

FREE



The Campaign for Real Ale

HERTFORDSHIRE NEWSLETTER

April 1979

Number 15

BEER SWAPPING NEXT ?

After a series of pub swaps, there is a possibility that products exchanges could be the next move by the bigger breweries. An exercise in the Midlands is underway involving Courage and Wolverhampton & Dudley beers, with 'JC' going into W & D pubs and (more importantly) Banks's Mild being installed in Courage houses. Although only operating on a limited scale, the deal could pave the way for similar exchanges in other monopolised areas of the country. Here, Hertfordshire springs to mind, with Ind Coope dominating the south, and Waitbread, the north-west.

Needed

Therefore, should a much needed scheme get off the ground locally, the prospects would seem good for a further increase in real ale, and choice. The pub swaps of late appear to have achieved this, but at the same time have upset many a drinker with such dramatic changes. With other breweries involved in similar discussions, and the Trade showing general approval of the idea, the introduction of 'foreign beers' would seemingly please most people - including Mr. Hattersley!

Inviting Prospect

With a large proportion of Ind Coope houses now real, a foreign beer could be an inviting prospect for the local real ale drinker, should they become involved in such a deal. It is also worth noting that an immediate comparison with the Wolverhampton brewery would be Greene King. Both have two production plants, around the same number of tied houses, and perhaps most importantly, brew dark mild. Even so, seeing handpumped XX in Ind Coope pubs is a bit too much to ask.....for the moment!

Rayment's IPA !

If you think your Rayment's BBA hasn't been tasting quite like it should over the past few weeks, you're right! The brewery's boiler broke down in mid-March, and while it was being repaired, Greene King IPA was supplied to all Rayment's outlets. The fault should have been repaired by the time this newsletter is published, and real real Rayment's will have returned. However, it still remains an ironical fact that, despite IPA being recently available in Rayment's tied houses, Greene King are still refusing to supply Rayment's tenants with XX dark mild.

PETER LERNER



CAMRA headquarters has been inundated with orders for the 1979 Good Beer Guide, indicating that support for real ale continues to flourish. A record order has in fact been placed with the printers due to the large demand.

This year's guide is not a revised version of the 1978 edition, but is the result of fresh research into the 6000 pubs entered, and a new approach to design.

Now Available

Of the 272 pages, 36 are given over to a full colour map section, to assist real ale drinkers in finding their pubs. For the less initiated reader, a further colour section at the beginning helps describe the brewing process, methods of beer dispense and CAMRA itself.

The guide is already available in the shops, retailing at £2.35p, but there is a 40p discount for members and a further reduction for branch members. With the ambitious introduction of colour sections, the price is reasonable. One hopes that this innovation will be both aesthetic and successful, and encourage even more people to buy the guide and drink good ale.

Locally

At branch level, the 1979 Hertfordshire Guide is now scheduled for publication in mid May. A slight delay is resulting due to the large number of new 'real' pubs that have occurred recently.

A revamped Essex Guide (which includes Herts/Essex borders pubs) is now available - cover price 50p (62p if ordering by post from : P D Foster, 60 Pynchbeck, Bishops Stortford, Herts).

ED

MALT - The Inside Story

Way Out West



Pauls & Sandars

New Herts South committee member, Denis Ward, recently arranged a visit to the Pauls & Sandars' maltings in Ware.

We were guided by general manager, Mr. Bill Mayne, who began with a brief run-down of the malting process. He also emphasised that of the 17,500 tons of malt produced annually the standard types go mainly to produce such brews as Whitbread Tankard, but the best pale varieties go to renowned quality beers, from Greene King Abbot to the Joneses ales from Penrhos Court.

Critical

The tour began in the steep-house where the first and most critical stage in the malting process begins. The selected barley is brought in from the pre-drying store where it has been lying dormant. A series of soakings in water over a period of two days brings the grains to life. This germination breaks down the chemical content of the grains producing the sugars necessary for brewing. The barley is given three soakings in water at 13 C, and after each, the 14½ ton tanks are drained and aerated. This helps to ensure an even rate of germination, and at the end of the third soak shoots could be seen emerging from the grains.

