

OPENING TIMES

ST. NEOTS & DISTRICT



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BRANCH NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1984

Cross Keys St. Neots

Despite CAMRA'S objections, work has now started on converting the former coaching inn into a shopping mews, with the premises being delicensed. It is understood that since approval for re-development, the agents have received a number of enquiries to buy the hotel outright. Unfortunately this has come all too late. It's a pity that the former owners, Paines P.L.C., did not try harder to find a suitable buyer.

National News

Everards of Leicester have now launched the first of their 'contract' beers, brews produced for them by outside brewers. In March they announced that their Burton brewery would close within a year, meaning that all beers apart from the premium Old Original would be brewed on a contract basis. They are bringing out a new beer called Everards Bitter(1033 O.G.) to replace Beacon Bitter(1036 O.G.) and brewed by Whitbread at Samlesbury, Lancashire. Only time will tell whether the new beer will prove to be an acceptable replacement, being of a lighter constituency. No new brewer has yet been appointed for the Mild and Tiger brands, although Bass are rumoured to be favourites to get the Tiger contract. A new small brewery is currently under construction in Leicester specifically to brew Old Original (1050 O.G.). With Everards being widely available in our area, local palates will get the chance to taste for themselves the new beer.

Beer production for the first half of 1984 increased by 1.5% to 17m880.156 bulk Barrels as against the 1983 figures.

Cuddles

Anyone with £40,000 to spare? If so, you can buy a twelve year lease for this former Whitbread theme pub on Longsands. Formerly known as the Greenacres, it has been closed for a number of months, awaiting a suitable owner.

NEW PUB
ATEATON SOCON

A new pub is planned for Gt. North Road, Eaton Socon in the early part of next year. St. Neots developers Hillson and Twigden are seeking outline planning permission from Huntingdon District Council before going ahead with more detailed plans.

Adnams of Southwold are test marketing a new light bitter ale called Adnams LBA(O.G.1032). If successful it will be widely available in the Free Trade.

Theakstons of Masham and Carlisle, brewers of the infamous Old Peculier have become the latest victims of a takeover bid. Matthew Brown the Blackburn brewers successfully bid £3.07m and were quick to guarantee that "The independent image of Theakston will be preserved, the name, product identity and production facilities will be maintained and that no beers would be dropped". Whether these prove to be hollow words, as in past examples of rationalisation in the industry remains to be seen.

The newly published 1985 Good Beer Guide claims that the price of a pint should be cut by 20p. Our ale is more heavily taxed than any other E.E.C. country except Eire- the guide says beer tax should be the same throughout the Common Market.

Local Pub News

The Conygeare, Eynesbury will be one of the first outlets to try the new 'Tadcaster Bitter' from Samuel Smiths.

The Hare and Hounds at Eynesbury has now taken out its real ale, landlord Vic Roberts being unable to get sufficient sales in what is predominantly a 'keg' pub.

The Crown, Eaton Socon has dropped Banks and Taylor Shefford Bitter in favour of a 'guest beer' policy to complement the Adnams, Marstons, Ruddles and Courage Directors have been tried so far.

Real Greene King KK light mild is likely to disappear from the St. Neots area shortly. The Old Sun, Eaton Socon has already dropped the beer and the George and Dragon in the same village is likely to follow suit. The New Inn, St. Neots, despite having the bar fittings, has never sold the beer. The reason in both cases is demand falling below the level necessary to keep the beer in good condition.

The Robin Hood, St.Ives and the Black Bull at Brampton are the latest houses to add Ushers Founders to their ranges. Since its introduction in the area, high sales have encouraged Watneys East Midlands to expand the number of outlets and make the beer permanently available.

St. Neots Centre, Paine's House the Lord John Russell has been fully refurbished. The Greene King owned Barley Mow at Eaton Ford has embarked on its alterations, whether any real ale will appear as part of the improvements remains to be seen.

Ind Coope East Midlands have now opened their new family pub the Pickled Skittle at St. Ives at a cost of £500,000. It is selling Ind Coope Bitter and Burton ale both on handpump.

