



THE HERTFORDSHIRE NEWSLETTER



The Campaign for Real Ale

NOVEMBER 1986

CIRCULATION 5000

NUMBER 99

GOOD BEER GUIDELINES

At the last count, there were exactly 57 card-carrying pub guides in the UK. Of these, 56 are compiled from paid-for advertising, recommendation from Rabbit's friends and relations, or salaried inspectors. Only one is surveyed by teams of independent volunteers who actually know and live in the areas they survey. This makes that particular guide the only one you can trust to give you unbiased and informed comment on pubs.

The guide has over 20,000 potential surveyors spread throughout Great Britain, which means that it is also the only one that is as useful and accurate in the North of England, the East of Scotland and the West of Wales as it is in the South of England. Each region is allocated a certain number of pubs on the basis of its population and area, combined with a factor for tourism – unlike most guides, which allocate pubs on the ease of access from their editors' London offices.

All the pubs in the guide are visited frequently during the year by volunteers; it isn't too much of a chore, because they actually like pubs... and they have been known to take a drink now and then. The surveyors are of both sexes, all ages and all tastes, so the selection of pubs reflects the diversity which characterises our Great British pubs. This guide knows that all sorts of people go to all sorts of pubs in all sorts of moods, so it offers the widest possible range: pubs with family rooms for people who believe that having children and a social life shouldn't be incompatible; pubs where children and dogs are instantly impounded for Glaswegian misogynists who wish to enjoy a quiet drink without distractions; pubs with juke boxes and discos for ravers; pubs with nothing louder than the clack of dominoes and the murmur of friendly conversation; pubs where you can eat a 3-star, 5 course meal; pubs where a bar meal is a pork pie and a packet of crisps; pubs near stations; pubs near motorways; pubs that you'd need a compass and a large amount of luck to find at all!

Though readers recommendations are always welcomed by the editor of this guide, they are all passed to the local volunteers and their decision is final. They assess the pub first and foremost on the quality of its beer. There is no great mystery to the keeping of good beer; what it does require is a bit of hard work and some tender loving care – qualities which also happen to be the requisites of the ideal landlord and landlady as well. If they keep their beer in perfect condition, chances are that their pubs will be first-rate too.

Pubs in this particular guide won't be described as 'clean' – if they aren't they won't be included – and the surveyors won't go into 500 word rhapsodies about the noisettes de water buffalo or the termite mouseline, but if the food is good, they will tell you so. The Guide works wonders in cramming all the facts you need to know about thousands of Great British pubs into a book that will still fit in your pocket without dislocating your shoulder. It tells you in simple, concise terms all a pub's facilities, its range of beers, its location, its points of interest and its atmosphere; in fact the kind of pub you can expect to find – and how to find it.

This guide is quite simply the best on the market, and it's the best value too. It is the 1987 CAMRA Good Beer Guide, available from all good bookshops and many pubs in Hertfordshire, price still only £4.95. It can also be had by post from CAMRA Ltd., 34 Alma Road, St. Albans, Herts. AL1 3BW.

The Crooked Billet Colney Heath

Tel: Bowmansgreen 22128



*One of
Hertfordshires
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Reduced prices on cask ale
5-30 to 7.00 pm Mon-Fri.

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FORLORN BOAT

Fuller, Smith and Turner may be the toast of St Albans for their refurbishment of the **Garibaldi**, the pride of Harpenden for reconstructing the **Harpenden Arms**, and the heroes of Hitchin for rescuing the **New Found Out**, but they are certainly not the bright stars of Berkhamsted. For although they bought the old **Boat** public house in Ravens Lane from Benskins some six years ago, since that time it has stood forlorn and semi-derelict. Even the brewery admit that the building "is in a dreadful state", and a local Councillor has reported that it has been occupied by squatters.

A local CAMRA member has commented that if Fullers were to re-open this pub, they could "clean up Berks", especially as a couple of popular ABC houses are to revert to their freehold owners, Watneys.

At present, the **Boat** is an embarrassment – after 6 years of thinking, Fullers should now declare their intentions and please Berkhamsted drinkers.

POST OFFICE IN DECLINE

Pub-goers in Hemel Hempstead fear that the **Post Office Arms** in Puller Road, Boxmoor – "a real character pub" in the opinion of one local CAMRA stalwart – may shortly close its doors for the last time. Benskins, the pub's owners, have reportedly not yet come to a final decision on the future of the popular local, but CAMRA hopes that if the Watford-based company can see no future for the **Post Office**, they allow it to be "privatised" as a free house or sold to another brewery. Anyone interested? – contact Benskins.