Production is geared to transfer two tanks at a time to the next stage. Two huge concrete boxes hold the grain for about 4½ days during which time it turns to 'green malt'. The boxes are aerated with controlled recycled air, and a mechanical turner ensures further constant germination by running through the malt every 12 hours. Each turn moves a batch of malt one step along the box until after 9 turns it has reached the correct chemical stage (this is still determined by a good maltster's eye).

Differing Types

During this time the moisture content is gradually reduced, but is still high. Kilning brings the moisture content down to about 4%, and the grain becomes crunchy and malty. At this third stage, temperatures reach 100 C in the gas fired ovens, and it is here that differing malt types arise due to the length of roasting time. A pale lager malt would be roasted to leave around 4% moisture. A malt for bitter would be roasted to leave around 3% to give its characteristic darker colour.

At this point Mr. Mayne decided that the proof of the pudding is in the eating, so we retired to the visitors room, where Greene King I.P.A. was available. (brewed from Pauls & Sandars' malt of course!) A short, rather technical film called 'Malt-The Inside Story' was shown, followed by an extremely interesting chat with our host (enjoying the beer). He obviously supports the policy of Martin Griffiths from Penrhos Court - if you cannot produce a product that you yourself like, don't bother trying! As a result of the visit the branch is at present negotiating the price of a sack of malt for home-brewers!

ED

The South Herts weekend trip began with a Friday lunchtime stop in the Georgian town of Cheltenham. We had a choice of 29 pubs, but with a high percentage of Whitbread. A popular choice was the Cotswold Hotel, which served a good pint of Wadworth's in a public bar lit only by gas.

First Class

After booking into our hotels in Kington, we left for Penrhos Court, just outside the town. The buildings are fine examples of early domestic architecture, and have been carefully restored to house the brewery and restaurant. Our meal was first class, as was the ale and porter, and was followed by a quick tour of the compact brewery. We were guided by the owner, Martin Griffiths who has set himself a high standard - we all wish him well in his venture.

Dormant

Amazingly, everyone was up for breakfast and ready to start the next drinking session, courtesy of HP Bulmer Ltd, in Hereford. Our branch were the first from CAMRA to visit the cidery - the largest in Europe. We received V.I.P. treatment (perhaps a case of mistaken identity!), starting with coffee and a film show. A tour of the complex began with a look at the silos yard and the pressing mill, but unfortunately all was dormant, as production is only during the apple harvesting season.

Next stop was the huge underground vat house. Over two acres house massive oak and steel vats, where the cider is stored and samples are taken for blending. Back above ground we had a sampling session in the charming draught cider department, before being supplied with a magnificent lunch, and plenty of Bulmer's cider of course. We even received an engraved plaque as a memento. Showing impeccable manners, our weekend's organiser, Tony Burns, produced a CAMRA mirror from under his jumper to present to the firm for their hospitality.

Brisk Trade

Saturday evening began with a visit to that well-known home-brew establishment in Bishops Castle. The Three Tuns did a brisk trade in sweat shirts, four-pint stone jars and beer (believe it or not!) An added attraction was the mynah bird and parrot. 'Well worth a visit' as the beer guide would say.

The next stop was the picturesque town of Ludlow, but its hilly situation made it hard work doing some of the 17 pubs plus fish & chip shops. A few of us managed to fit in a session with the local CAMRA branch in a busy Marston's house. We managed to return to Kington in time for a pint in our hotels, despite having to fish the Membership Sec. out of the gutter in Ludlow!

Thanks

Sunday lunchtime was spent in Gloucester, a fine city with 25 real ale pubs, a new brewery (Hawthorne), and some enterprising free-houses.

With over thirty brews being available in the three days, many thanks must go to Tony Burns for a great trip. Let's hope next year's just as good.

MARION BIRCH

Real Folk

If you read descriptions of pubs in the old days, the days before juke boxes and piped 'muzak' were invented, it seems as if almost every pub session ended up with singing. Local characters would perform well loved songs for the pleasure of the regulars, and strangers would contribute new songs to the repertoire, from far away areas.

Nowadays, I'm afraid that many licensees would look askance at you if you disturbed the gentle rhythm of teeth on fried scampi by bursting into song, and you would probably find yourself finishing the performance in the car park. Nevertheless, there are at least three pubs in Hertfordshire where you are lucky enough to be able to enjoy the pleasure of a pint of real ale and listen to, or even better to join in with, good song and music. These three pubs are the meeting places for folk clubs, which meet weekly in the pubs' club rooms and charge a small amount usually under £1, for an excellent evening's entertainment.

