

FREE



# The Campaign For Real Ale HERTFORDSHIRE NEWSLETTER

October 1978 • Number 9



## Whitbread: More Real Ale

Hard on the heels of last month's announcement by Greene King that their landlords who wanted real ale would have a chance to convince company chiefs that real ale would sell well in their pubs provided that the pub met certain conditions, comes even more surprising news - this time from Whitbread, who are now willing to consider similar applications from their tenants for real ale - in the form of Wethered's Bitter. Landlords will have to show that they can look after the beer and that it will sell well in their pub. This news was revealed by Whitbread's London Trading Area Assistant Managing Director, Mr Jenkins at a meeting with CAMRA's Robin Bence. This policy is however restricted to the London Trading Area but fortunately for us this includes Hertfordshire and East Anglia. Of course, the somewhat loose phrasing of the offer gives Whitbread lots of loopholes to wriggle out through but it does appear to be a slight change of attitude, which is to be applauded. To be fair to Whitbread, they have supplied Wethered's Bitter to an increasing number of pubs in Hertfordshire but it has usually been tenants who have missed out.

### Luton's Inheritance

The whole problem is made more difficult by the fact that the company's Luton brewery (perhaps megakegery is a more accurate term) is unable to produce any real ale. All the Whitbread real ale available in the county is being sent up from the Marlow brewery (formerly Wethered's). Whitbread have a large number of pubs in Hertfordshire, mainly in the north of the county and on the Herts-Beds borders area. This estate of tied houses was inherited by Whitbread when they took over J.Green of Luton, a company who had in turn taken over such Hertfordshire breweries as Adey and White of St.Albans and Fordhams of Ashwell.

### Dearth of Real Beer

There is no doubt that there is a dearth of real beer in Whitbread's tied houses in Hertfordshire, a situation which could well improve if many landlords can persuade Whitbread that real ale would be a good seller in their pub. Any improvement of choice is a good thing from the customer's point of view, so, landlords, the ball is now in your court. Let's face it, there can't be many pubs which have lost out by introducing real ale.

## Barry Joins CAMRA

Barry Norman, TV/Radio celebrity and local author and his wife were guests of Herts. North branch at their recent Beer Festival in Ickleford, where a good time was had by all. First beers to go were Paine's Extra Special dark mild and Greene King's XX dark mild (who says there is no demand for dark mild - brewers take note!). And CAMRA has enlisted a new member - Barry Norman himself.

## Castle Withdrawn

After years of persisting with Castle Keg, sales have slumped so low that Mac's have decided to withdraw the beer altogether - probably this month. Castle Keg is not a keg in the true sense of the word - it was not pasteurised, but it was filtered which more correctly classes it as a 'bright' beer. The redundant dispensing equipment will be used to serve top pressure AK and Country Bitter.

## 2 For Hitchin?

At a recent meeting between Greene King and CAMRA, GK said that real ale may feature in the Three Moorhens, Hitchin, when it re-opens after refurbishment next year and hinted that real ale may also soon be available in one of their other tied houses in the town. With other breweries eg. Ind Coope, Whitbread and McMullen's all introducing real ale in the town in the last two years, only Greene King with their 9 Hitchin tied houses, have made no concessions to real ale drinkers - who will surely be heartened to hear of two possible new Greene King real ale outlets.

### Festival Profit

CAMRA's recent Great British Beer Festival has made over £11,000 profit for future campaigning.

## Real Ousts Fizz

A pub sold by Mac's a year ago, has recently had installed two handpumps to dispense Country Bitter and AK Mild. The Queen's Head in Sheering - one mile into Essex on the B182, was sold leasehold but present owner, Mr Carr, is still tied to McMullen's beers. Now real ale has returned after years of top pressure. Current prices are Country at 32p per pint and AK at 30p

# STAMFORD BREWERY MSM.

It's not a particularly hard drive from Hertfordshire up the A1 to Stamford, an ancient and delightful town with a wealth of interesting architecture and a good choice of real ales in the local pubs. Not so many years ago, the town boasted two breweries; the last of these, Melbourns, stopped brewing in 1974 when its boiler could no longer stand up to the strain of helping to produce enough good ale to satisfy 30 local pubs. Unlike most redundant breweries, though, Melbourns All Saints Brewery has not been 're-developed' to become a shopping precinct, a multi-storey car park or a six lane highway. It has remained with all its equipment virtually intact, as a museum of brewing.

