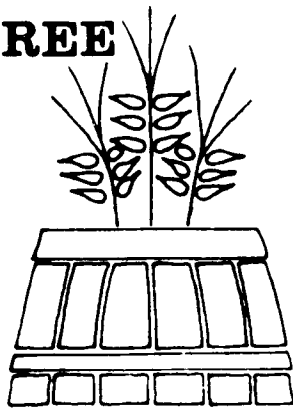


FREE



The Campaign For Real Ale HERTFORDSHIRE NEWSLETTER

February 1979 • Number 13



XX-For A Milder Outlook

You don't need 'A' levels to deduce that most of the brewers in the south-east would rather not brew cask-conditioned mild. With a few noteworthy exceptions (eg. Mac's & Ridleys) the brewers will tell you that mild sales are falling to such a degree that it may soon become uneconomic. What the brewers don't spell out is that they are not prepared to advertise mild - preferring to spend huge amounts of money promoting their kegs and lagers which are usually less value for money but more profitable to the brewer. Is real mild a thorn in their side? Well if the brewers will not promote their milds then CAMRA will. Milds will only be saved if sales increase and so locally we are spotlighting our attention first on Greene King XX Mild, a superb beer brewed at Biggleswade. Only 30 barrels of XX are currently being produced a week and although there are no immediate plans to withdraw the beer, the company are watching sales carefully. CAMRA has launched a campaign to boost XX with leaflets, beer mats, badges and tee shirts etc as we fervently believe XX is worth saving. But the onus is on you, the drinker - if you agree with us, make sure you ask for XX next time you visit your local Greene King pub.

Knock-Out Punch

In Ware, the Punch House has finally closed. Greene King have gained planning permission to extend the pub into the next-door premises, currently an Oxfam shop, but once the Bell and Sun, a Simpsons house. It is understood that the pub will be closed for at least one year. Herts South branch are very concerned that the pub's unique atmosphere is somehow retained in the future pub and, of course, that real ale will feature in Greene King's plans for the pub.

Indian Adnams

Real ale drinkers wanting a run for their money will surely soon be flocking to the popular Rawalpindi Indian Restaurant in Sun Street, Hitchin, where at weekends the management will be selling Adnams Bitter on gravity. This is certainly the first Indian Restaurant in Hertfordshire to sell real ale and perhaps even in the whole country! The idea was mooted by Herts North branch members, Dennis Robertson and Barry Males, regular customers at the Rawalpindi.

At The Maltings

Many people have been to a brewery of one sort or another but how many have been to a maltings? Why not reserve a place on Herts South branch's visit to Pauls and Sandars' Victoria Maltings in Ware. For details ring Tony Burns: Welwyn 7805 (home). The evening visit will be on Monday 19th March.

XX in Hadhams

Greene King XX cask-conditioned dark mild has gone on sale in another pub, surprisingly the Nag's Head at Little Hadham - a Rayments pub!

Wild West Show

It was sundown as mean 'Evil' Jesse Pickett got off his horse, kicked the trail dust from his boots and ambled across the main street towards Wells' saloon, looking for a showdown. The batwing doors careered wildly on their hinges, the piano stopped and 'Evil', with four days stubble and the remains of a cheroot dangling from his lip, stood menacingly in the shadows of the doorway. 'Evil' moseyed to the bar: 'Wwwwwwwhat'll it bbbe Mmmr Pickett' squeaked the bar tender - there weren't nobody gonna tangle with Jesse Pickett.

'Give us a pint of Matt Dillon Bitter, partner' The music started and stetsons were thrown wildly into the air and an old timer in the corner declared 'Well I'll be damned, I guess that critter ain't so bad after all'. THE END

New Ale

Yes folks, Charles Wells are to launch a new cask-conditioned bitter probably before Easter - with an original gravity of around 1040. The company are keen to hear of any suggestions for a name - perhaps of a Wild West flavour in line with their Fargo.

Yep, that's real fine, I kinda figure I'll have to try one. 'The Hell yer will!!!' roared 'Evil' Jesse Pickett - and I ain't in no mood to argue, with a gun barrel firmly embedded in my left nostril. ED

More Wethereds

It's nice to see more Whitbread landlords introducing real ale to their pubs, following the company's statement that pubs would be considered for real ale provided the landlord was proficient in the keeping of real ale and that cellar conditions permitted. The beer? - Wethereds Bitter.