Rosey Outlook

The splendid Chequers Inn at Woolmer Green is the venue for the Stevenage Folk Club, which meets every Friday evening and where the welcome is always friendly. Ind Coope Burton Ale, Bitter and Mild are on handpump, and some good guest performers are scheduled, including the fine singer, guitarist and concertina player Tony Rose, on 20th April.

Also meeting on Fridays is the Hoddesdon Folk Club, whose pub is the Crown at St. Margaret's. Again Ind Coope Burton Ale and Bitter are available, and the standard of music is very high - watch out for the visit of John and Suzie Adams, half of the popular group Muckram Waves, on 27th April.

Enthusiastic Support

Every Sunday at the Goat Inn, St. Albans, meets one of the longest established folk song clubs in Hertfordshire, where talents are as diverse as Tim Hart and Maddy Prior (lately of Steeleye Span) and Donovan, gave early performances. The St. Albans Folk Club enjoys very enthusiastic support, having a nucleus of fine local singers and musicians, and an enterprising choice of guest performers. Wethered's Marlow Bitter is on handpump at the Goat, and a date to look out for is 22nd April, when Bert Lloyd, one of the stalwarts of the folk revival, is the guest.

Star Attraction

If there are any folk clubs meeting in real ale pubs which I have missed, and their organisers would care to 'phone me (Watton at Stone 616), I will try to mention them in a future Newsletter. Also I will attempt to produce a monthly list of real ale pubs where Morris or Sword Dancing can be seen, and again, details from organisers will be welcomed.

I can make a start by announcing that the renowned Standon Morris Men will be demonstrating their art at the Star, in Furneux Pelham, on Thursday 3rd May at 8pm. Rayment's BBA and Greene King beers will be available as usual.

PETER LERNER

Heading the Way



At their last branch meeting, South Herts were fortunate enough to have Mr. Tony Skipper - new head brewer of McMullens - along for a short talk. The evening was a continuation of the recent involvement by the company with local CAMRA branches. Earlier in the day, Herts/Essex Borders had enjoyed an excellent visit to the brewery, and were in fact guided by Mr. Skipper.

Hopeful ?

His informative talk centered around the changes that he has observed during his employment in the brewing industry. Not coming from a brewing family, he soon realised the need for suitable academic qualifications if he was to put his interest in beer to good purpose. On passing out (not literally!) of university in 1961, he noticed little basic change in the industry (apart from rumblings of keg) from the situation at the turn of the century. However, after a short spell with McMullens, his second post was with a firm that appeared different to other breweries at that time - due to the large amounts of bottled beers produced there. The Hope & Anchor brewery, Sheffield, were one of the first to push bottled lager on a large scale in the U.K., and were eventually to become part of Bass-Charrington.

Demand for Consistency

This led to his involvement with the Runcorn project, at which time he left to rejoin McMullens (a moral there somewhere). During the late 60's the two main trends that he remarked on, were the alarming number of brewery mergers with non-brewery companies, and the arrival of a consistent and less gassy (albeit keg) substitute for bottled beer. He felt that drinking trends seemed always to be governed by this demand for consistency, and today, the high standards maintained by brewers enable real ale to be accepted within such realms. He gave some interesting examples of brew-house hygiene standards encountered by him in his early days, which helped to explain the varying quality of traditional beers of that era.

Tenacity

During a hectic question time, many points raised were a rather too specific for a recent employee to answer without incriminating himself. However, his regard for CAMRA, and for the tenacity of the McMullens to remain as an independent, were openly apparent.

The local branches wish him all success in his post with the company.

ED

Fancy a Taste of Yorkshire ?

The Bradford branch of CAMRA are offering any CAMRA member the chance to sample many of the real ales available in Yorkshire, by staging a weekend of hospitality in July. The scheduled dates are Friday 6th or Saturday 7th to Wednesday 11th, and the cost is £35. The price includes bed and breakfast in Bradford, and trips to the Yorkshire Dales and the East coast. For further details contact Tony Burns (tel. Welwyn 7805), or write to Gerald Garside, 17 Beechwood Drive, Wisbey, Bradford, West Yorkshire.