## Victorian

The museum was opened, after some years of careful preparation, on 24 August this year, and is a rare treat for anyone nostalgic for the days when local beers were a matter of local pride. The curator, CAMRA member Ivan Burgess, has aimed to re-create a typical Victorian small town brewery, and the visitor can wander through the fine old buildings following the brewing process from raw materials to beer in wooden casks. After a look at a real, enormous white Shire horse and its dray, a stop in the refreshment room will probably reveal the curator himself, pulling an excellent pint of Samuel Smith's Old Brewery Bitter.

## Exhibits

There are displays of everything from bottle labelling machines to antique beer cans, and a particularly interesting exhibit traces the brewing history of Stamford's pubs, revealing that only one pub in the town is now owned by the same brewery that owned it in 1953, Coronation year, the rest having endured perhaps three or four take-overs. Stamford brewery museum is thus a monument to small independent breweries everywhere, and thank goodness that the real ale revival has kept a few of these alive.

## Interesting

The museum shop has plenty to interest the collector of 'breweriana' and indeed if you normally find museums more boring than Scottish World Cup Football, provided you are interested in beer you will not find the 60 minute drive to the Stamford Brewery Museum disappointing. Will there be in 2078 I wonder, a museum to the factories of the 1970s, where chemists in white coats press buttons to fill tankers with fizzy, antiseptic lager?  
BY PETER LERNER.

## Legion for Burton

During the recent AGM held at the Harpenden British Legion Club, members voted in favour of having a handpump installed in their bar to serve the popular Burton Ale. Nothing surprising in that you may say, but once again it goes to show that given the opportunity to decide for themselves a majority of beer drinkers do prefer cask conditioned beer to be served without gas pressure. I rather fancy some publicans will shudder at what comes next, but wouldn't it be a good idea if pub regulars were given a similar chance to express their opinions once a year?  
BY DENNIS ROBERTSON.



## Ridley's...

Since our visit to Ridley's of Essex and the article in July's Newsletter, Mike Turner, CAMRA's brewery liaison officer for the company, has been in touch with me with some good news: now every one of Ridley's 65 pubs now sells real ale. The 'bad penny' - the Saling Oak near Dunmow had electric pumps installed in June, as a result of a concerted effort by all six Essex branches of CAMRA and some excellent co-operation from Ridleys. Even better news is that mild sales are no longer on the decline. Figures just provided by Ridleys show that for the period March-June 1978 versus 1977, sales are up by nearly 20% and mild is now sold in 5 more pubs than last year. With Ridleys winning the award at Alexandra Palace for the best light bitter, September seems to be Ridley's month! Congratulations. EDITOR.

## Tim and Joanne

Welcome to Tim and Joanne Hunter, new licensees of The Windmill, Charlton, near Hitchin. Although new to the trade, Tim and Joanne are no strangers to the area having lived locally for some time. Tim, a CAMRA member said "The first few weeks have been very hectic indeed - the handpump for Wells Bitter just doesn't stop moving, and Fargo is doing very well." For those of you who like to eat as well as sup good beer, Joanne will shortly be introducing a winter menu which will include home made pies and jacket potatoes. Good luck to you both.

BY DENNIS ROBERTSON

## 'Tax Bias' Claims

Britain has been summoned to attend the European Court of Justice to defend herself against the European Commission. Under EEC law, article 95 of the Treaty of Rome, Britain faces charges of a biased taxation system which it is claimed favours home produced beer to the detriment of imported wine.

### 7p per pint

In Britain light beer carries an excise duty of 55 pence a gallon and light wine a duty of £2.95 a gallon. The Government's defence is based on the unit of consumption, thus the tax on one pint of beer is about 7 pence and on one glass of wine about 8 pence. Let us all support Britain resisting any increase in beer taxation.  
BY DAVE BUNDY

■ One change which has been resisted is that of the pint going metric. The Government will not enforce metric measures for draught beers and spirits, the Metrication Board has announced - so the pint will not just become 0.568 of a litre.

## Mild Threat

The discontinuation of Ind Coope KK Mild now seems imminent with rumours now running rife amongst customers and landlords alike that the company are soon to axe the beer. Ind Coope are at present only brewing KK once every two weeks. Perhaps if Ind Coope bothered to push mild instead of discourage, sales might improve.



