

THE HERTFORDSHIRE NEWSLETTER

FREE



The Campaign for Real Ale

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BENSKINS SHAKE-UP

Benskins are to merge with Halls, the Oxford based division of Allied Breweries and the latter's MD, Philip Davies, will be in charge of the new group. Jim Glover the current Benskins MD had already resigned before the merger was announced and is off to expand his retail experience at the Kingfisher Group (which owns Woolworth).

The new group will use the Benskins name and their main office will be in Watford, although Halls Oxford office will remain open as a base for local area managers etc.

The merger has resulted in the board of the two companies being combined with several executive jobs being lost.

The new group will have over 1200 pubs despite some 135 of the outlying Halls outlets being transferred to Ansells and Friary Meux. Halls also transfer control of the Plympton brewery in Plymouth to Ansells, although it was unlikely that

we would ever have seen those beers around here, anyway.

Halls have only recently absorbed the ABC pubs into their estate while Benskins took over a number of Ind Coope East pubs in East Anglia in 1988. It looks as though Allied have deemed their experiments with local trading groups to have been a failure, several beers have already been lost. It begs the question as to which will be the next Allied trading company to go? There have been plenty of rumours about Taylor Walker...

(So its back to 'Big is profitable', Ed)

WHITBREAD — MORE BREWERY CLOSURES

We have just heard that Whitbread are to close the Fremlins brewery at Faversham in Kent and Liverpools' only remaining brewery Higsons, only recently acquired from Boddingtons.

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TEN YEARS AGO

Back in February 1980 the Newsletter was headlining the £1/2 million expansion by Charles Wells at their Bedford brewery, their third extension in five years. Ominously the expansion in brewing capacity was to meet the great increase for beer in take-home packs, particularly in supermarkets. The sale of beer in supermarkets has continued to affect the trade in pubs in the intervening decade. Another increasing concern of the Campaign was featured on the front of the March 1980 Newsletter: the closure of traditional character pubs. Facing closure at the time were two of the county's 'little gems', the Goose at Moor Green and the Chequers at Wood End. The article urged that as traditional beer was saved CAMRA's next battle was to save the traditional pubs to drink it in. Sadly both the Chequers and the Goose closed as have others like them, but the campaign continues.

Also in the news in March 1980 was the retirement of George and Lil Newberry from the Red Lion in Old Stevenage, a traditional pub still open albeit much altered. It was reported that Carlsberg had patented NAB, a non-alcoholic beer for export to Muslim countries in powdered form. Non-alcoholic and powdered beers have both been re-invented in recent times.

JFF

LONDON DRINKER BEER FESTIVAL

March 14th to 16th. Camra London Drinker Beer Festival at the Camden Centre, Bidborough St., London WC1. Featuring over 40 real ales, with an emphasis on independent breweries, featuring beers from Scotland, plus traditional cider, perries and continental beers. Festival opens 11.30 am to 3.00pm and 5.00pm to 10.30pm (March 14 & 15) and 11.30am to 10.30pm (March 16), with last admission 10.00pm (subject to availability). Entrance £1.20 evenings, after 4.00pm on the 16th. Food available. Live music evenings. Over 18's only.

S & N LEAVE THE BIG LEAGUE

Scottish & Newcastle Breweries are intending to sell off 250 pubs before the government orders implementing aspects of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report come into effect next May. Their purpose is to get below the 2000 pub-owning limit and thus get themselves categorised as a 'large independent' rather than as a member of the Big Six. In doing so they avoid the necessity of having to offer their tenants the opportunity of taking a guest beer and of having to run half of their pubs above the limit as free houses.

With S & N monopolising the pub scene in Scotland, it looks as though the opportunity of introducing some much needed choice north of the border may have disappeared. The Office of Fair Trading have a watching brief on the way the breweries operate the new regulations and can recommend the strengthening of the rules if necessary. This must surely be the first case for their attention. Meanwhile Alick Rankin, the S & N chairman, has taken over as the new chairman of the Brewers Society from Anthony Fuller. The latter, who was the mouthpiece for the Society in their denigration of the MMC Proposals, (forecasting the end of the pub as we know it, etc. etc.) told the shareholders at the Fullers AGM what a wonderful opportunity the new proposals offered to his company. That's what **we** were telling **him** a few months ago.

The government have still not said how they plan to enforce the few remaining proposals left from the MMC report. What is probable is that Grand Metropolitan will sell off their brewing interest leaving them a 6000 pubs chain and will buy back their beers. The remaining big 4 will have to make free houses out of half their pubs over 2000. So Bass with 7000 will have 4500 tied pubs and 2500 free houses. Hotels and restaurants will not be counted so we could be seeing some conversions. Big 4 Tenants should be allowed to stock a non-tied beer of their choice but there will be much pressure not to choose, not least their replacement by managers.

