

OPENING TIMES

ST. NEOTS & DISTRICT



BRANCH NEWSLETTER

Issue No 71

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LOCAL NEWS

Worthington Best Bitter is now available on handpump at both **The Golden Lion, St. Ives** and **Ye Olde Ferryboat, Holywell**.

The Millers Arms, Eaton Socon is now open all day on Saturdays, from opening time which is 12.00 noon through to 11.00 pm. and is still selling the excellent Greene King XX dark mild, so give it a whirl.

The Wheatsheaf, Eaton Socon has new incumbents Pat and Dilys Sheridan, who have returned to the licensing trade after 20 years out of it. They were indeed at one time mine hosts at The Angel,

St. Neots.

The Prince of Wales, Hilton, a Freehouse has just put on Shefford Bitter from Banks and Taylor, one of our local independent brewers. As the beer is not too widely available locally, then it is worth a trip to Hilton to try it. The beer will replace the Marstons Pedigree and will complement the existing Bass and Adnams Bitter.

Greene King have put real ale into two local pubs. We are pleased to say that **The Eight Bells Abbotsley** and **The Wheatsheaf, Perry** both now have I.P.A and Abbot available on handpump.

The Plough, Eynesbury a Manns pub, is for sale at a figure upwards of £125,000 freehold and free of tie. Currently a fizz only outlet, perhaps real ale will appear here, if and when it is sold.

Across the road to the Plough we have the ever improving **Woolpack, Eynesbury**, a Greene King tied house. This has been refurbished and enlarged to create an L-shaped room in the friendly one-bar pub. Abbot now appears on handpump alongside the existing I.P.A. With two refurbishments over the last few years, a much improved pub decorwise, but at the same time retaining its own ambience.

As you will read elsewhere in this newsletter, we as a CAMRA branch are having a big push to promote mild in our area. We are pleased to say that one of the first pubs to listen to our request is the **Hare and Hounds, Eynesbury**, where landlord Bob Eaton has agreed to give Tolly Mild a try. So please get down to the pub and give it a try, you'll enjoy it! He also has Tolly Bitter available, both brewed at the re-opened Ipswich brewery and being of superior quality than the previously Camerons brewed Tolly purely because they do not have to travel so far. Bob also has a separate function room, which he has refurbished himself and made a good job of it too.

RAYMENTS SPECIAL MAKES ITS BOW

Those of you who drink in Greene King pubs may have noticed the introduction of a new real ale - Rayment's Special Bitter (O.G. 1040) has been brought out to fill the gap between IPA and Abbot for a middle strength beer. The new beer is sweet and has a taste that is more easily acquired than the bitter tastes of IPA and Abbot.

The beer will be widely available in Greene King pubs and is certainly at **The**

Wheatsheaf, St. Neots where an array of all four Greene King ales is on handpump. Also we know it to be available in **The Crown at Litlington**.

However, the use of the Rayment's name has upset some CAMRA activists, who describe the beer as a 'pretend Rayment's' product.

With Rayment's BBA - the beer match brewed at Bury St. Edmunds - being phased out, it could be construed as a sop to the old Rayment's name.

Greene King feel that RSB reflects a style and type of beer that was brewed at the Hertfordshire based Furneux Pelham in the 1930's, being distinctly different to other products in their range.

The thoughts of the local CAMRA branch are that it is good that one of our local independent brewers should add a new beer to its range. It is however sad that Furneux Pelham brewery was closed and that this as always following a brewery closure, led to the demise of a fine

beer. We also pray that the introduction of the new bitter does not lead to the eventual axing of the excellent XX Mild (OG 1031) The current four beer range is an excellent advertisement for an Independent brewery.

White Shield - Red Face
CAMRA man walks into an unlightened pub and surveys the array of keg dispensers. "Yes sir?" says the young barmaid. "Er, have you got any White Shield?" he asks desperately. Barmaid blushes "I think you'll find them in the gents", she stammers!

As a regular item, we are going to feature a pub in each newsletter issue. Normally the pub will be chosen from those listed in the CAMRA Good Beer Guide, but if your local is interesting enough we will consider it, so drop the editor a line.

SPOTLIGHT ON THE ROYAL OAK - HAIL WESTON

Mine hosts here are Tony and Joyce Lusby, who have been at the Charles Wells pub since January 4th of this year.

