the pub offering a total of 30 different ales every month. Several times winner of local CAMRA Branch Pub of the Year.

2. KING'S HEAD - 84 High St, Barnet

Owner - MCMULLEN

One bar McMullen house in the shadow of Barnet Church. Serves two regular beers; McMullen *AK Original Mild* and McMullen *Country Bitter*.

3. BUTCHERS ARMS - 148 High St, Barnet

Owner - RED TREE UK

After major refurbishment, the pub reopened on Friday 29th January 2016 as The Butchers Arms. There has never been a pub of that name in Barnet, but many, many years ago the site was a butcher's shop to the front, with an abattoir behind and below; hence the name change. It was also once Wetherspoon's **Moon Under Water** and was converted in 1987 to a free house offering an ever-changing range of four ales. However, one regular is *St Austell Tribute*.

4. YE OLDE MONKEN HOLT - 193 High St, Barnet

Owner - GREENE KING

Historical pub at northern end of the High Street, dating from 1863. At one point called "The Monk", it reclaimed its original name Ye Olde Monken Holt after a refit in September 2017. 4 regular cask beers are Greene King *Abbot*, Greene King *IPA*, *St Austell Tribute* and Timothy Taylor *Landlord*.

5. SEBRIGHT ARMS - 9 Alston Road, Barnet

Owner - MCMULLEN

One of the longest walks between the pubs for the

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night is when we then head to this one. A genuine and popular back street community local which still retains separate and contrasting public and saloon bars. This Barnet hidden gem has been a McMullen pub since 1891. As well as locally crafted real ales, this pub regularly serves two beers; McMullen *AK Original Mild* and McMullen *Country Bitter*.

6. THE BLACK HORSE - 92 Wood Street, Barnet

Owner - STAR (HEINEKEN UK)

The Barnet Brewery, brewing both Barnet and Hadley beers is located at the rear of the pub and can be viewed through glass doors. They brew real ale ranging from pilsners and light ales to dark rich bitters. The brewing equipment on site are the original tanks from the Federation Brewery in Newcastle Upon Tyne, which were sourced from the Iceni Brewery in Norfolk. The eight handpumps offer up to four of their own beers plus regional and national ales from around the country.

7. LORD NELSON - 14 West End Lane, Barnet

Owner - RAM PUB COMPANY (YOUNG'S)

A Wells and Young's pub that will often have a guest ale as well as seasonal offers from their brewery. Young's *Bitter* and Young's *Special* are pub regulars.

Another tribute to Dave

McKerchar

Dave McKerchar (1948–2020): a heritage pub pioneer mourned

Dave McKerchar, who sadly passed away on 8 April, aged 71, is remembered for his significant contributions to CAMRA's pub heritage work. Before our National Inventory (NI) got properly off the ground, Dave had already spent a decade or more pursuing his personal passion for heritage pubs with visits across the UK, culminating in the compilation, with late co-enthusiast Dave Burns, of his own *Classic Pubs Selection 1989*. This prophetically listed many pubs that have become mainstays of the CAMRA inventories. Dave Gamston of Pub Heritage Group (PHG), who spearheaded the early development of the NI by putting out appeals for knowledgeable contributions, recalls the generosity and enthusiasm with which Dave McK shared his knowledge for this 'greater good', so helping lay the foundations of the NI. Chris Witt, also of PHG and a personal friend of Dave's for 40 years, recalls the benefits that he, and hence PHG, gained from Dave's professional knowledge, particularly on the tricky matter of assessing the age of woodwork in pubs. His ability to differentiate the repro from the original derived from many years' experience as a designer and pub estates surveyor with Courage, Morlands and latterly, Greene King. Priceless skills from a well-respected and good-humoured man.

Geoff Brandwood

Buy 2, get 1: Belgium launches 'Helpy Hour' to support bars

Happy Hour has been run by many number of pubs in the UK, including one who had an unhappy hour when customers were encouraged to come in and have a good moan. It was either reduced prices during quiet early evening periods or when you ordered one beer and got the next free.