Tenants should also have the choice of non-beer products they stock; in theory this could open up a lot of outlets for real cider.


From May 1990 loan ties made by national brewers should leave publicans able to take a guest beer as for tenants. Theoretically outlawing the 100% ties but no doubt unrealistic barrelages will be set, as happened at the still closed Barley Mow.

LOOK OUT FOR THE MAN IN THE BOWLER

The Office of Fair Trading will be in charge of overseeing the changes, but without a huge increase in manpower its difficult to see them getting round all the pubs. CAMRA will be doing all it can locally and nationally to see fair play. If you want to help with the surveying get in touch with the contacts on the back page.

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TOWN AND AROUND

First the bad news: the **Farmers Boy**, Brickendon is closed and boarded up, the future of this "typical village pub near village green" as McMullens describe it, is not known as we go to press. Macs have also sold the **Crown** Hertford Heath this "village house with large garden area" is to become a free house.

The **Nelson** Wheathampstead which has been boarded up for the best part of a year is thought to have a buyer. Whitbread have been selling a couple of pubs to Fullers; just before Christmas the **Portland Arms** changed hands, retaining the old governor. At 9am on the 5 Jan, Bill and Kathy Lynch and the fitters moved into the **Gibraltar Castle**, Batford, Harpenden, at 10am Whitbread phoned for the beer order only to be told it was a Fuller's house. Pride and ESB available at both. Also in Harpenden the **Inn on the Green** is closed, rumour has it Benskins are taking it over from Greene King; Grant Hollier, is now managing the **Silver Cup**, a recent S Herts Pub of the Month.

Although the pub was sending Christmas greetings to the readers of a local paper the **Batchworth Arms**, Rickmansworth, remains boarded up, having apparently been closed for reasons of health and safety in November. Thanks to Ian Burdnett of the **White Bear** for his hospitality when a local social was transferred there from the **Batchworth** at short notice.

The **Estcourt Arms**, Watford, has been redecorated and Tetleys is now available alongside the Benskins. **Blakes** has extended their drinking area by moving the kitchen. Morrells Graduate and Wethereds Winter Royal were available at the time of writing, and the **Wellington**, now has Youngs Special as a regular beer and guest beers are likely to include Wadworths Old Timer and Adnams Old. Welcome to Andy and Hazel Muskett who are due to take over the **Railway Arms**, Oxhey, in early February. Barry Beech, licensee of the Good Beer Guide listed **Sportsman**, Hertford, is one of the five finalists in the British Institute of Innkeeping's Innkeeper of the Year award. (Bill, I of the Y).

Following the completion of its restaurant, the Good Beer Guide listed **Black Horse** at Brent Pelham now sells Ruddles Best Bitter and County instead of its former range of Greene King and Adnams beers.

The **Windmill** at Charlton and the **Cat and Fiddle** at Pirton have joined the number of Charles Wells pubs selling Adnams Broadside.

The **Marques of Granby**, Stevenage, which has spent some time under refurbishment, has re-opened as just The **Granby**, and has become a real ale pub selling Greene King IPA and Abbott.

For several years now the bar of the **Chequers**, Barley sported two pump handles which had no workings underneath and hid top-pressure taps. Now this attractive one-bar village pub, which dates from 1786, has been partially refurbished to provide an enlarged drinking and eating area and two new handpumps dispense Greene King Abbot and IPA. Outside a new floodlit Petanque piste has been laid and children will be catered for in a new play area this year.

Over at Rushden, refurbishment has also been carried out in the **Moon and Stars**, increasing the area of the lounge and handpumped Greene King IPA in each bar.

WE DO LOVE TO BE BESIDE THE SEA

CAMRA's Great British Beer Festival is returning to the South Coast after a two year sojourn up North. The demolition of the Queens Hall in Leeds which has hosted the GBBF for the last two years led to a fairly frantic countrywide search for a site which was sufficiently large,

had the necessary amenities and was reasonably priced. In the end the only suitable site that was available was the Metropole in Brighton.

The festival will open on the evening of Tuesday 7th August and continue until Saturday 11th August. The usual wide range of British beers (250 from 100 different brewers) will be supplemented by traditional ciders and perries and a selection of foreign beers.

