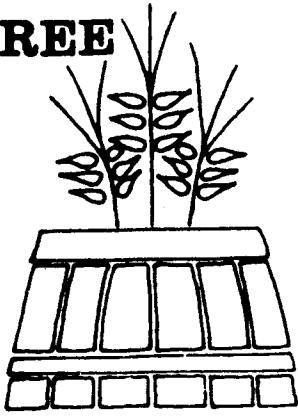


FREE



The Campaign For Real Ale **HERTFORDSHIRE NEWSLETTER**

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It's Time To Slacken The Tie!

Once again industrial disputes have interfered with supplies of beer to local pubs - this time it is Ind Coope, who have recently experienced a walk-out by the 134 workers at their Hunton Bridge depot, near Watford. The action resulted in many pubs running out of beers, especially draught beers, in days. Two other huge concerns, namely Whitbread (Luton) and Courage (London) have also experienced strained worker-management relations. Contrasting this, is the close-knit atmosphere of smaller brewing concerns such as McMullen's of Hertford - where has there been any major strife there? The same can be said of many other small concerns now supplying the free trade locally, such as Adnams, Young's, Fuller's and Paine's. All have the satisfaction of both employee and customer high on the lists of management priorities. So while the supplies of big brewery beer run dry it is ironic, but satisfying, to note that landlords are replenishing their supplies with ales from dependable, smaller, concerns, in order to keep their livelihood going. It is a situation that some good tenant landlords seem to relish, and the customer too, as many temporary replacement brews prove to be more popular than those brewed by the big national breweries. Beers from Morlands, Hook Norton, Marston's, Ruddles, Everards, Adnams, Greene King (to name but a few) have recently featured in various Ind Coope pubs during the industrial action.

One 'Foreign' Beer

Everything points to the views CAMRA has been expressing for some time now i.e. the slackening of the tie tenants have with the brewery. CAMRA would like to see tenants have the option to stocking at least one draught beer from a 'foreign' company, which would bring about a greater choice for the customer especially in areas dominated by one brewer. So far such an idea remains a pipe-dream as the brewers and unions sneer at the very thought, although there has been some support from the NULV in the Avon area. CAMRA hopes that time will bring a change of heart and feels that the extra competition that this proposal would bring will be a healthy step forward. BY NICK PAGE.

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

Christmas is a very special time of year. A time that despite the materialistic overtones of 20th century society; despite the hedonistic tendency of its every ritual; despite the commerciality surrounding it; despite all this and more, it is a very special event. It is the time when we must, as the skiing fraternity would say, go "sur la piste". Merry Christmas from CAMRA.

FOLK EVENING

If you're at a loose end on Monday 18 December and you like folk music why not pop down to the Hop Poles in Baker St, Enfield where Herts North Branch members Bruce and Sandra Ward run a monthly Folk Club. The guests that night will be Brandywine Bridge. 8pm start.

The Farriers

You all thought it couldn't happen, but yes it has, George and Glad have left the Farriers Arms in St. Albans. Rumours that he had been summoned to the Vatican for a higher post were dispelled when the wrong coloured smoke came out of McMullen's brewery. Instead they are looking for a quiet retirement across the road from the pub which they have run for the last seven years.

Only Pub In Town

The Farriers has a special place in the history of CAMRA as it was here that the first branch, the Hertfordshire Branch, was formed. Then it was the only real ale pub in St. Albans - now there are over 30. It has always had a deserved place in the Good Beer Guide, the 1974 comment was "Extremely friendly basic pub. An oasis for real draught beer drinkers. Highly recommended and well worth a visit." This of course led to all kinds of beer bores packing out the place, driving all the regulars out and George round the bend. So, in no uncertain terms George set about deterring customers to get things back to a sensible level. However the beer always remained good justifying its place in the guide. There was a reminder of how things used to be on their last night when everyone came to pay their respects. Even on his last night George would not sell the Country Bitter because the brewery had supplied him with three duff barrels - but we were content with pints of first-class AK.

All The Best

Hertfordshire South Branch would like to wish you, George and Glad, a long and happy retirement and would like to wish the new licensees the best of luck.

Just one thing - please don't all rush at once to see them!
BY 'SIR ROBERT HORN'

PUB NEWS

Colney Heath i) The Cock is now selling hand-pumped Ind Coope Bitter. ii) The Crooked Billet is now selling Greene King Dark Mild.

Pirton The Motte and Bailey now is selling bitter from Adnams and Westcrown - a new beer to Hertfordshire, brewed at Newark.