Pub News

Ayot St. Lawrence The Brocket Arms will be closed from April until late summer, whilst being extensively renovated.

Elstree The Battleaxes - a similar story. Range of beers likely to decrease, and bar to be open to restaurant users only.

Great Offley A new outlet - the Crusty Loaf - is now selling Adnam's Bitter.

Hoddesdon The Rose & Crown is another conversion to Wethered's Bitter on handpump.

North Nibley, nr Stroud The New Inn is now selling Abbot Ale on handpump.

Old Hall Green The Bay Horse Inn has Gibbs Mew Bishop's Tipple on gravity - another new brew for the county.

Radlett Renovation at the Red Lion may interfere with the availability of real ales.

Royston Apologies to the Old Bull Hotel, where Bass has not been withdrawn, but is still available alongside Wethered's and Courage beers.

St. Albans The Beer of the Month is currently Adnam's Bitter at the Black Lion Hotel.

Discover Old Breweries of Herts.

Did you know that St. Thomas a Becket was a Hertfordshire home brewer way back in the 12th century, when he was rector of Bramfield, near Hertford?

Did you know that less than 90 years ago no fewer than 35 Hertfordshire towns and villages had their own brewery, with some places having as many as six?

Unlike St. Thomas, most of the county's old brewers have gone unrecorded. Now in an attempt to rectify that the local branches of CAMRA are looking for people who would like to search out the history of the breweries that once existed in their area. A meeting has been organised at the Crown Hotel, Hatfield Rd, St. Albans at 8pm. on Tuesday April 17. Further details from: Martyn Cornell, tel Stevenage 60675 (home) or Welwyn Garden 27551, ext 27 (work)

Branch Contacts

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HERTS/ESSEX BORDERS

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Newsletter

The Herts Newsletter is produced monthly by the Herts North, Herts South and Herts/Essex Borders branches of CAMRA. This April edition is a maiden attempt by Val Sandy and Nick Page of Herts South and we hope that our efforts match up to the very capable ones of Les Middlewood, our predecessor; much thanks go to Les for his work.

We would be very grateful for articles etc. to be sent to: 28, Inkerman Road, St. Albans. Tel. 33810. Female writers needed especially.

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What's On

HERTFORDSHIRE SOUTH BRANCH

3 Apr The White Horse, Potters Bar (Ind Coope). Finals night of branch darts competition, plus practice time for ladies and gents.

11 Apr Robin Hood, Potters Bar (Ind Coope) Branch Meeting - 8pm start. Extension applied for.

14 Apr Radlett Aerodrome, Park Street. Beer tent at Bantam Motorcycle Racing Club meeting. Full days road racing and drinking. Real ales include Adnams, Everards, Greene King (inc. XX) and Merstons. Admission £1.

18 Apr Rose and Crown, St. Albans (Ind Coope) Ladies versus Gents darts match. 8pm.

HERTFORDSHIRE NORTH BRANCH

10 Apr The Sun, Hitchin (Charrington) Branch Meeting - 8pm. start. Places for Paines Brewery visit will be balloted.

18 Apr Brewery Tap, Ferneux Pelham (Rayments) Inter-branch social. Coach from Stevenage. (contact Steve Done, Stevenage 721960)

25 Apr Stevenage pub crawl - starting at the Edward the Confessor, Danestrete (Charrington) 7-7.30pm. Plan to visit the Red Lion High St. (Greene King), the Fisherman, Fishers Green (Ind Coope), with the planned finish being at the Royal Oak, Walkern Rd. (Mc.Mullens) at 10pm. where food has been arranged. All welcome.

HERTS/ESSEX BORDERS BRANCH

2 Apr The Angel, Sun St., Walham Abbey (Mc.Mullens) Joint social with Enfield and Barnett branch. 8pm. start.

21 Apr Visit to Paine's Brewery (includes a trip to Cambridge)

23 Apr The Bell, Ongar (Charrington's) Branch Meeting - 8pm. start.

27 Apr St. George's Hall, Woodford Ave., Gants Hill. Folk and Ale party arranged by South West Essex branch. 7 real ales. Tickets are £2, they include food in the price.

9 May Visit to Tolly Cobbold Brewery (pm)

MEMBERSHIP



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