Vivat Victoria!

The beautiful tower brewery that still hums with activity in a small village less than two miles from Stevenage New Town is an ironic survivor. Ironic because the family that ran it gave up trying to make a living brewing beer there, and kept it going only as a soft drinks factory - while the bigger, more profitable breweries nearby at Hitchin, Ashwell, Baldock and Royston have all been taken over, closed down and demolished.

Erected in 1870

Wright's brewery at the southern end of Walkern, a pearl of industrial archaeology, was actually built in 1870. But the family malting business was established by Samuel Wright back in 1790, when the area from Ware to Ashwell still supplied much of the malted barley used by the big London ale and porter brewers. It is more likely that the Wrights were brewing beer for their own workers right from the beginning, just as farmers had done for centuries. Judging by the evidence from contemporary trade directories, however, the family did not begin brewing commercially until the mid-1960s, when the business was being run by Samuel's son, Sam Junior.

Up-to-date

A few years later a serious fire burned down many of the farm buildings. But the fire was a blessing in disguise, for it enabled Sam Junior to erect on the site a brand-new up-to-date brick built tower brewery named, in honour of the age, the Victoria Works. Sadly Samuel did not live long to enjoy his new brewery, for he died in 1875 just a few years after it was completed. But although his two sons, Samuel III and Herbert, were aged only 13 and five respectively, their father's executors kept the family interest in the brewery and brought in one James Holland to act as head brewer and manager until they were old enough to take over themselves.

Well Water

At some time - nobody knows when - a 300 feet deep artesian well had been dug into the chalk below the brewery, and this carried beautifully clear, pure water straight to the mash tuns at the top of the brewery tower. An advertisement in 1886, when Mr Holland was still running the brewery, quotes a glowing letter from a London chemist who said his analysis had found Wright's beer "peculiarly digestible and suitable for invalids", with "an excellent flavour", and an alcohol content all of 8.6 per cent - pretty powerful stuff.

Jubilee

By 1890 the Wrights were not only brewing ale, stout and porter, but also making their own mineral waters. They were still commercial maltsters too, and their maltings were big enough to house 450 Walkern villagers for a grand dinner to celebrate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1898. In 1905 the brewery attracted a visit from the St. James Review, who described Wrights' steam barrel steriliser, and their mechanical bottle washer, and added that the family were running a profitable line in Havana cigars, as well as turning out their own ginger wine and cordials.

15 Tied Houses

Around this time the Wrights had some 30 horses and eight or ten draymen, who would cover up to 40 miles a day each, making deliveries to pubs and

BY MARTYN CORNELL

private customers. Much of their trade came from door-to-door deliveries to farmers and private families in the area. But they had around fifteen tied houses of their own, including the Red Lion in Walkern itself, the Crooked Billet at Symonds Green, the Hermit of Redcoats nearby and the Jolly Butchers in Luton, and they also delivered beer to privately-owned pubs such as the Saracen's Head in Ware and the Marquis of Lorne in Stevenage.

Cider

During the First World War Wright's cider supplies suddenly dried up as a result of rationing by the manufacturers, Gaymers, and in desperation the family started to make their own thus becoming, in 1917, Hertfordshire's first and only known commercial cider brewers.

Apples

A cider apple orchard alongside the brewery itself proved abortive - the apples simply were not good enough. But a judicious mixture of apples from Kent, Essex, Bucks and Cambridgeshire did the trick, and Wrights kept on making their own cider and supplying it to the world even after the war ended.

Sold

The economic climate in the early 1920s was not a good one for small brewers, however - no less than eight other Hertfordshire breweries closed between 1919 and 1925 - and in 1924 the Wrights decided to stop brewing and concentrate entirely on cider and soft drinks. Brewing rights and tied houses were sold to Simpsons of Baldock - later taken over by Greene King - and an indication of the state of Wright's pubs at the time can probably be gathered from the fact that Simpsons seem to have closed down most of them and rebuilt many of the rest.

Only Bottled

Nowadays the company, which is no longer owned by the Wrights, does not even brew its own cider - the stuff is merely bottled at the Victoria Works - and only a few items of brewery equipment still remain. But the artesian well is still running, with the help of an electric pump, and the brewery buildings are still all there. Although the present owners say they have no interest in brewing beer, one day, perhaps, the Victoria might live again. (With grateful thanks to Mr Fred Wright for his invaluable assistance).