Welwyn The White Horse in Mill Lane has had three handpumps installed and is waiting for first supplies of Ind Coope Burton, Bitter and Mild.

Potters Crouch The Hollybush is now selling Ind Coope Bitter on handpump. No Burton Ale.

'79 LOCAL GUIDE

Survey forms are already being completed for the 1979 edition of Real Beer in Hertfordshire which should be out in the Spring. Please notify editor Dave Burns of any changes in pub entries. Martyn Cornell (10 Darwin Road, Stevenage) is compiling a brewing history section for the guide and would like to hear from anyone with books, pictures, bottle labels, beer mats, price lists or reminiscences of bygone Hertfordshire breweries.

The local branches of CAMRA would like to thank all those who sold guides this year. Special mention goes to The Crooked Billet, Colney Heath where landlord David Hughes sold over 450 guides and to The Woodman, Chapmore End where Pip and Sandra sold over 250. These are two of the smallest pubs in the county too!

NEW YEAR PARTY

Tickets are now almost sold out for the Herts South Branch New Year Party being held on Friday 5th January at Bramfield Village Hall. There will be no admittance without ticket. A coach has been arranged leaving Watford 7pm prompt and calling at St.Albans, Hatfield and Potters Bar. It makes sense to leave your car at home - contact John Birchall (Tel St.Albans 55271x23 work; St.Albans 54331 home) who has further details.

REGULARS PLOUGHED OUT

It is not only the big brewers who are responsible for the desecration of village locals. The Plough at Tyttenhanger Green is to be closed soon to be given 'the treatment'. The pub was recently sold by Whitbread to become a Free House (the figure is believed to be in excess of £30,000). It will be closed for Christmas and the darts and dominoes club that regularly raise money for charity has been told to wind up to make way for a new image. Is the new owner - a London buyer - aiming to poach customers from the Barley Mow?

BY BOB NORRISH

THE REAL AND UNREAL

John Smith's, part of the Imperial Tobacco Group, as is Courage, are heading south, armed with a big advertising budget and very little else. Their 'Yorkshire Bitter', complete with fizz, is definitely not a traditional cask-conditioned beer, so make sure you are not fooled. And don't confuse Yorkshire Bitter with Samuel Smith's Old Brewery Bitter which most local drinkers will know is a real ale. If you're a real ale drinker you may as well steer clear of John Smith's altogether, 'cos they don't brew any.

FOR SALE

Herts South Branch have 2 handpumps for sale, preferably to a local landlord interested in introducing real ale. Contact A.Green (01-882 6406 eves.)

BEER & RATTLES

As a family man, I find myself with the age-old problem of liking a good pint but being unable to take my daughter into the pub with me. Pub gardens provide only a modicum of relief during the summer - in between rain showers and fighting off kamikaze wasps. With the Erroll Report slowly collecting dust somewhere, it seems unlikely that children will ever be allowed into bars as on the continent. Having witnessed the sheer pandemonium of children running around a public bar, shouting screaming, knocking tables and dropping crisps into drinkers' beers, I don't think this would really be the answer. Even if children were allowed in it would completely alter the character of the British Public House.

Misleading

The possible solution, to be found in only 1.5% of Hertfordshire's pubs, are Childrens Rooms. In the West Country, where these are more common, they are set aside from the main bars and often well equipped with games such as bar billiards.

Quite often the Children's Room symbol in local guides is misleading - some are simply pubs where landlords allow children into normal bars. I am aiming to find out the true facilities in Hertfordshire. Meanwhile here are two pubs in the south-west of the county:

- a) The Artichoke Inn, Croxley Green (Ind Coope) which has a prominent children's room at the end of the saloon bar containing tables etc.
- b) The Two Brewers, Chipperfield (Greene King and Bass) where children are allowed in the large comfortable lounge between the bar and restaurant. But beware, the room is not available if there happens to be a meeting, wedding reception or if the restaurant is fully booked.

If many more pubs provided an inside Children's Room/Area, this would enable the family man and wife to keep an active interest in beer and possibly CAMRA.

BY MIKE BIRCH

THE LAST POST

On 9 October members of the Hertfordshire branches of CAMRA held a special social evening at The Old English Gentleman in Waltham Abbey. This was to mark the retirement of landlord Bernard Appleby from the licensed trade.

Brass Band

With deep cunning the Herts/Essex Borders branch had planned a surprise presentation of some CAMRA books and a brass band LP to Bernard and his wife Joan. As it turned out they were surprised themselves - twice. First Joan produced a fiver and a filled-up membership form for both of them, then Bernard announced that for the final half-hour drinks would be "on the house"!