SPORTS REPORT

Earlier in the year North Herts and South Beds branches fought out an exciting darts match in Luton ending in an eight all draw. Recently, the return leg was staged at the **Maidens Head**, Whitwell. North Herts were always in arrears and even the guest appearance of Mike Jones, the landlord (who lost) failed to get North Herts in front. The final game of the evening saw the North Herts Chairman and his wife playing a doubles to save the match. As with all good stories, the Chairman threw double one to gain a creditable draw. a marvellous spread of food was put on by Barbara Jones and with Mike's excellent ale it was a thoroughly enjoyable evening.

PC

WELWYN PUBS – ANCIENT AND MODERN

On my weekly visit to the **Rose & Crown**, I espied a copy of local historian and archaeologist Tony Rook's booklet entitled "Of Local Interest: A Book of Welwyn Pubs".

He gives a potted history of the fourteen local pubs that are still open, along with a further seventeen that can still be traced, albeit as either private residences or business accommodation. The history is amply supported by the authors own pen and ink drawings of the pubs, past and present.

The booklet is ideal for a Saturday pub crawl, allowing the reader to discover the former pubs between lunchtime closing and evening opening. The author does not attempt to involve himself in the types of beer on sale in the pubs, but I feel sure some mention of the 'characters' to be found in them would not have gone amiss.

The booklet costs £1.50 and is obtainable at Welwyn Bookshop and selected Welwyn pubs.

Eric Sim

PUB OF THE MONTH

Motte and Bailey, Pirton

Named after the nearby earthworks, the **Motte and Bailey** at Pirton wins the North Herts Pub of the Month award for November.

This Victorian building was once a run down Whitbread pub called the **White Horse**. It has been extended, its name changed and is now a thriving free house selling Greene King, Shefford and Adnams fine ales and often has guest beers available.

Bill and Hilary Glover have run the pub for the last two years and, along with the excellent beer, Hilary's homecooked food and authentic Indian curries have an enviable reputation. The pub also has a dart playing dog, thought to be unique in Hertfordshire.

So come along and see for yourself on Wednesday 19th November.

P.Clarke

This so-called summer has seen some major changes to quite a few pubs in the south of the county. Firstly, the two Fullers pubs have been completely altered, almost beyond recognition. Both have been decorated in a neo-Victorian style, with lots of stained glass, mail-order prints and an abundance of light fittings; they could easily be mistaken for London pubs.

The **Harpenden Arms**, Harpenden has lost its Public Bar and gained some new toilets and a patio. The dining room is now part of the bar with a separate food servery; an important addition to the beer range is Chiswick Bitter.

The **Garibaldi**, St. Albans has lost its function room to accommodation and the bar billiards has disappeared; it has gained more bar and drinking space, a new kitchen and servery, and piped music. There are also plans to add a conservatory, and to add Chiswick to the range after the bottle store has been built.

Bass Charrington have spent a large sum revamping and adding a conservatory to the **Engineer**, Harpenden, a former free house. The choice of real ales is now restricted to Bass and Charrington IPA.

The **Green Dragon**, Potters Bar (actually nearer Barnet) is now re-open after, yes a complete refit and conservatory addition. It seems to be concentrating more on food in the form of the "Chargrill" than on the pub side, though three Whitbread real ales are available.

At the time of writing, the **Plough and Harrow**, Harpenden was closed for a refit and extension (and no doubt a conservatory!).

The **Verulam Arms**, St. Albans has been under the new management of Benny Gale and his wife for six months now. The dust has just about settled from the incorporation of the two bars into one horseshoe-shaped bar, again decorated in the neo-Victorian genre. Benskins and Burton Ale are back in the 'Ver' and food is available all opening hours, expect Sunday evenings.

Even the **Farriers Arms**, St. Albans has had a new bar fitted, the dartboard moved to the opposite wall, some new wallpaper and a lick of paint.

The **Black Lion**, St. Albans has become Bass Charrington's first tied house in the city, the former owner having sold up after 12 years; the ale range has been reduced to Bass and IPA. Watch out here for alterations and a conservatory?

Along the street, the **Lower Red Lion**, still offers a range of five real ales from Adnams, Fullers and Greene King. A new manager has now taken up residence and the owner has recently submitted plans for alterations at the rear of this delightful old pub.

Our correspondent is worried that he is paying for all these expensive alterations out of his already overpriced beer. He longs for a pub that does not smell of new paint.