This was all before the coronavirus lockdown. But in Belgium, a country whose beer drinking and bars are on UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage of humanity list, it's now time for "Helpy Hour".

As Belgium's bars and restaurants prepared to reopen 8th June following two and a half months of closed doors due to the coronavirus pandemic, Belgian beer lovers were being urged to buy one drink for the price of two in support of their favourite locals.

Bars and restaurants in Belgium were allowed to

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reopen starting Monday 8 June under strict conditions, with tables spaced at least 1.5 meters (5 feet) apart, and a maximum of 10 people per table. Ordering and drinking at the bar won't be possible and waiters will have to wear face masks.

Diane Delen, the federation's president, said the draconian measures will reduce attendance in bars by at least two thirds. She told The Associated Press on Thursday that the "helpy hour" initiative will help bar owners bear the shock of the economic crisis triggered by the virus.

"I don't think the Belgians will be happy to see their beloved cafes disappear," she said. "It's a temporary measure that will help avoid an avalanche of bankruptcies. And once everything is back to normal, clients will be satisfied because happy hours will return."

An average beer at a Brussels bar or cafe costs about 2.8 euros.

According to the federation, half of Belgium's 12,000 cafés may not survive the coronavirus crisis.

Although we all know our pubs are under threat as their viability has been damaged by the lockdown, I can't see an initiative like this getting much if any support in the UK.

Steve Bury

This section contains information from a large number of sources and occasionally errors may occur. News items are supplied to meet newsletter deadlines, and which in some cases may unfortunately be out of date upon publication. Comments or additional information should be sent to our contact details at the bottom of this page.

Ashwell: The tenants of the **Three Tuns** left on 20th March and the pub is up to let by Greene King. The **Bushel and Strike**, closed Autumn 2019, is advertised to let by Wells.

Baldock: The **Boot** is closed and up to let by Greene King.

Cheshunt: The **Green Dragon** has been given planning permission to be converted into four residential units and land to the rear for the erection of seven townhouses. The pub (listed, we believe) has been closed for a couple or more of years with no interest shown by anyone to take it over whatsoever. In the last Branch visit to the pub (4 years ago?) they offered one real ale, and the front bar was closed. It's been on our South Herts Branch Closed Pubs list for some time. That just leaves the **Crocodile**, a large Mac's pub, in this part of the area.

Elstree: The **Fishery**, boarded up and with building materials outside the pub, was reported as being up for sale by owners McMullen's. An update would be welcome. There is now no pub open in the village.

Hitchin: The freehold for **Venue** was sold to Just Pubs Ltd in May. The pub remains closed.

Harpenden: The **Skew Bridge** is no longer boarded up and will hopefully re-open shortly. We would like to welcome Michael Singleton and Matt Reeder who have taken over at the **Silver Cup** and used the lockdown to give the pub a makeover.

London Colney: Work is well underway with blocks of flats built around the **Golden Lion** on the car park and bowling green, and the function room at the back has been demolished as well. The garage and car sales lot next door remain untouched and the pub is still standing as well. We assume that the original building is protected in some way but will no doubt be converted to housing at some point. The last remaining historic features were the etched windows at the front of the pub, though we doubt they will be kept.

Radlett: The **Cat & Fiddle** has been shut now since August 2019. In February an application was made to convert the pub into a cardiac centre. This was then withdrawn. From the paperwork lodged with Hertsmere Council it appears that the pub has been sold to Barnet Football Club. We contacted their agents WSP Indigo who as yet have not replied. We do not know the reasons why the application for change of use was withdrawn, but many of the internal features are Grade II listed. The pub was originally two cottages built in 1814 and opened as



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a licensed premises in 1878.

Ridge: The **Old Guinea** has lodged a planning application to build a side extension which will house a coffee lounge. It is good to see this investment in what is a thriving village pub.

Stevenage: The **Crooked Billet** is closed and being refurbished by owners Greene King. New tenants are being sought.

Weston: Although the **Red Lion** is closed, it is run by an events company, and its beer garden was open for business weekend of 11/12 July, with Hadham Beers being available.

Wildhill: During the lockdown the **Woodman** has had an interior redecoration, and the long-awaited refurbishment of the gent's toilets is now completed.