The Crown at Gt. Staughton has been put up for sale by James Paine at an asking price of £70,000. The income received would enable the brewery to make loans in the Free Trade and therefore open new accounts.

Greene King have added between 3p-4p on to the price of a pint in their pubs as from the middle of October.

The Tudor, Fenstanton has added Abbot to its existing range of Greene King I.P.A. and Wethereds.

The White Horse at Eaton Socon changed hands in August. Outgoing landlord David Wood has left after nearly eight years of running the Whitbread pub to take on a new job as an area manager for Falstaff Taverns, part of the Imperial Group who control Courage. New tenants at the 15th century coaching inn are Bob and Stephanie Green who although originating from Cornwall were previously at the Red Lion, Hinxton, near Saffron Walden, Essex. It is hoped that Castle Eden will be added to the current range of beers.

Another pub with a change of faces behind the bar is the Stag and Hounds at Oldhurst where Len and Bridget Mountfield have taken over.

Eric and Margaret Irvine have taken over as landlords at the Green Man at Colne. The last of our landlord changes are at the Axe and Compasses, Hemingfords and the Three Horseshoes at Houghton and Wyton which according to our information both have new landlords pending.

The Seven Wives, St. Ives has come top in a competition run by pubowners Hampden Hosts for biggest percentage increase in sales from May to June within the group.

For cider drinkers The Swan, Old Weston is selling Bullfinch Puddingstone Dry Cider on handpump. With a gravity of about 1047 this is marketed by Bullfinch Hertfordshire Ciders a new company who eventually hope to produce a range of real Puddingstone Ciders in Hertfordshire. At present it is made for them in Herefordshire. Hopefully for them the cider will prove a success, being sold alongside Adnams, Abbot and Marstons Pedigree at the Swan.

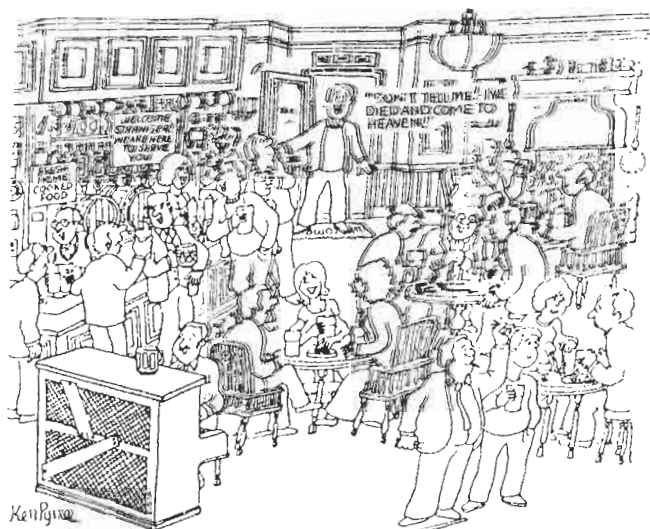
The Falcon in Huntingdon has now completed its refurbishment.



Licensing Laws

The Brewers Society is poised to launch its strongest ever lobby to achieve a relaxation of licensing laws within on trade outlets. The society is organising a meeting which will involve all those in the trade, including restaurant and theatre owners, CAMRA and the National Association of Licensed House Managers. This will culminate in extensive lobbying of Parliament to implement a change in licensing legislation, which hopefully can be achieved by the end of the current Parliament in 1987. The society is not demanding total relaxation but flexibility where discretion can prevail. With other groups such as the Flexible Hours Action Group pushing for more liberal licensing laws perhaps the outmoded restrictions first applied in 1915 will be changed. The Government has said it will act-but only if there is sufficient evidence of public support for change. CAMRA chairman Tony Millns says "I believe our role is to provide as much evidence of this public support for reform as possible".