Foxy's Wine Bar, Radlett is now under new management and has had a facelift. The bar has been moved and a new cellar provided. Marstons Pedigree and Merrie Monk are on handpump; Westons real cider is available on draught and guest beers are planned.

The Hotel Bar in **Pinks Hotel**, Shenley has now re-opened after being closed for major alterations. Unfortunately the Youngs Special has been discontinued, hopefully temporarily. The range of beers on handpump is now Wethereds S.P.A., Brakspears Bitter and Courage Directors Bitter.

The **Countryman**, Chipping, now under new ownership, has submitted plans for extensions, alterations, erection of fences, walls and signs.

The **Gloucester Arms**, Great Offley has closed and the future of this Greene King house now looks uncertain.

REAL ROYSTON

The excellent new local guide 'Real ale in and around Cambridge', reviewed last month, was a long time gestation. Indeed it is six years since the publication of the last Cambridgeshire guide.

It is a great pity then that trouble was not taken to ensure that the listing of Royston pubs was more up to date. Some of the houses listed as non real ale pubs have been selling real ale for two years!

The new licences at the **North Star** replaced the handpump selling Wethereds bitter on their arrival late in 1984. A further handpump has since been installed in the new garden bar downstairs.

Also at the end of 1984 a handpump reappeared in the **White Bear**, after a long absence, selling Flowers Original. This has since been joined by a second selling another ale from the Whitbread range.

The **Old Bull Inn**, listed as non real, does occasionally have Charringtons IPA on handpump.

Of the others listed, Whitbread's **Green Man** is still closed for alternations, for which planning permission has been sought. It is understood that re-opening by Christmas is planned, but thought to be optimistic. It is still not known if real ale is to be re-introduced.

JFF

KING'S HEAD AVOIDS THE CHOP

Benskins plans for closing the **Kings Head**, Bushey and turning it into a private house were thrown out at a meeting of the Bushey and Aldenham area planning sub-committee in early September.

The history of Benskins plans for the grade II listed pub goes back to February 1982 when they applied for permission to greatly extend the bar area and to add a restaurant. While this application and subsequent appeal were being rejected, the pub was allowed to fall into structural decay, and no attempt was made to update the primitive living accommodation the pub's tenants had to endure.

Earlier this year local rumours started circulating, suggesting that the brewery were planning to close the pub. The local CAMRA contact at the brewery was unable to confirm or deny these stories.

In April this year Benskins submitted new plans. These proposed the building of six two-bedroomed houses on the site and the resultant demolition of the pub's toilets. However, the plans showed the **King's Head** remaining as a pub. This seemed to be a backdoor way of getting the pub closed as the local CAMRA branch pointed out in objections to the plans. This led to the re-submission of the plans, showing the proposed change of use and the admission that the first plans were in error.

Unfortunately, although this battle was won, the war is liable to be far from over. Benskins can still appeal and, furthermore, the planning officer has intimated that he would not object to a change in use of the pub. However, as was proved at the **Haydon Arms**, Oxhey three years ago, Benskins will listen if there is sufficient local support for the pub, particularly when this is backed up by an increase in the pub's turnover! In the meantime, you could do worse than visit one of the last remaining examples of an old traditional pub in the Bushey area (even if the outside loos are a bit chilly in winter!).

Watford & District Branch

RAMBLINGS

The quality of beer is something which concerns all beer drinkers and drinkers of real ale in particular. How often have you had a pint that is undrinkable and when you complain to the landlord are told: "Its real ale you know". Unfortunately, real ale by its nature requires care and attention and also a reasonable turnover. If any of these are missing, you stand a good chance of getting a pint that is just not right.

However, publicans seem less inclined to change beer these days, reactions varying from: "That man is drinking it and not complaining", to throwing the customer out. This latter action happened to me only a month or so ago in a pub in west London owned by the biggest of the big six brewers. The beer tasted of vinegar and a polite request for a change was greeted with a stream of four letter words and the demand that I left the pub or be thrown out. Fortunately, a letter from me to the brewery resulted in an apology and a refund, but the real ale customer should not have to go through this aggro to get a decent pint.

Now for a place where you will definitely get a decent pint, my pub of the month:

The Coach & Horses, Longborough, Gloucestershire.

This is a small pub in the Cotswolds, not far from Stow-in-the-Wold, selling Donnington beers. The landlady is very friendly and the pub is popular with trippers, walkers and horseriders on fine days. Good lunchtime snacks are available - there is a small outside area where you can sit in the sun and watch the weddings at the local church across the way. You will also find the price of the beers refreshing: 70p for the bitter in August. Like a lot of Donningtons pubs, there is a stone floor and wooden floors; a small part off the bar gives plenty of additional seating in comfort.