# Ware's Falling Star ?

The Hertfordshire town with perhaps the strongest connection with the brewing industry is Ware. It was once the foremost malting town in the south of England, and many old coaching inns along the High Street once were proud to

serve Ware-brewed beer. Most of Ware's maltings are now no longer in use, and the last of Ware's breweries, the Star Brewery in Watton Road, ceased production in 1951. You can still see its characteristic tower buildings, but not for much longer, if its present owners, a firm of builders' suppliers have their way - they have applied to the local council for permission to demolish it.

## 100+ Years Old

The brewery is over 100 years old, built around 1861. In 1874 it was owned by Isaac Everitt, whose business was acquired in that year by McMullen of Hertford. Brewing continued at Watton Road, however, under William Wickham, who were acquired by Holts Marine Brewery of Ratcliff, east London in 1900. For a period the Star Brewery was used only as a store, but by 1938, the Ware Brewery Company had transferred to these premises from New Road.

## Conservation

In these enlightened 1970s, conservationists deplore the way that so many of Ware's characteristic maltings have been allowed to fall derelict, eventually to be redeveloped. Anyone who is interested in real, traditional beer must be a conservationist - are we content to sit by and watch another part of Hertfordshire's brewing heritage crumble beneath the bulldozer? If you think Ware's Star Brewery should be preserved, make your feelings known NOW, before it is too late, to the East Hertfordshire District Council, Wallfields, Pegs Lane, Hertford.

BY LES MIDDLEWOOD (with acknowledgements to Keith Osborne of the Labologists Society for providing historical information).



# Not By Beer Alone

The other staple item in a proper diet, Real Bread, received a boost recently when a Festival of Real Bread was held at Campus West, Welwyn Garden City on 22nd and 23rd September. The festival was run by Country College, an organisation set up to encourage what it calls 'sustainable life-styles'. CAMREB - the Campaign for Real Bread and Flour - was there as were several companies pushing their particular brand of the staff of life.

## In Common

It is easy to see similarities between CAMREB and the task they have ahead of them and CAMRA. The baking industry is controlled by just a few companies (as is brewing) and the saga of how plastic bread has been promoted as the national inedible equivalent to keg beer provides an obvious parallel.

## Seven Aims

One of CAMREB's seven aims is, in fact, to "persuade pubs selling Real Ale to sell Real Bread Ploughmans Lunches as well" - an admirable objective. One can also see evidence of overpricing, now that real food is becoming fashionable, in the same way that real ale prices have escalated in the south east and, certainly, it is easy to feel cynical about the motives of some of the companies involved after experiences in the last few years of CAMRA. Despite all this, however, CAMREB is to be welcomed and it's hoped that they have the same measure of success that our Campaign has had. For more information write to: CAMREB, c/o Parkdale, Dunham Road, Altrincham, WA14 4QG, Cheshire. BY DAVE BURNS

## ONE MORE FOR RICKY

One pub which has eluded the eye of Herts South Branch lately is The Western in Rickmansworth which has been selling Burton Ale for some time now. Plaques recently fixed outside on the wall now make this obvious. Now the only pub not offering any real ale in the town centre is The Fox and Hounds (Greene King).

## Membership

CAMRA is an independent organisation fighting to improve the quality of beer and pubs throughout the country. Why not join and help us improve the lot of Britain's drinkers. For your £4 subscription you will receive, monthly, 'What's Brewing', CAMRA's newspaper on what is going on in the world of beer.

IF YOU JOIN NOW YOU WILL GET 15 MONTHS' MEMBERSHIP FOR THE PRICE OF 12 - UNTIL 31 DEC. '79.

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.