Membership

Why not join and help us improve the lot of Britain's drinkers.

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. (£5.00 husband and wife).

Name Address

. Signature.

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

PUB NEWS

Berkhamsted The Goat now sells handpumped Ind Coope Burton Ale.

Bishop's Stortford The Old Maltings is now selling Charrington's Crown, Ind Coope Burton Ale and Wethered's Bitter on handpumps.

Chiswell Green The Three Hammers, already selling Ind Coope Burton Ale has added KK Mild and Bitter is to follow shortly.

Hatfield The Robin Hood in the town centre now sells Ind Coope Burton Ale and Bitter.

Pegsdon The Live and Let Live now has Greene King Abbot, IPA and XX Dark Mild on electric pump (GK mini-handles are used, connected to electric pumps. Formerly Abbot was sold on gravity.

Old Bricketwood The Old Fox is now serving real cider from Coates in addition to the full range of Ind Coope cask-conditioned beers.

St.Albans The City Hall has recently had hand-pumps installed for Charles Wells IPA (or Eagle) and Fargo.

Tyttenhanger The Plough has re-opened and is now selling Wethered's Bitter. The pub, now a Free House, is still being re-decorated. There will be a grand opening this month with an extended range of beers. At the Barley Mow, Marston's Owd Roger is now on handpump - Theakston's Old Peculier has been withdrawn.



TROUBLE DOWN AT SAM'S

If you like a pint of Sam Smith's OBB (or any of their other brews) you may be unlucky soon, as the NULV, backed

by the Sam Smith tied house tenants are asking all Free Trade licensees to discontinue Smith's beers. If successful it will have a marked effect on the company who sell most of their beer in the Free Trade. At present Smiths can give three months notice to any tenant without reason and they will not recognise membership of the NULV. A complete tie on soft drinks and a refusal to allow draught Guinness into tenanted houses has left the publicans with no job security. I for one will not be drinking any Smiths beers until satisfied that the tenants are getting a better deal and if I find Sam's beers on sale in pubs locally I will definitely bring the dispute to the publican's notice.
BY STEVE BURY.

Stoned on Keg?

Stones of Sheffield, part of Bass-Charrington, are test marketing their keg bitter in 290 outlets in the South-east. Sadly, there is no intention of introducing cask Stones to the area.

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.

Further copies of the Hertfordshire Newsletter are available from the Editor - please send a SAE. Current Circulation: 2300.

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Poetry Corner

McMullen's deserve a few words of encouragement for their frequently changing displays of brewery archive material, on view in their office windows, which have been delighting passing citizens of Hertford for some months now.

Display Items

The latest display includes old McMullen beer mats, items of brewery equipment, an advertise ment (pre-war) for special Christmas Ales and this eloquent and moving poetic gem, dating from 1940:-

'Take me to the pictures, take me to the Zoo,
Take me down a coalmine or out into the blue,
Any time will suit me, in rain or sleet or hail
But I've simply GOT TO HAVE

McMullen's Bottled Ale.'

A New Slogan

Readers may not know that Mac's have a large room full of this most entertaining 'breweriana' at their brewery. Such a pity that most of this may never see the light of day - how about opening your museum to the public, Mac's, say for one day every month? You might even find that someone is inspired to compose a new advertising slogan for you.
BY PETER LERNER

Last month Herts South Branch had a superb visit to Mac's - a report will appear in next month's Newsletter.

For Charity

As a post-script to the feature in the November Newsletter on the efforts of the licensees and customers of the Rest and Welcome at Haultwick to raise funds for Muscular Dystrophy, licensees Rob and Marianne Silvester would like to thank, via the Newsletter, everyone who helped them to raise the magnificent sum of £665.81 for this charity
BY PETER LERNER

CONTACTS

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HERTS/ESSEX BORDERS BRANCH

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Real Ale at Poly

Students at Hatfield Polytechnic will soon be able to sample real ale in their own Union Bar. Handpumps have been installed and cellar alterations have been completed. The initial range of real ales will be Greene King Abbot Ale, Adnam's Bitter, Courage Directors Bitter and Ind Coope Bitter and Burton Ale. The bar is only open to NUS Card or Hatfield Polytechnic Card holders.