Rambler

Tetley's Invasion

By the time you read this, Allied Breweries, £1 million promotion of Tetley's Bitter in the London area should be under way. The aim of this campaign is apparently to establish the beer in 250 pubs in the region. If the beer is as bland as the Tetleys that I've drunk in Allied's Nicholsons free house chain then it certainly will require all the expensive lager-style hype advertising it can get.

The more worrying aspect is that this seems to be Allied's attempt to establish a national real ale in the same way as Grand Met seem to be pushing Websters into every Trumans and Watneys pub. The outcome of this in Allied pubs will almost certainly be the replacement of a 'local' beer.

How long will it then be before Allied then consider that it is no longer viable to brew Benskins, Friary Meux or Taylor Walker? Perhaps the local company should be pressing for a larger slice of the advertising budget before they once again find themselves without their own label beer.

B.A.

NORTH HERTS ON THE ROAD

In early September, an intrepid band of North Herts members set out from Stevenage by minibus, on a pub tour of Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire.

First stop was the **Bell** at Southoe on the A1. Unfortunately on arrival the pub was still shut with no sign of life, so some thirsty members, who couldn't wait, set off on foot across the fields to another pub in Southoe. Those who waited were rewarded when the upstairs window opened and a bleary eyed gentleman raised two fingers. Thankfully this meant that he would be down in two minutes. Not long after he had opened the party reassembled, after the return of those who had quaffed a quick half in the **Horseshoe**.

Back onto the bus around the shores of Kimbolton Water to the **Red Cow** at Covington, a remote free house which had changed hands the previous week. The owners were obviously surprised to find the bar packed at such an early hour, but the Marstons was nectar.

Out of Cambridgeshire and into Northamptonshire for a pint of Wells at the **Nags Head**, Hargrave. An extremely picturesque pub opposite the church. Regrettably, the beer was quite the worst we had all day.

A quick trip into Bedfordshire brought us to the **Prince of Wales** at Upper Dean, where another round of the excellent Marstons was drunk before we found ourselves in Northamptonshire for the rest of the day.

The **Swan** at Newton Bromswold, was the next stop. A typical Greene King roadhouse where the party enjoyed themselves playing skittles in the bar. After five pints, some of the throws were less accurate, including the one that hit the Chairman's wife instead of the skittles.

The last port of call for the lunchtime session was the **Carpenters Arms** at Irchester, where we arrived in time for a couple of pints of Courage before heading into Northampton to have a bit to eat, a wander around the shops and to get the football results.

At half past five, the minibus returned to pick us up and we set off for the village of Grendon where we had two pubs to visit. The first was the **Half Moon**, a traditional Wells house. A game of pool soon ensued before a saunter through the village to the **Crown**, formerly a Manns house but now a thriving free house.

The **Olde Cherry Tree**, tucked away down a cul-de-sac in Great Houghton was found and further Wells was consumed before moving off to the last pub of the tour. This was the **Red Lion** in Yardley Hastings. A traditional country pub retaining its character and serving excellent beer.

All in all an enjoyable day, and a special round of thanks is due to the driver of the increasingly noisy minibus.

Peter Clarke.



BRANCH DIARY

WHAT'S ON AT YOUR PUB

NORTH HERTS BRANCH

Thursday 13th November

Social at the Star, Furneaux Pelham, 8p.m.

Wednesday 19th November

Pub of the Month social at the Motte & Bailey, Pirton, 8p.m.

Thursday 11th December

Pub crawl of Stevenage Old Town. Meet in the Coach & Horses, 8p.m.

Contact/Peter Clarke ☎ Stevenage 365957

SOUTH HERTS BRANCH

Monday 3rd November

Committee Meeting at the Barley Mow, Tyttenhanger, 8p.m.

Tuesday 11th November

Double new real ale outlet social. Meet in the Queen Adelaide, Shenley, 8p.m. and then on to the King William IV about 9.30p.m. All welcome.

Tuesday 18th November

Branch Meeting at the Rose & Crown, Welwyn Village, 8p.m.

Please try and attend at this new venue.

Tuesday 25th November

Joint social with Watford Branch at the George & Dragon, Colney Street, 8p.m.

Tuesday 16th December

Annual General Meeting at the Goat, St. Albans (back room) 8p.m.

All South Herts members please attend.