In that time they have been steadily building up the trade, and want very much to make the pub the centrepiece of the local community. They have already had successful karaoke nights and Tony is willing to listen to sensible suggestions for other forms of entertainment and customer involvement at the pub.

Tony, originally from Durham is running his first pub and previously worked in industrial relations in Letchworth, where he learnt to communicate with people - an asset he sees as very important in his new role.

The Lusbys are working hard to help the pub achieve its full potential, and it is open all day from Monday to Saturday 11.00 to 11.00, with standard opening hours on Sundays



For those of you who don't know the pub, it is as our picture shows an attractive 17th Century, thatched pub with internal beams and low ceilings. It has one main bar and a separate, newly opened a la carte restaurant, plus a childrens room, which contains a bar billiards table. Excellent value bar snacks are served in addition to the restaurant menu.

Currently there are four beers available on handpump, all in good condition, which cannot always be said for small pubs with a wide beer range. They are Charles Wells Eagle and Bombardier, Adnams Bitter and Mansfield Riding.

The pub makes children especially welcome having a large garden as well as the childrens room. The garden is where most improvements have been carried out, in an area not fully utilised in the past. It is split into two distinct areas, with large conifers in between to separate the adults from the childrens noise. To give mums and dads piece of mind, the childrens section is enclosed and secure with no 'escape routes' unless they go past their parents. It contains swings, see-saw and climbing apparatus together with a slide.

The grown ups part of the garden contains ample tables and chairs, plus a purpose built barbecue hut. Here you can obtain food from the pub and either cook it yourself, or if you prefer it will be cooked for you.

Tony tells us that he is also able to cater for larger private functions by erecting a marquee in the garden if so desired. Lastly, if any institutions wish to pay him a visit, he will lay-on afternoon cream teas - subject to demand and prior booking arrangement. Contact him on 0480 72527.

All in all, a worthy first spotlight subject, achieving what we are after a good pub selling good beer and worth a trip out.

FUTURE MEETINGS AND SOCIALS

June 26th Crawl of Ramsey - commence Jolly Sailor (Brent Walker) at 8.30pm

July 11th 8.15pm Cross Keys (Free) - Molesworth then 9.45pm Swan (Free) - Old Weston

July 17th 8.15pm Mini bus trip to Prince of Wales (Freehouse) - Hilton with Batemans available at reduced price.
Contact: Steve Leader 0480 75095

Aug 2nd Joint Social with N.Beds branch in Sandy .
Crawl commence 8.15pm Lord Roberts, (Wells)

Sept 5th 8.15pm Three Horseshoes (Manns) - Abbots Ripton then 9.45pm Unicorn (Greene King) - Kings Ripton

Sept 25th 8.15pm Edward VII (Free) - Guilden Morden then 9.45pm Waggon & Horses (Greene King) - Steeple Morden

Come and Join us

Your local CAMRA Branch have fortnightly get together in pubs in your area, usually every other Wednesday (but sometimes on a Thursday) at two different pubs. The first at 8.15pm, moving on to the second in time for 9.45pm arrival.

We choose pubs from all over our branch area - points as far apart as Ramsey, Bassingbourne, Earith and Bythorn.

We try to make new attendees welcome and even if you're not a CAMRA member, come along for a chat.

If you are a drinker or a landlord and would like us to hold a branch social in your local then contact us and we will consider it. Ring the editor or Roy Endersby on 0480 73364

YULETIDE BEER CRACKERS

This time of year sees the availability of those welcoming, warming, Winter Ales, which comprise old ales, winter warmers and Christmas ales.

This time last year there were a reported 73 available, this year the number has soared to 131.

From the CAMRA compiled list I have endeavoured to list those that I feel will be available either in our branch locality, or in surrounding counties.

Quite often, these winter ales are served direct from polypins perched at the corner of the bar, so are not always immediately visible, upon entering the pub. So, if your local has its brewery listed, or is a free house,



ask your landlord to get some in. Most pubs should be able to sell at least 36 pints of Winter Ale, even if its strength dictates that it should only be in halves!

OG in brackets after beer name.

Adnams,
Southwold, Suffolk.
Old Ale (1042).
Tally Ho (1075).