A recent article in the Daily Mail highlighted a growing feeling among many drinkers of the state of the traditional British Public House. With trend following trend over the years, we have seen the demise of the public bar, all in one saloons being the vogue. We have seen bistro and disco type pubs and the buzzing army of space invader machines takeover what once was a pleasant local. Food is the number one facility now being offered in a bid to attract customers. There is of course nothing wrong with food, with pub lunches and evening meals earning themselves an ever improving reputation for originality and value for money, as well as becoming a commercial necessity. However, pubs should surely be a pub which serves food, rather than an eaterie which happens to sell alcohol. Many 'Grub Pubs' can make the customer wants just a drink feel like an intruder. Traditionally, the British Pub has always been a meeting place and community centre for the local populace. With each new gimmick coming and going over the years, the record of the larger brewers in adapting their houses to fit each new trend has not always been a success. With the 18+ age group being the ones with cash in their pockets, it is understandable that brewers alter their houses to suit the current tastes of this age group. However, with 10,000 'locals' having vanished since the war it should be remembered that different does not always mean better. The breweries have always meant well. It is just that they have not often got it right before, so why should now be any different. CAMRA's Pub Preservation Group was formed in 1979 to battle against the growing rate of pub closures and nasty alterations. Since that time, the Groups catalogue of achievements has been impressive, which has meant that within a short time their voice is taken seriously when it speaks out. Hoping, we trust to prevent streets of identikit pubs in every town!



Swithland Leisure based in Leicestershire have gained control of Midsummer Inns (formerly CAMRA Investments Ltd) in a £1.9m deal. The new owners have pledged "The present estate will stay, that no houses will be sold and that they will remain as real ale houses. The beer range however will be rationalised to ensure a better turnover, with three good real ales in each pub, plus one guest beer". The pub in the immediate vicinity of our area affected by the takeover is of course the Salisbury Arms in Cambridge.

The Local

Britain's first free pub newspaper 'The Local' has ceased publication after 50 editions with the August edition being the last. Produced in Peterborough by East Midlands Allied Press in association with CAMRA, the decision has been taken on commercial grounds. Despite a high level of advertising in the 16 page paper, revenue had proved not sufficiently profitable to continue production. However, it was this, that, in many CAMRA members opinion made the paper too much of an advertising vehicle. With editorial support from CAMRA branches gradually declining over the four years of its existence, the general feeling was not of sorrow at the papers passing. It seems that at the moment it is not possible to make pub papers viable, it being left to branch newsletters like "Opening Times" and its counterparts to inform and comment on the real ale scene. This again prompts the editor to ask for any newsworthy information from its readers if there any of you out there! Also as a branch we would like to ask any non-active members to consider attending Branch meetings and socials. New faces and ideas are essential to provide fresh impetus and enthusiasm.

Since our last newsletter we have seen the independently organised St. Neots real-ale and wine festival make a somewhat subdued appearance at the Priory centre. Only moderate attendances were forthcoming, perhaps the admission cost put people off, in any case only 9 kils of beer were sold.

Anybody interested in real ale and football can help in the compilation of a set of maps listing real ale pubs in the vicinity of Football League Club grounds. You are invited to send good maps and information to Keith Emerson, 111, Ordell Road, Bow, London, E3 2AQ with an S.A.E. He will send you copies of whatever he receives.

EDITOR: Mike Birch, 19, Andrew Road, Eynesbury, St. Neots, Cambs.
Telephone: Huntingdon 74497

"OPENING TIMES" is published by the ST. NEOTS AND DISTRICT BRANCH OF "THE CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE (CAMRA)".

Future Meetings

Come along to a CAMRA meeting where you will be most welcome.

Wednesday 7th November 8.00 pm
Social at The George, Fenstanton.
(Whitbread)

Wednesday 21st November 8.00 pm.
Social at The Angel, Cambridge Street,
St. Neots. (Wells)

Wednesday 5th December 8.00 pm.
Social at The Crown & Cushion,
Gt. Gransden. (Wells)

Friday 14th December 8.00 pm.
Branch Christmas Party.
Red Covington (Free House).



The 1985 Good Beer Guide is now available at a cover price of £4.50. Copies can be purchased from your landlord or by contacting the editor.

JOIN CAMRA

Full membership £7.00.
Joint husband/wife membership £7.00.
I/We wish to become members of CAMRA Ltd.
I/We agree to abide by the memorandum and articles of association of the company.
I/We enclose a cheque/p.o. for £7.00.

Name(s)
Address
Signature