Two other festivals before then: the **First Battersea Beerex** at the Battersea Arts Centre, Lavender Hill, SW11, between 21st and 24th February (open Weds evening, Thurs lunchtime, all day Fri and until 6 on Sat) and lovers of real cider and perry can sample a range of products at the **First National Cider and Perry Exhibition** to be held on the 18th and 19th May, at the Camden Centre. Over 40 different brands should be available and, given the attrition rate in the cider industry, this could be your last chance to taste some of them. Entertainment includes the Yetties on Friday evening. A family area will be available.

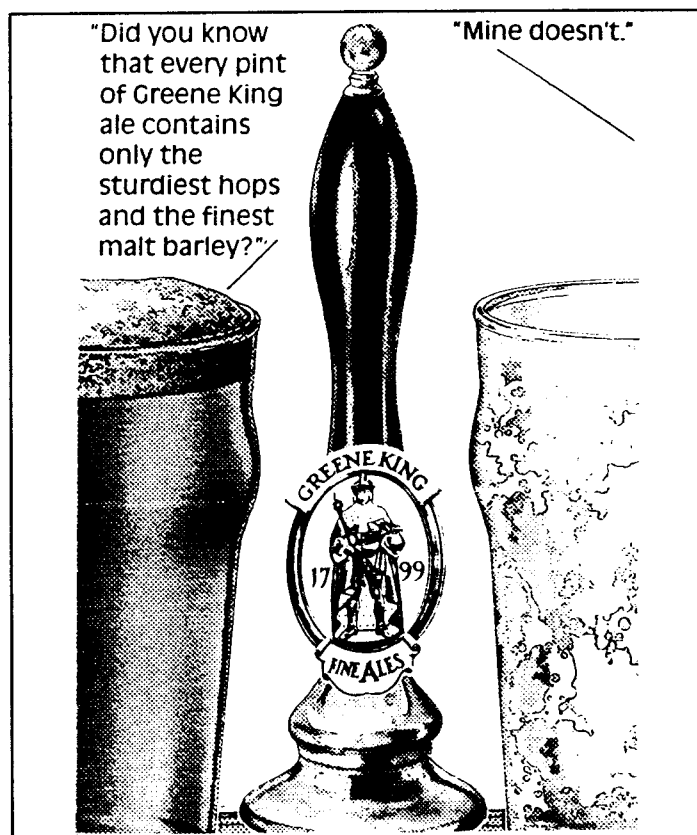
MEMBERSHIP SOARS

During the year 1989, CAMRA membership grew by 21%, and as the rate shows no sign of slowing, now exceeds 24,000.

John Cryne, CAMRA's chairman, said: "This extraordinary success shows our high profile on the Monopolies Commission, the success of the Good Beer Guide, the growing perception of the threat to consumer choice, and the sterling work of our members up and down the country".

A recent survey of new members shows that the main reasons people are joining the campaign are to help protect real ale, to be kept informed on what's happening in the brewing world, and the wish to belong to an organisation that is fighting for choice, for the consumer, and against the big brewers. If you feel likewise, and want to join an expanding, social, consumer group, fill in the form below.

Winner of the Christmas Quiz was Mr K Tuckwood of Marshalswick St. Albans.



DIARY DATES

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE BRANCH

Wednesday 14 February 8.30 Branch AGM at the **Crown**, Buntingford.

Wednesday 28 February 8.30 Puckeridge Crawl, starting at **Buffalo's Head**

Wednesday 14 March 8.30 Social at **Lytton Arms**, Old Knebworth

Wednesday 28 March 8.30 Walsworth/Hitchin Crawl, starting at **Sailor Boy**, Woolgrove Road

Wednesday 11 April 8.30 Branch Meeting at the **White Hart**, Baldock.

Wednesday 25 April 8.30 Social at **Woodman**, Nuthampstead, then from 9.30 at **Fox and Hounds**, Barley.

WATFORD AND DISTRICT

Tuesday 6 February Good Beer Guide Pub social at the **Halfway House**, Rickmansworth from 8.30pm.

Tuesday 13 February Branch meeting at the Pub of the Year **Old Shepherd**, Chorleywood 8pm for 8.30 start.

Wednesday 28 February Three-pub social in Oxhey Village, meet at the **Railway Arms** (opposite Bushey Station) 8.30pm, moving to the **Rifle Volunteer** at 9.15pm and ending up at the **Villiers Arms** at 10pm.

Wednesday 7 March Branch meeting and AGM, the **Wheatsheaf**, Watford 8pm for prompt 8.30 start.

Nominations for committee welcome.