Ancient Druids,
Cambridge (Brew-pub).
Frostbiter (1065).
Available only at this
brew-pub.

become the UK's biggest pub operator.

Under a revised agreement, following conditions imposed by the Office of Fair Trading, the new pub owning company - Inntrepreneur Estates will own 8,450 pubs.

This comprises all of the 4,910 former Courage pubs and 3,540 of Grand Metropolitan outlets, with Courage/Fosters securing a deal to supply the IEL estate for seven years, Grand Mets remaining 990, and a further 550 leased from IEL for a further four years.

Under the OFT conditions, 1,100 of IEL's initial 8,450 will be sold, plus a further 2,470 to be released before November 1992, leaving 4,350 pubs tied to Fosters.

Banks & Taylor,
Shefford, Bedfordshire.
2XS (1058),
Black Bat (1065).

Bateman, Wainfleet,
Lincs.
Salem Porter (1049).

Crouch Vale, South
Woodham Ferrers, Essex.
Willie Warmer (1060).

Earl Soham,
Woodbridge, Suffolk.
Old Cyril (1060-70).

Elgoods,
Wisbech, Cambs.
Winter Warmer (1080).

Although it will not effect our area too much, a restriction has been placed on the number of pubs in each licensing district.

By November 1992, only 25% can be tied to Fosters. Once the four year deal with Grand Met expires, the limit would reduce to 20%

Could it all lead to price increases?

As the number of large brewers decreases and at the same time the survivors become larger, then it narrows down the list of choice for free trade chains to purchase from. Tim Martin, Managing Director of London free chain JD Wetherspoon fears that this, allied to an end of the tied system would destroy discounts and in turn lead to price increases.

Greene King, Bury
St. Edmund's, Suffolk.
Winter Ale (1060).

Mauldon's,
Sudbury, Suffolk.
Black Adder (1055).
Christmas Reserve
(1065), a barley wine.

McMullen, Hertford.
Stronghart (1070).

Nethergate, Clare,
Suffolk.
Old Growler (1054).

Nix Wincott, Turvey,
Beds.
Winky's Winter Warmer
(1054).

Ridleys, Chelmsford
Christmas Ale (1050).

Tolly Cobbold,
Ipswich, Suffolk.
Old Strong (1047).

Whitbread, (Brewed by
Gales at Horndean)
Winter Royal (1053).

However, in answer to that, it could be argued, that in the past, some people have become accustomed to large discounts due to excess of brewing capacity in the industry.

Courage have said that "As a major free trade brewer focusing on production, distribution, and brands marketing we believe all will become increasingly free as the decade progresses."

Certainly, this latest deal is another step along the road to massive change in our brewing industry nationally and locally. Join CAMRA and make your voice heard in the battle for choice in your local. CAMRA now has an ever growing national membership currently standing at 31,000. Complete the membership form contained herein to boost that figure even higher.

NEW PUBS AND BREW- ING GIANTS FORMED AS DEAL IS SIGNED

The Grand Metropolitan and Courage/Fosters, pubs for breweries swap has now been finalised, to produce a new brewing giant and a massive pub retailer.

Fosters will control about 20% of the UK brewing industry and have quit running pubs.

In turn Grand Metropolitan has

'REAL ALE IN CANS' - BATTLE HOTS UP

Britains brewers are gearing up for one of the industries biggest battles. This is the £300m gap in the bitter market - decent draught beer in a can.

Bitter drinkers have always complained that the canned versions of their tippie are gassy, metallic and tasteless. This means that canned beer sales are predominantly lager, because this is what the lager drinker expects.

Mega money is being spent on research, advertising and promotion of real ale in a can, in an effort to attract the take-home bitter drinker.

Research says that the nine-ties drinker is more discerning and looking for taste and tradition in his beer.

With take home sales now 22% of the total beer market - it is a big proportion, and well worth having a share of.

Guinness, have entered the fray with *Guinness Draught Bitter*, and indeed are ahead of the competition, through having developed the plastic, mushroom shaped 'widget' for its Draught Guinness stout in 1988. They patented this In Can System (ICS) then, knowing it would revo-

lutionise the take home market.

Other brands available are:

Bass Traditional Draught Ale - who use a judicious amount of nitrogen and no widget.