# PUB NEWS

- Baldock** The George and Dragon (a Schooner Inn) now has Greene King Abbot and IPA on handpump.
- Berkhamsted** The George now has handpumped Bass on sale alongside Ind Coope Bitter and Mild.
- Broxbourne** The White Bear, at present closed, will shortly be re-opening with six handpumps fitted by Rayment's for BBA Bitter, AK Mild and Abbot Ale. An extension has been built at the rear of the pub to give extra bar space. The pub is to be re-named The Masseys and interior decorations are designed to give a Victorian Gin Palace feel.
- Chipperfield** The Windmill is now selling Bulmer's real cider.
- Flamstead** The Three Blackbirds now has Watney's London Bitter on sale alongside Fined Bitter and sells real cider. Delete Truman's Tap from your local guide.
- Royston** The Chequers now has handpumped Courage Directors Bitter
- Sheering** (nr Bishop's Stortford and 1 mile into Essex). The Queen's Head now sells McMullen's AK Mild and Country Bitter on handpumps.
- Shenley** Pink's Hotel has added Wethered's Bitter to the existing range of handpumped beers.
- St. Albans** i) The Acorn now has Burton Ale on sale alongside the Ind Coope Bitter already sold on handpump. ii) A mistake in last month's Newsletter - The Bunch of Grapes should have read 'Bunch of Cherries' - selling Wethered's Bitter. The Bunch of Grapes of course no longer exists. iii) The Great Red Lion in the town centre is currently closed for re-decoration but a quick peep through the windows reveals that Ind Coope have installed 3 handpumps. Opening date awaited. iv) The Midland Railway now has Courage Bitter on handpump next to Directors Bitter.
- Stevenage** The Prince of Wales in the Old Town has recently had handpumps fitted for McMullen's AK Mild and Country Bitter.

## New Mac's Booklet

Recently published by McMullens is a guide to food in their pubs entitled 'Good Food in a Mac's Pub'. While I would contest the use of the adjective 'Good' in some instances, the booklet is nicely produced with lots of line drawings and gives full information on the eighty-odd pubs listed. The format bears a remarkable resemblance to many CAMRA real ale guides although it does not mention which of the pubs serve their beer traditionally. It is available free through Mac's pubs or from the brewery.

## BREWMASTER

If you live in the Hertford-Ware area and are a keen home-brewer but have difficulty in obtaining ingredients or equipment, then you may be interested to hear of Peter Rolfe whose 'Brewmaster' stalls in Hertford market (Saturdays) and Ware market (Tuesdays) should be able to supply you with all of the things you need.

## LOCAL GUIDE

Still not bought your 1978 copy of 'Real Draught Beer in Hertfordshire'? A few copies are still available from Dave Burns, 11 Turpin's Chase, Oaklands, Welwyn, Herts, price 30 pence. Please send a large SAE and a cheque/postal order for 30p made payable to CAMRA Herts. South Branch

# WHAT'S ON

## HERTFORDSHIRE SOUTH BRANCH

- 10 Oct. Darts Match v Hawker Siddeley Dynamics Social Club, Gunnels Wood Road, Stevenage. 8pm.
- 17 Oct. October Branch Meeting  
The White Hart, South Mimms, nr Potters Bar (McMullen's) 8pm. Real ale will be available both in the bar and in the meeting room.
- 21 Oct. Brewers Droop Train 2 - a Saturday train trip to Sheffield and Cambridge. For details contact Tony Burns, Tel: Welwyn 7805 (home) 01-928 3965 (work).

## HERTFORDSHIRE NORTH BRANCH

- 11 Oct. Branch Annual General Meeting  
The George, Bucklersbury, Hitchin. (Ind Coope) 8pm.
- 25 Oct: Campaigning social at The Fox and Duck, Buntingford (Greene King) 8pm. Coach leaves Stevenage 7pm, Hitchin 7.15pm. Details from Barry Males, Tel: Hitchin 52539 (home).
- 31 Oct. Social at The Star, Furneux Pelham (Rayment's) 8pm.

## HERTS/ESSEX BORDERS BRANCH

- 9 Oct. Social: The Old English Gentleman, Waltham Abbey (McMullen's) 8pm. The social marks the retirement of Bernard Appleby, landlord of the pub for the last 11 yrs.
- 16 Oct. October Branch Meeting  
The Rose and Crown, Turners Hill, Cheshunt (Ind Coope) 8pm.

## BRANCH CONTACTS

### HERTFORDSHIRE NORTH BRANCH

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## Newsletter

In our travels we have met beer drinkers, licensees and even brewers who have disagreed violently with what has been written in the Newsletter. It's your privilege, but don't just vent your spleen upon the first CAMRA member you meet - tell us all by putting your views on paper and by writing to the Newsletter Editor. The Newsletter has a circulation of over 2000 and as it is distributed mainly to pubs and libraries, is probably read by 3 or 4 times as many people. If you feel that what you say is important, and it's relevant to the topics of beer and pubs, why not let us all know. Editor: Les Middlewood, 81a Linden Way, Southgate, London, N.14 4NG.

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