Wednesday 14 March Two-pub social in Abbots Langley starting at the **Kings Head**, High Street at 8.30pm moving on to the **Rose & Crown**, 9.45pm.

For further details of events contact Martin Few on Watford 52412.

HERTFORDSHIRE SOUTH BRANCH

Tuesday 30 January 8.30 Pub of the Month, **White Horse**, Hertford.

Tuesday 13 February Branch meeting, **Woodman**, Water End, North Mymms, 8.30pm

Tuesday 27 February Social, **Old Bulls Head**, Ware.

Tuesday 13 March Branch Meeting, **Bull**, London Colney 8.30pm

Tuesday 27 March Pub of the Year, **John Bunyan**, Coleman Green.

Contact: Bob Norrish 0582 769923 (h) 0582 763133 X2554

MID-CHILTERN BRANCH

Contact: Chris Pontin 0494 783198

HERTS-ESSEX BORDERS BRANCH

Contact: Steve Marlow 0279 30450

PUBS OF THE YEAR

The Watford & District branch of CAMRA have chosen the **Old Shepherd** at Chorleywood Bottom as their first Pub of the Year. It is situated on a corner of the common with a pleasant rural outlook, but is within easy walking distance of Chorleywood station.

This small, friendly pub serves Benskins, Tettleys and Burton all excellently cared for by licensee Mike Farrant. Food is available all sessions except Wednesday evenings, and a small family room is available. Join us there on the 13th February.

Herts South branch members have voted the **John Bunyan**, Coleman Green as being the best of their last ten Pubs of the Month and on the 27 March will be presenting a plaque to Gill and Eddie Comley.

ROUND & ABOUT

One of this country's most famous pubs, the GBG-listed Trip to Jerusalem in Nottingham has been bought by Hardy's and Hansons for 'a substantial seven-figure sum'. Visitors to this year's GBBF in Brighton (see elsewhere) might like to search out the GBG listed Hand in Hand which is now brewing its own beer.

Youngs have acquired the Royal Oak in Pimlico, SW1, and the Duke of Cornwall, Ascalon Street, Battersea.

Brent Walker have continued rationalising their beer range. The latest to go are John J Hunt's Ebor Ale and Robert Newton bitter, both brewed for their Tap & Spile 'free house' pubs. Both beers were named after brewers taken over by Camerons.

Under the 1872 Licensing Act it is an offence for a licensee to be drunk or disorderly anywhere on his pub's premises as a Saffron Walden landlord recently found out. However the case was dropped when he agreed to be bound over in the sum of £200 to keep the peace. The maximum fine for the offence is £50.

A survey by Trading Officers of 189 bars in Herts, Bucks, Beds and East Anglia showed that 71% of ale was 'deficient in measure' and that 33% did not fully comply with price marking obligations.

Premier Ales Ltd, of Stourbridge are going really traditional: they are planning to deliver their beer using narrow boats over the canal network.

Peter Austin, famed for having helped set up many small breweries including Ringwood, was the last head brewer at the old Hull Brewery. He has now returned to Hull to take part in the resurrection of the Hull Brewery name. Since its takeover by Northern Foods and then Mansfield brewery the name has apparently been deregistered and Peter is now helping two local businessmen to set up a new small brewery of that name.

APPLICATION FOR CAMRA MEMBERSHIP

I/We wish to join the Campaign for Real Ale Limited, and agree to abide by the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Campaign. I am/We are over 18 years of age (AGE.....)*

NAME(S)

DATE

ADDRESS

.....

.....

SIGNATURE

TELEPHONE NUMBER(S)

I/We enclose remittance for individual/joint membership for one year: U.K. £9

Overseas £12

I/We would like to receive further information about CAMRA

* Knowledge of the average age of our members would be helpful. The information need only be given if you wish ALL MEMBERS MUST BE AT LEAST 18 YEARS OF AGE.

Please send your remittance (payable to CAMRA Limited) with this application form to:

**THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY, CAMRA LTD.,
34 ALMA ROAD, ST. ALBANS, HERTS. AL1 3BW
OR WHY NOT TAKE ADVANTAGE OF DIRECT DEBIT?**

The Hertfordshire Newsletter is produced by the Hertfordshire North, Hertfordshire South, Watford & District and Mid-Chilterns branches of the Campaign for Real Ale Ltd. The views expressed are not necessarily those of the editor, CAMRA Ltd or its Branches. Any articles or letters for publication should preferably be typewritten and double-spaced; handwritten items should also be well spaced and as legible as possible please. Send to: Eric Sim, 10 Heron Way, Hatfield, Herts, AL10 8QL.

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