11 Years

Bernard said that no release date had yet been fixed, so the 'Last Post' will continue to ring out over Waltham Abbey Marshes for some time yet at Closing Time. Even when he leaves the pub he's kept for 11 years Bernard will only be moving down the road and he says he is eager to get involved in CAMRA affairs. Who knows, the tradition of 11 years might even be continued by post-horn performances to close Herts/Essex Borders Branch meetings! Good luck to everybody involved in the handover and let's hope that handpumped Mac's AK and Country continue to flow.

BY BOB CANDLISH

IF YOU'RE IRISH, YOU DON'T HAVE TO DRINK GUINNESS.....

BY KATHY ROBERTS & MARTYN CORNELL

Visitors to Ireland who are worried at the thought of a continual diet of bottled Guinness in an otherwise never-ending sea of keg can take heart - there is a real ale alternative to the ubiquitous Dublin brew on sale in the Republic. Unfortunately it's only available in a limited part of the country, it's not easy to find that it's - that's right - a naturally-conditioned bottled extra stout.

Beamish

The 'other' real stout is brewed by Beamish and Crawford, the Irish arm of the worldwide Carling combine, and for really determined people, the best places to search for it are the bars near their brewery in South Main Street, Cork. Beamish also produce a keg version of their stout, distinguishable from Guinness only because it's not quite so bitter, but the company, which was founded in 1792, gets most of its sales from the Carling/Bass Charrington beers it produces, including draught and bottled Bass pale ale and Carling Black Label, which are available throughout the Republic. Beamish no longer organise brewery trips, unfortunately, but like most Cork people they are extremely friendly - and they must also be one of the few breweries in the world with a Gaelic-speaking gateman. Actually the company have recently begun exporting bottled stout to the United Kingdom but, alas, not their real stout.

Murphy

Cork's other brewery, James Murphy Limited, also produces a Guinness-like stout in kegs and bottles but the bottled version is, alas, pasteurised. However the beer does not appear to be filtered, and drinkers can spot little black bits floating about even in the bottle. Murphy's Ladyswell brewery was founded in 1856, but a few years ago the company was going through a rough time, and it was bought by a group of Irish vintners who wanted to see a commercial alternative to Guinness maintained in Ireland. Their success can be gauged by the fact that Murphy's keg stout is now on sale not just in Dublin, home of Guinness, but even in England, at places like the Shamrock Club in Welwyn Garden City and the Vine in Luton.

Keg Youngers

The company also brew and keg Youngers ale for the Scottish and Newcastle combine in Ireland, advertised with a mock wooden handpump-style keg dispense and the laughable slogan "The way ale used to taste", but Murphy's own keg pale ale, launched a few years ago under the name Schooner, has now sunk almost without trace.

Irish Ale

For the majority of Irish drinkers, however, beer means Guinness - and not just because stout is the most popular drink. Beer in Ireland is divided into stout and ale, the latter being what we would call bitter or pale ale, and by far the biggest producer is Irish Ale Breweries. Our own Allied Breweries has a stake in Irish Ale, but the majority shareholder is - surprise, surprise - Guinness.

Best seller of the Irish ales is Smithwicks, which being owned by Guinness, is found wherever Guinness is found, that is to say, everywhere. Keg and bottled versions are derived from the

same brew, but despite its fizzy, nondescript taste, for some reason it easily outsells all its competitors. The original Smithwicks brewery was built on the site of a Franciscan monastery in Kilkenny in 1710 and the current kegery looks rather strange alongside the roofless church which still stands in the brewery grounds. For anyone who wants a closer look, trips round the brewery leave the main gate every day at 3 pm.

Smithwicks

Smithwicks also brew and keg Perry's at Kilkenny, another bland and tasteless beer only available near the original Perry brewery in the Irish Midlands, while Smithwicks Ale is also brewed and kegged - though not bottled - at the Cherry's brewery in Waterford, again an Irish Ale subsidiary. Cherry used to produce its own draught and bottled ale, Phoenix, but this is now brewed, in a bottled version only, at the third Irish Ale subsidiary, Macardle and Moore of Dundalk, and shipped back down to Waterford. Even in its home town, however, one barman told us, Phoenix is outsold by Smithwicks about nineteen bottles to one.