Any comments, articles or letters for publication are welcome. Please send to: **Steve Bury, 14 New Road, Shenley, Herts, WD7 9EA.** Or send an Email to us at: pintsofview@hotmail.co.uk

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Pubs Officer - Norman Samuals

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Email: realales@yahoo.com

Socials Secretary: Ian Boyd, Tel: 07402 323525

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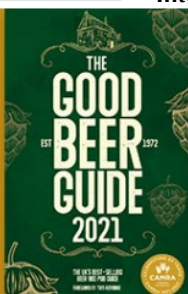
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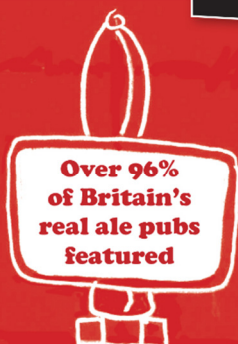
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Please indicate whether you wish to receive
What's Brewing and *BEER* by email OR post:

What's Brewing By Email ☐ By Post ☐ *BEER* By Email ☐ By Post ☐

Concessionary rates are available only for Under 26 Memberships.

I wish to join the Campaign for Real Ale, and agree to abide by the Memorandum and Articles of Association which can be found on our website.

Signed

Date

Applications will be processed within 21 days.

Partner's Details (if Joint Membership)

Title Surname
Forename(s)
Date of Birth (dd/mm/yyyy)



Instruction to your Bank or Building Society to pay by Direct Debit

Please fill in the whole form using a ball point pen and send to:
Campaign for Real Ale Ltd, 230 Hatfield Road St. Albans, Herts AL1 4LW

Name and full postal address of your Bank or Building Society

To the Manager Bank or Building Society
Address
.....
.....
Postcode

Name(s) of Account Holder

.....

Bank or Building Society Account Number

.....

Branch Sort Code

.....

Reference

.....

Service User Number

9 2 6 1 2 9

FOR CAMRA OFFICIAL USE ONLY

This is not part of the instruction to your Bank or Building Society

Membership Number

Name

Postcode

Instructions to your Bank or Building Society

Please pay Campaign For Real Ale Limited Direct Debits from the account detailed on this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with Campaign For Real Ale Limited and, if so, will be passed electronically to my Bank/Building Society.

Signature(s)

Date

Banks and Building Societies may not accept Direct Debit instructions for some types of account.



This Guarantee should be detached and retained by the payer.

The Direct Debit Guarantee

- This Guarantee is offered by all banks and building societies that accept instructions to pay by Direct Debits
- If there are any changes to the amount, date or frequency of your Direct Debit The Campaign for Real Ale Ltd will notify you 10 working days in advance of your account being debited or as otherwise agreed. If you request The Campaign for Real Ale Ltd to collect a payment, confirmation of the amount and date will be given to you at the time of the request
- If an error is made in the payment of your Direct Debit by The Campaign for Real Ale Ltd or your bank or building society, you are entitled to a full and immediate refund of the amount paid from your bank or building society
- If you receive a refund you are not entitled to, you must pay it back when The Campaign Real Ale Ltd asks you to
- You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time by simply contacting your bank or building society. Written confirmation may be required. Please also notify us.

*Price of single membership when paying by Direct Debit. *Calls from landlines charged at standard national rates, cost may vary from mobile phones. New Direct Debit members will receive a 12 month supply of vouchers in their first 15 months of membership. The data you provide will be processed in accordance with our privacy policy in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations.

Attention ALL CAMRA members!

Want to get more from your membership?
Like to attend a future brewery trip in your area?
Understand more about local branch campaigns?
Want to know more about your local beer & cider
festival and how to get involved?

**Things are changing - you can now choose
exactly what you want to hear about from CAMRA.**

**Make your information preferences clear by
updating your CAMRA member record:**

- 1 Sign in using your membership
details at www.camra.org.uk**
- 2 Select 'Edit your membership information'
to update your contact preferences**
- 3 Sit back and enjoy getting the information
that matters to you!**



**CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE**