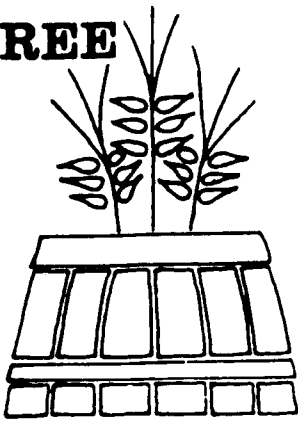


FREE



The Campaign For Real Ale **HERTFORDSHIRE NEWSLETTER**

November 1978 • Number 10

Bitter About Mild

Although it's not yet May, the time when we normally spotlight mild, unless we do something soon there may not be any mild left for next year's month long campaign. We have always known that some milds were threatened; Ind Coope KK has been under sentence of death for several years - in no small part due to the company's non-existent attempts to sell it. Now we find that it's not only the bigger brewers that find themselves incapable - or uninterested - in supplying so called minority tastes. Last month Rayments announced that production of their AK mild would stop by Christmas. Would this have happened if Rayments were truly a small brewer, and not under the friendly guiding hand of Greene King - whose light mild they will now supply instead? I doubt it. Courage mild from Horselydown has gone, and what production there is of this popular drink is from Reading. With this brewery set for closure when the Worton Grange fizz-only factory opens, it looks as though Courage dark mild will become just another beer to be remembered rather than drunk. Fullers Hock may soon be lost and a question mark hangs over the fate of Greene King XX dark mild - in my opinion the best beer they brew. This leaves good old Macs AK - yes what has been happening to the flavour of that recently? - and Greene King KK - here sales are actually on the increase. Paines, thank goodness, still produce an excellent dark mild, but then, they do seem to have the desire to brew what the customer wants.

Not Enough Profit

Basically the problem with mild is that the brewers just don't make enough profit out of it. Consequently they refuse to supply, hardly ever advertise it and try to push high priced, weak imitation lagers down our throats instead. That's where the money is! If they thought that they could get away with lager-type prices for mild they'd have the hairy-chested he-men on TV tomorrow telling us how good it is. The answer is in the customer's hands. If he looks forward to the standard, one lager, one high priced real ale pub then that's the direction in which things are going. If, like me, you would still like to see a choice of ales in the years to come then give those other beers a try. Especially mild - on taste it can be as good as any strong beer, on price it's an awful lot better. But I'd try it soon - you may never get the chance again.

By Dave Burns

PUB NEWS

This month's pub news is dominated by ex-Whitbread pubs, now doing well as Free Houses selling real ale (There must be a moral there somewhere): **Barley** The Fox and Hounds (Ex-Whitbread) is now selling Courage Directors by gravity.

Brent Pelham The Black Horse has added Tolly Cobbold Cantab (gravity) to the range of beers.

Buntingford The Jolly Sailor: Abbot and Tolly Cobbold Cantab on handpumps have increased the number of real ales available. (contd inside)

The Story Of KK

After delving into the history of AK in June's Hertfordshire Newsletter, the spotlight now falls on KK, best known in the county as a light mild brewed in Romford by Ind Coope. Rumours continue to abound that KK is to be withdrawn and replaced by the kegged and deathly "Pale"; however, KK will live on in this area courtesy of Greene King who only started to brew a light mild by this name in 1960. In that year Wells and Winch (soon to become Greene King's Biggleswade branch) bought 6 former Benskins pubs in the Watford area from Ind Coope, and found to their horror that while the only Biggleswade mild was dark, Watford drinkers preferred a light brew. So, Greene King KK was born, and now this far outsells Biggleswade's XX dark mild. That's how history is made - and now the chances of obtaining either Ind Coope light mild or Greene King dark mild in Hertfordshire, in real draught form, are increasingly remote.

By Peter Lerner

CHRISTMAS DRAW

Herts South Branch Christmas Draw tickets (10p each) are now available from Dave Burns, 11 Turpins Chase, Oaklands, Welwyn, to whom also, all stubs should be returned. This year's prizes include 1st: Firkin of beer and a fresh turkey; 2nd: Firkin of beer; 3rd: Bottle of Vintage Port.

NEW MUSEUM

Watford Borough Council are to convert the office building at the former Benskin's brewery in High Street, Watford, to house a museum on local history. They aim to make part of the museum into a recreation of a 'pre-plastic pub' and are asking for genuine exhibits (particularly needed is a bar top). If you can help, please ring Tony Burns of Herts South branch on Welwyn 7805 (eves).

Pub Crawl of Welwyn By Tony Burns

As a resident of Welwyn it is very difficult not to draw comparisons between the Old Town and the Garden City. This comparison also applies to the availability of real ale and real pubs in the two towns, with the former taking the honours. Although they both offer similar ranges of beers, the hostelries in which they can be drunk are as far apart as chalk and cheese.

Steamer

On the principle its easier to walk downhill the best place to start a pub crawl of Welwyn is at the Steamer on the Codicote Road. The typical 1940's/50's McMullen's exterior hides a pleasant interior with large public and saloon bars. The Mac's Country Bitter and AK alas, are served by top pressure but the welcome is friendly and the explanation of why a horse is featured on the inn sign rather than a locomotive deserves ten out of ten for the effort.

White Hart

Following Codicote Road to Prospect Place down towards the centre of the town and the White Hart is unmistakable. Here Wethered's bitter supplies the first pint of real ale, at a very reasonable price for Hertfordshire. This old coaching inn has retained its fascinating character in the saloon bar which is contrasted by the lively Public Bar. A good chance to see for yourself will be at the next CAMRA Herts South Branch meeting which is to be held at the White Hart on 21 November. The pub also serves good food at lunchtime.

Tavern

Next, over the river Mimram on the right hand side of the High Street is an off licence. Close inspection will reveal a thriving two bar pub, the Tavern, at the rear. Unfortunately again, the Mac's is served by top pressure.

Wellington

Another pub serving only top pressure beer is the Wellington in Coddicote Road opposite the church. Greene King Abbot, bitter and mild would improve the choice of real ale in Welwyn and the area tremendously if a set of handpumps were installed. The building dates back to the 13th century and was known as the White Swan until 1816. Inside the decor is more akin to a Scandinavian kitchen with its bright interior and light wood fixtures.

Rose and Crown

Contrast this with the 16th century Rose and Crown situated near the home of Vincent van Gogh's sister in Church Street. This is a typical horse brassy saloon type pub selling Ind Coope Burton Ale and Bitter by handpumps.

White Horse

Opposite is Mill Lane, which leads to the final two pubs. The White Horse serves Ind Coope top pressure beers. The exterior, although not unpleasant and typical of many Ind Coope pubs in the area, hides a busy, friendly, and beautifully preserved inn - well worth a stop for a bottle of Guinness or a White Shield.

Baron of Beef

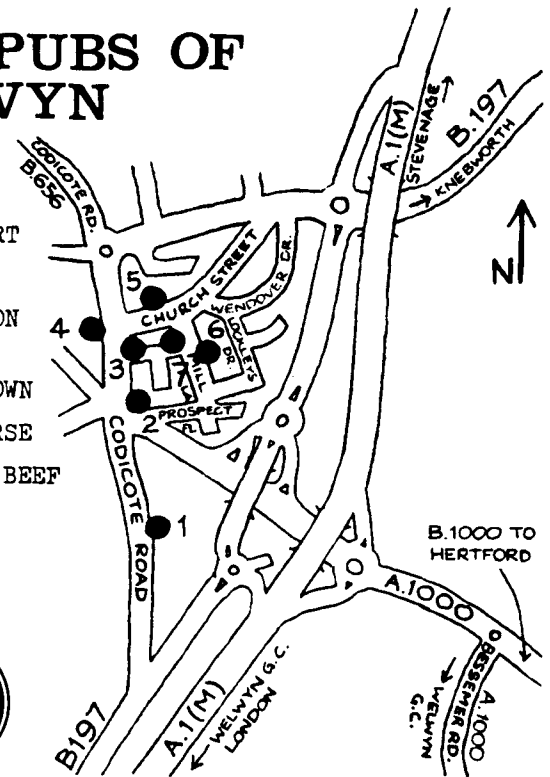
Almost opposite is the final resting point of the crawl - at the Baron of Beef, where handpumped Mac's AK is available in both bars (note the curious serving handle in the saloon). Again, the public bar is busy and lively and 'The Baron' always strikes me as the friendliest pub in Welwyn.

For the second year running, Welwyn has won the

best-kept large village in Hertfordshire prize. With a few more real ale outlets, it could become one of the best places to drink in Hertfordshire.

THE PUBS OF WELWYN

1. STEAMER
2. WHITE HART
3. TAVERN
4. WELLINGTON
5. ROSE AND CROWN
6. WHITE HORSE
7. BARON OF BEEF



Real Ale In Holwell

The landlord of the New Inn, Holwell has recently started serving Greene King IPA Bitter and Abbot Ale direct from the cask. Top pressure beer is also still on sale, so anyone considering a visit must be sure to ask for real ale, which I can assure you is kept in first class condition.

Gas Area

The New Inn is situated on the main road (A600) between Hitchin and Henlow Camp, and local real ale supporters will be quick to appreciate that this is a most welcome change in an area where despite the large number of Greene King pubs in towns like Hitchin, and surrounding villages such as Ickleford, Henlow, Arlesey and Shefford, every one serves the beer on gas pressure. I would like to point out that this was done entirely on the initiative of the landlord himself - let's make sure that this becomes the success it deserves to be. BY DENNIS ROBERTSON.



MEMBERSHIP

HERTFORDSHIRE 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 subscription.

Name

Address

.SignatureDate

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

REMEMBER! IF YOU JOIN BEFORE THE END OF 1978, YOU WILL GET 15 MONTHS' MEMBERSHIP.

PUB NEWS

Buntingford The Shah has recently changed hands and in the handover the handpump for Weathered's bitter has been removed.

Colney Heath The Crooked Billet, ex-Whitbread, has recently celebrated the opening of a new garden. Real cider is now on sale and a further handpump has been installed for Marston Pedigree.

Hitchin The Sun now sells Charrington's Crown from a once-dormant handpump.

Holwell The New Inn will soon be selling Greene King Abbot and IPA by gravity.

Leavesden The Swan, it is hoped, will shortly be serving handpumped Abbot, IPA and KK Mild.

Pirton The Motte and Bailey, ex-Whitbread, is now a Free House with handpumped Greene King IPA and Abbot.

Potters Bar The White Horse is now selling Ind Coope KK Mild alongside Bitter and Burton Ale.

Royston The Coach and Horses has added Ind Coope KK Mild to the usual range of real ale.

Sandon The Chequers, ex-Whitbread, now has handpumps for Everard's Beacon Bitter and Tiger Bitter. Another real ale is to follow.

Borehamwood The Red Lion now has handpumped Ind Coope Bitter alongside Burton Ale.

St. Albans The Great Northern now has Courage Bitter on handpumps.

Rest and Welcome

The place to be on Saturday 25 November will be without doubt the Rest and Welcome, Haultwick. The new licensees of this friendly village pub, Marianne and Rob Silvester, are hoping to obtain a special licence to enable them to remain open all day from 10am, for a day of fun, competitions and raffles, with plenty of food and of course handpumped Mac's AK and Country on tap. Proceeds from the competitions will go towards Muscular Dystrophy, and the highlight of the day will be a sponsored Darts Marathon.

Abbott's Farewell

One of the liveliest pubs in the north-east of the county is the Star at Furneux Pelham, where local branches have enjoyed three excellent socials in the past year. The first was a campaigning social (legendary as the 'beer and bucket' evening), where we attempted to convince licensees Jim and Sheila Abbott that demand for real ale really existed. In no time Rayment's BBA and Greene King Abbot were available on handpump, and we came back again - and again. The Star is now a candidate for the 1979 Good Beer Guide, and it is therefore with sadness that we learn that Jim and Sheila are to leave the Star, and the pub business, this month. We would like to wish them all the very best for their future. By Peter Lerner

Newsletter

The Hertfordshire Newsletter is produced monthly by the Herts South, Herts North and Herts/Essex Borders branches of CAMRA. Any current information, news or articles will be gratefully received. Editor: Les Middlewood, 81a Linden Way, Southgate, London, N.14 4NG.

The far west of the county is covered in more detail by the Mid-Chilterns Newsletter, produced by Mid-Chilterns Branch. This monthly newsletter is available from Tim Amsden, Mermaid Cottage, Hawridge Common, Chesham.



TOWER IN FURNEUX

On the evening of 29th September, 28 members of local CAMRA branches gathered in the Brewery Tap, Furneux Pelham as a prelude to CAMRA's first ever official visit to Rayment's brewery.

The Brewery

Our host and guide for the visit was Rayment's genial manager/brewer Laurie Collins, who explained to us that while Rayment's is a classic Victorian tower brewery (built in 1860), the advantages of the tower arrangement in allowing the brewing process to proceed downwards by gravity were lost when, many years ago, someone decided to leave the mash tun on the ground floor, with the result that the pumps now have to work overtime. Some fascinating old equipment is still in use, including a 60 year old malt roller. The newest additions are a second hand fermenting vessel from Charles Wells of Bedford, and a second hand cask washer from Banks of Wolverhampton. Despite the age of some of the fixtures, however, and following a period a year or two ago when rumours were strong that Greene King, the brewery's owners, would close Rayment's down, there is now a commitment to continue brewing there, with the injection of £100,000 capital for the construction of a new sewage plant.

Tied & Free

Rayment's now cater largely for the free trade and the 25 tied pubs in Hertfordshire and Essex only account for some 10% of the business. The London market is particularly growing, and this increase in demand for draught BBA Bitter has led to a recent decision to stop brewing Pelham Ale, Rayment's only bottled beer and AK Light Mild. This decision is likely to be implemented by Christmas and will result in the sad loss of a very acceptable bottled beer and a delicate light mild. AK will be replaced by Greene King Biggleswade KK in Rayment's pubs. Out of a total production of 250-300 barrels of beer per week at Furneux, AK only accounted for 12 barrels.

Traditional

Laurie Collins and Rayment's are proud of their 100% commitment to draught beer and of the fact that all this beer is produced entirely 'by hand' in the traditional manner. Before coming to Rayment's, Mr Collins worked at traditional breweries in Grimsby (Hewitt's), Guildford (Meux) and Wolverhampton (Banks), and the push button method keg and lager factories are not for him.

Rural Setting

The brewery at Furneux Pelham could not be in a more rural setting and the local farmers can thank Rayment's for supplies of spent malt, hops and yeast to feed their livestock and fertilise their soil. Local beer drinkers can also thank the brewery for continuing to supply a first class bitter, BBA, which is available in real draught form in 15 out of the 25 tied pubs (as compared with the average of 20-25% in the rest of Greene King's empire).

Our visit ended with a lengthy stay in the sample room, making friends with the brewery mouse, renewing acquaintance with BBA and enjoying an excellent buffet provided by Mrs Collins.

By Peter 'Lord Pelham' Lerner

WHAT'S ON

HERTFORDSHIRE SOUTH BRANCH

- 7 Nov. Darts Match v Pub Team at The Bell and Crown, Cowbridge, Hertford (Mac's) 8pm.
- 19 Nov. Sunday night folk evening being run jointly with Hertford Folk Club at The Dimsdale Arms, Fore St, Hertford (Mac's) 7.30pm. Admission approx. 50p. Real Ale upstairs.
- 21 Nov. November Branch Meeting
The White Hart, Welwyn (Wethered's) 8pm.
For map of Welwyn see Page 2.
- 28 Nov. Darts Match v Enfield and Barnet Branch at the Railway Bell, New Barnet (Ind C) 8pm.
- 7 Dec. Darts Match v Rothamsted Experimental Stn. at Harpenden. The match will be in the Club House which has a selection of real ales. 8pm.
- 19 Dec. A.G.M. and December Branch Meeting
The Crown, Hatfield Road, St. Albans. The meeting will start prompt at 8pm. Beers on sale include Bass, San Smiths, Charles Wells Fargo, Ruddle's County and Bitter.

HERTFORDSHIRE NORTH BRANCH

- 8 Nov. November Branch Meeting
The Roebuck, Stevenage (Rayment's) 8pm.
- 14 Nov. Social at The Chequers, Woolmer Green (Ind Coope) 8pm. Derby Draw Beer.
- 18 Nov. Saturday. The branch is hosting a National Executive meeting at the Roebuck, Stevenage between 10.30 & 6pm. Local CAMRA members are welcome to attend. The meeting will be followed by a drink with NE members (venue/s to be announced). More details at Branch Mtg.
- 20 Nov. See Herts/Essex Borders Branch.
- 12 Dec. Christmas Social at The Chequers, Woolmer Green (Ind Coope) 8pm.

HERTS/ESSEX BORDERS BRANCH

- 6 Nov. November Branch Meeting
The Three Tuns, London Road, Bishop's Stortford (Rayment's) 8pm.
- 20 Nov. Joint Social with Herts. North Branch at The Nags Head, Little Hadham (Rayment's) 8pm.
- 11 Dec. December Branch Meeting
The Phoenix, Tillwicks Road, Harlow (Courage) 8pm.

Branch Contacts:

HERTFORDSHIRE NORTH BRANCH

Dennis Robertson Tel: Stevenage 782779 (Home)

HERTFORDSHIRE SOUTH BRANCH

Dave Burns Tel: Welwyn 7805 (Home)

HERTS/ESSEX BORDERS BRANCH

Rob Candlish Tel: Waltham Cross 32045 (Home).

Broxbourne

The Masseys (formerly The White Bear) is now open with handpumped Wethered's Bitter, Rayment's BBA Bitter (both at 36p per pint!) and Greene King Abbot Ale.