Macardles

Macardles, reflecting the Allied Brewery share in IAB, also turn out bottled Double Diamond at Dundalk, as well as their own draught and bottled ale. This tends to be restricted to the Dundalk/Dublin area, but Macardles No.1 is, in fact, quite a tasty bottled beer, by far the most palatable of Irish ales - though nowhere near a real beer.

Lager

Finally, just like England, the Irish are drinking a lot of lager these days. The biggest seller here is Harp, who are owned by - well, we don't really need to tell you. Beamish get their own back a little with Carling and Carlsberg, but there is hardly a bar in Ireland that doesn't have keg stout from Guinness, keg ale from Smithwicks and alongside them keg lager from Harp, all owned by the same people - and outside the big cities, in most places that's all you'll find.

Monopoly

Guinness's unhealthy grip on the Irish beer scene extends everywhere - the men from Beamish complained to us that they even have to buy the gas for their kegs from the Dublin company - and it cannot be a coincidence that the choice for anyone wanting real ale in Ireland is so poor. In short the country's beer scene is a horrifying picture of what might have happened here if the British consumer had not revolted in time - and all, because of punitive taxation, at 42p to 50p a pint. If you're Irish, you don't have to drink Guinness - but there's very little else.

Watney Double Talk

On 5 October 1978 'Publican' - a licensed trade paper, carried a large article by Paul Walmsley, smooth-talking PR Director of Watney, Mann and Truman. Its subject was Watney's real ale revival and could have made a good read, but for the typical big brewery double talk.

For example, did you know that when selecting their new brews, "Watneys (continued back page)

Watneys (contd)

believed in the importance or regional differences in palate". Is this, I wonder, the same concern that led to the brutalisation of the local and distinctive beers of Phipps, Tamplins, Bullards and Steward and Patteson? Did you know that "it is generally accepted that the traditional beer engine has some marginal disadvantages in serving beer in perfect condition and, importantly, needs careful attention to keep it clean"? It's almost as if top-pressure systems clean themselves - which of course they can't do. If Watney's think that they do, or even that they don't need "careful attention to keep (them) clean" it could go a long way to explaining their beer's infamy.

First Attack

And why do you think that CAMRA's first outright attack on any brewer was directed towards Watneys? Mr Walmsley tells us "CAMRA, initially, at least, was simply wanting to promote traditional beers, but as a campaigning body it needs to be aggressive; to attack the beers which were replacing them. It also needed a very simple line of publicity. Inevitably this led to the company which had led the changes for twenty years and so the attacks on Watney's". Even richer in PR schmaltz is Mr Walmsley's explanation of Watney's decision to go real again in London after 14 years of 'Red Revolution'. "We were not forced to produce a product we did not want to sell" he tells us oblivious of economic theory and ignoring the fact that for years drinkers in Norwich, Northampton, Brighton, London and scores of other places were forced to buy a product they didn't particularly want, through a simple monopoly.

Advertising

A recent Watneys advertising campaign for their particular brand of gas-fired 'cold tea', called "Special" used the slogan 'the less said the better the beer'. Doubtless coined or approved by Mr Walmsley's Department, I feel that he should have stuck by this phrase and not have aired his lack of knowledge and his company's 'take it or leave it' approach to the consumer. Anyone who can seriously say of real ale "We are still in the early stages of exploiting this market.." can't really be treated with credibility. My dictionary tells me that to exploit is to use for one's own ends, but Mr Walmsley's must say something different, if only to explain the content of this article.

BY ROB CANDLISH

What's On

HERTFORDSHIRE SOUTH BRANCH

- 7 Dec. Darts Match v Rothamsted Experimental Stn. at the Station's Clubroom in Harpenden. 8pm. A selection of real ales is available
- 19 Dec. A.G.M. and December Branch Meeting The Crown, Hatfield Road, St. Albans. (Free House) 8pm start - prompt!

HERTFORDSHIRE NORTH BRANCH

- 12 Dec. Christmas Social at The Chequers, Woolmer Green (Ind Coope) 8pm.
- 13 Dec. December Branch Meeting The George, Bucklersbury, Hitchin. 8pm. (Ind Coope)

HERTS/ESSEX BORDERS BRANCH

- 11 Dec. December Branch Meeting The Phoenix, Tillwicks Road, Harlow. 8pm. (Courage)

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, N14 4NG. The far west of the county is covered in more detail by the Mid-Chilterns Newsletter which is available from Tim Amsden, Mermaid Cottage, Hawridge Common, Chesham.

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MEMBERSHIP

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

..... Signature Date

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

HERTFORDSHIRE NEWSLETTER.