Contact/Adrian Jolliffe ☎ St. Albans 69675

WATFORD & DISTRICT BRANCH

Wednesday 5th November

Pub Crawl in Rickmansworth. Start at the Western, 8p.m.

Wednesday 12th November

Branch Meeting at the Wheatsheaf, Watford, 8p.m.

Tuesday 25th November

Joint social with South Herts Branch at the George & Dragon, Colney Street, 8p.m.

Sunday 30th November

Committee Meeting at West Herts Sports Club, 8p.m.

Contact/Tony King ☎ Garston 672587

HERTS/ESSEX BORDERS BRANCH

Monday 10th November

Branch Meeting at the Rising Sun, High Wych, 8.30p.m.

Contact/Steve Marlow ☎ Harlow 30450

MID-CHILTERNES BRANCH

Contact Peter Freeman ☎ Hemel Hempstead 69773

Peter & Lesley Reynolds welcome you to



THE STAR INN

FURNEUX PELHAM



Rayments BBA ★ Greene King KK & Abbot

**GOOD HOME COOKED FOOD
MONDAY TO SATURDAY**

☎ Brent Pelham 227

TEN UP

A special word of congratulations to Rob and Marianne Silvester of the **Rest and Welcome**, Haultwick, who have now completed ten consecutive years in the national Good Beer Guide. They become the second licensees in North Herts (the George IV in Baldock was the first) to have achieved this feat.

Anybody who knows the pub and the tenants will not be surprised, for it really is everything the name implies. Often one reads in this newsletter implied criticism of our Herts brewers, McMullens. In this case it's well done Mac's and well done Rob and Marianne.

PC

7th November: **Crown, Stanstead Abbots.** Bonnie Shaljean at Hoddesdon Folk Club, 8p.m.

9th November: **Brewery Tap, Ware.** Bob Walser at Ware Folk Club, 8p.m.

14th November: **Crown, Stanstead Abbots.** Steve Knightly at Hoddesdon Folk Club, 8p.m.

16th November: **Brewery Tap, Ware.** Singers Night at Ware Folk Club, 8p.m.

21st November: **Crown, Stanstead Abbots.** Calennig at Hoddesdon Folk Club, 8p.m.

23rd November **Brewery Tap, Ware.** Dave Walters at Ware Folk Club, 8p.m.

28th November: **Crown, Stanstead Abbots.** Richard Grainger at Hoddesdon Folk Club, 8p.m.

20th November: **Brewery Tap, Ware.** Ragged Robin at Ware Folk Club, 8p.m.

5th December: **Crown, Stanstead Abbots.** Singaround at Hoddesdon Folk Club, 8p.m.

7th December: **Brewery Tap, Ware.** Adrian May at Ware Folk Club, 8p.m.

Remember, listing in the What's On column is **FREE**. Send details for February to the Editor by 1st January.

JOIN CAMRA NOW!

Membership form

I/We wish to become a member/members of the Campaign for Real Ale Limited

I/We agree to abide by the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Campaign

I enclose £7 (£10 overseas) for a year's full membership

We enclose £7 for a year's joint full membership

FULL NAME(S)

FULL POSTAL ADDRESS

.....

..... Date.....

Cheques should be made payable to Campaign for Real Ale Limited
Send to Membership, CAMRA, 34 Alma Road, St. Albans,
Herts AL1 3BW

FREE GOOD BEER GUIDE!

Join CAMRA in Watford now!

Watford & District Branch of CAMRA will give a free 1986 Good Beer Guide to anyone who lives in the Watford area and joins CAMRA in response to this notice. As a CAMRA member you will receive 'What's Brewing', the CAMRA newspaper, every month; you will be able to participate in branch social evenings, brewery trips and other events; but, most importantly, you will be helping to protect traditional beers and pubs.

A special rate of £7 applies for this month for individual or joint membership.

Just fill in the membership form in this Newsletter and send it with this notice to: Sally Bennell, Membership Secretary, CAMRA, 34 Alma Road, St. Albans, AL1 3BW.

We will send you your free Good Beer Guide and details of our forthcoming events.

CAMRA Watford & District (Watford 27786)

The Hertfordshire Newsletter is produced by the Hertfordshire North, Hertfordshire South, Watford & District and Mid-Chilternes branches of the Campaign for Real Ale Ltd. The views expressed are not necessarily those of the Editor, CAMRA Ltd or its branches. The Editor gratefully receives articles or letters for publication. Send to **Nadine Fynn, 78 Old North Road, Royston, Hertfordshire.**

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