Burton Ale - a shot of nitrogen and no widget.

Draught Directors - the 'nitrogen flush' process, in use since 1989.

Boddingtons Draught Bitter - use Whitbread's patented Draughtflow System and on sale in 85% of Britains supermarkets and off licences.

You will probably find the 'Draught' bitters more costly than the conventional canned beers but they probably taste better. The canned beers tend to be sweeter than the pubs draught versions. Possibly the use of nitrogen gas is somehow upsetting the delicate balance between malt and hops and the essential bitterness which bitter drinkers look for is being lost. The beers have to be stored in fridges to throw a head and clear body, making

them unpleasantly cold.

However, it is a step in the right direction, and means that breweries are having to update their advertising to rid bitter of its downmarket image. Now that bitter sales generally are on the up, it has to be advertised properly - research shows that bitter drinkers are more confident and down to earth than lager drinkers and don't need over the top image sales messages.

Bass Second Best?

I see the current Draught Bass advertising campaign calls the beer the Liverpool Football Club of the cask beer world.

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If you are a drinker or a landlord and would like us to hold a branch social in your local then contact us and we will consider it. Ring the editor or Roy Endersby on 0480 73364. We also organise branch brewery trips for members to attend and enjoy, give us a try, come along for a pint.

A PINT OF THE USUAL

It's far too easy to pop into your local, ask for a "pint of the usual" and get just that. A somewhat boring bitter. Drinkable, sinkable, but hardly inspiring.

At Ruddles we are firm believers that you only get out what you put in. That's why we use only the finest whole hops in the brewing process and handpick the best English Barley. Naturally, our yeast strains are unique and you can be sure that the water used is of the utmost purity. And, of course, Ruddles beers are only brewed at Langham - our home since 1858.

Some brewers may find this approach unusual.

We don't.

You see the quality of our ingredients coupled with years of traditional brewing experience results in pints of distinction. Craftsman's beer. Bitter with a light head, strong clear body and distinctive hoppy taste. Flavour that comes through whether you fancy a slow sup of County or a deep draught of Best Bitter. A little unusual perhaps, but more than a little popular.

Now, we're not suggesting you ask for a "pint of the unusual" next time you're in the pub - that could cause a little confusion. Just ask for Ruddles County or Ruddles Best Bitter and make sure the barman knows your preference. Then, the next time you're in, you **can** ask for a "pint of the usual" - and know that it isn't.

Tony Ruddall

ARE YOU READY FOR A RUDDLES?



LOCAL NEWS

The Queen Victoria, St. Neots, owned by Brent Walker has re-opened after a long closure. It does not, however have any real ale to offer.

As one pub re-opens, then another closes. **The White Horse** at **Newtown, Kimbolton** a Free House is the latest loss. It would seem that the pub has closed down for future use as a private dwelling and is not up for sale.

The Black Bull, Somersham a Manns pub is now closed. While other Manns pubs - **The White Hart, Godmanchester** and **The Harrier, Brampton** are up for sale. **The Cock, Hemingford Grey** (Manns) is now selling Tetleys and Websters.

In St. Ives, **The Royal Oak** has changed hands but is still selling Burton Ale and Anells Bitter. Whilst, **The Greyhound** (Manns) is now selling Bass and Websters, **The Golden Lion** has Pedigree and so does the up for sale, Brent Walker owned, **Manchester Arms**, which also has Tolly Original. Another BW pub in St. Ives up for sale is **The Black Bull**, so look out for changes in the beer range at these pubs.

My spies tell me of two pubs in our area, which are currently boarded up. They are both Free houses, **The Manchester Arms** at **Tilbrook** and **The Queen Adelaide** at **Croydon**.

The Old Sun, Kimbolton is now selling Batemans XB.

Awards for two local pubs

The Royal Oak, Hail Weston now proudly displays a plaque for being a finalist in 'The Publican' Family Pub of the year contest. This pub was heavily featured in our last issue, so read that for more information about it.

Very many congratulations to **The Green Man, Leighton Bromswold**, which has been voted CAMRA East Anglia Region pub of the year. A real piece of kudos for our branch area. If you plan to visit the pub, don't go on a Monday - Thursday lunchtime, the pubs closed.