Penrhos court

This year's Herts South branch brewery trip weekend from Friday 2 to Sunday 4 March is SOLD OUT! The weekend will include visits to Penrhos Court brewery in Kington, Herefordshire and a cidery in Hereford.



Pub of the Year '79

The Windmill at Charlton has been voted 'Pub of the Year 1978' by the Herts North Branch of CAMRA. To celebrate this event, a social will be held at the Windmill on Wednesday 7 March 1979. At the social an inscribed CAMRA mirror will be presented to Tim and Jo by the Branch Chairman. Other activities will include folk music, cribbage, dominoes, shove-ha'penny, yard of ale and the presentation of an eagle jug to any non-driver who consumes 10 pints of real ale.

Atmosphere

The Windmill, which sells Charles Wells IPA and Fargo, is a small village pub situated by the River Hiz. The present hosts, Tim and Jo, have kept the friendly, warm, homely atmosphere, and Jo prides herself on her home cooking. Effectively the Windmill has three bars, because in the summer customers crowd outside under the sun shades. It is also a favourite venue for the Offley Morris Men.

Second

John Wells has been invited and it is hoped that Wells' head brewer will attend to discuss the possibility of producing a cask-conditioned dark mild for May 1979. The Brewery is in the process of putting in central heating and re-decorating the Windmill. Runner-up in the Pub of the Year competition was the Cricketers at Ickleford, formerly a Whitbread house, which is now a free house selling real ales from Paines, Everards and Greene King.

BY DAVE BUNDY.

Dennis and Barry

At their January meeting, Herts North branch paid tribute to two of their hardest working members, who have resigned from the branch committee. Dennis Robertson, who had been Chairman since May 1977 and an active branch member since 1975, has led Herts North from success to success, and it is no coincidence that in the period since Dennis first joined the committee as Campaign Organiser, the number of pubs selling real ale in the branch area has more than trebled.

Barry Males, who had been an energetic Social Secretary, has certainly succeeded in improving the branch's social life, having introduced many new members to the Campaign, a large proportion of whom have been female. Barry also managed the prodigious feat of selling 97 books of Derby Draw tickets last year.

Thankfully, both Barry and Dennis will remain active in the branch. Their successors will be elected at the branch's February meeting. P.LERNER.

What's On

HERTFORDSHIRE SOUTH BRANCH

- 20 Feb February Branch Meeting
The Garibaldi, Albert Street, St.Albans (Ind Coope) 8pm.
- 2-4 March: Penrhos Court (See Page 3)
- 13 Mar Branch Darts Competition at The White Horse, Potters Bar (Ind Coope). Be there at 8pm if you wish to enter.
- 19 Mar Evening visit to Pauls and Sandars' Victoria Maltings in Ware. For details ring Tony Burns: Welwyn 7805 (home).
- 20 Mar March Branch Meeting
The Dimsdale Arms, Fore Street, Hertford (McMullen's) 8pm. Real ale will be available in the meeting room and the evening will feature a talk from McMullen's head brewer, Mr Tony Skipper.

HERTFORDSHIRE NORTH BRANCH

- 14 Feb February Branch Meeting
The Wilbury Hotel (Ballroom Bar) Letchworth (Greene King) 8pm. Dress Optional.
- 21 Feb Social at The Chequers, Wood End, near Ardeley (Greene King) 8pm.
- 22 Feb Joint Social with South Beds Branch at The Live and Let Live, Pegsdon, near Hitchin (Greene King) 8pm.
- 28 Feb Social at The Cricketers, Ickleford, near Hitchin (Greene King XX Dark Mild, Everards, Paines) 8pm.
- 7 Mar Pub of the Year presentation social at The Windmill, Charlton (see this page).
- 14 Mar March Branch Meeting
The Old Bull, Royston (Bass, Charrington and Courage) 8pm.

HERTS/ESSEX BORDERS BRANCH

- 19 Feb Annual General Meeting
The Rose and Crown, Turners Hill, Chess-hunt (Ind Coope) 8pm.
- 12 Feb Social at The Coach and Horses, St.Leonards Road, Nazeing (Ind Coope) 8pm.

Chipping The Countryman has added Greene King IPA and Abbot to its range of handpumped ales.
Hertford Bottles Wine Bar now sells Charles Wells IPA and Fargo replacing Fuller's ESB & Greene King Abbot Ale. The Two Brewers now sells Charrington's IPA (replacing Crown) and Courage Directors (H) & Best Bitter (E).