We hear that **The White Hart** at **Bythorn** is doing well. Pam and Bill Bennett took over the Free House in December of last year, after it had been closed for

some time. They have extended to pub at the rear and now have 'Bennetts Restaurant' as part of the facilities. They were formerly mine hosts at **The Pheasant** at **Keyston**, a pub highly regarded for its food. As for the beers, **Greene King Abbot, IPA** and **Rayments** are available. The pub is closed on Mondays, with standard opening hours the rest of the week.

News of a sort of local nature

One of East Anglia's smaller breweries, **Mauldons Brewery** from **Sudbury, Suffolk**, (who began in 1982), has won the prize for the **Champion Beer of Britain 1991**, at **The Great British Beer Festival** organised by **CAMRA**, with their **Black Adder Stout** (OG. 1055).

Ask your Free House landlord to get some in, but if he does, take care, for it is a dangerously drinkable beer for its gravity.

Mauldons are contactable on **Sudbury (0787) 311055**.

A brewery from outside our branch area, but within

Cambridgeshire - Elgoods of Wisbech, are making a guest beer available to the 49 real ale pubs within their tied estate of 51.

They plan to have several independent brewers' beers available by the end of the year.

As Elgood's beers are being sold in **King & Barnes'** and **Wadworths'** houses, a reciprocal deal could see **Sussex Bitter** and **6X** in Elgood's pubs. The closest Elgood's houses to our area that spring to mind are: **The Boat** at **Whittlesey** and **The Black Horse, Thorney Toll**.

Sign
of
the
Times

Spotted on a noticeboard,
outside an Eynesbury pub:

Customers Wanted
No Experience Required
Apply Within.

MILD UPDATE

The Royal Oak, Hail Weston has replaced its **Mansfield Bitter** with **Mansfield Mild**. Hopefully, it will hold its own here, alongside **Eagle, Bombardier** and **Adnams Broadside**. **The Crown and Cushion** at **Great Gransden** is also selling the **Mansfield Mild** and has been for some time.

We are also pleased to say that the **Tolly mild** is holding its own at **The Hare and Hounds, Eynesbury** and similarly the **Greene King XX dark mild** at **The Millers Arms, Eaton Socon**. Unfortunately the same can not be said for the **Adnams Mild** at

The Golden Miller, Longstowe, where it has been taken out because of poor sales and replaced by **Greene King IPA**.

A recent social, between **St. Neots, Peterborough** and **Northampton** CAMRA branches held at the **Green Man, Leighton, Bromswold** saw the pub sell out of the **Brains Dark Mild** it had in.

This particular beer - **Red Dragon**, to give its official name - **OG 1035** doesn't let it be known too loudly that it is a mild but that's what it is. A proving of the

adage that "we could probably sell more mild if we changed its name".

Hopefully its success will lead to more milds being made available among the vastly improved pubs constantly changing guest beer range.

Indeed **Brains Mild** captured the drinkers imagination at **CAMRA's Great British Beer Festival** and was voted **best Mild ale** and even more significantly was voted **3rd best beer of the whole festival**. Who says mild ales are not of good quality?

One of East Anglia's micros, from **Earl Soham, Woodbridge, Suffolk** established in 1985 has won a mention in the **Champion Beer**

of **Britain** competition at the **GBBF**. Its **Gannet Mild** (OG.1033) was a runner-up to the first three beers in the **Mild** section. If you want to try this beer, it is available at the **Brewery's own pub, The Tram Depot** in **Cambridge**.

Mansfield's launch of **cask conditioned Riding Traditional Mild** has reversed the decline of their mild sales. The beer, made available in **Autumn 1989**, has turned a **9% year-on-year decrease** in sales into an increase. **Mansfield** say that "By launching a high quality cask-conditioned product, we have kept our own customers interested in mild and proved that if the product is good the demand is there."

GOING TO THE ISLE OF WIGHT?

The thirst in an occasional series about drinking in other parts of the country, (written in an esoteric fashion).

Geoff Parsons

Those of you who have attended a CAMRA meeting over the last few years will probably have met one of our illustrious members by the name of Geoff Parsons, (No he hasn't grown a moustache, he's shaved his beard off!).

Geoff for his sins, hails from the Isle of Wight and is supremely proud of the fact. What, you may say, has this got to do with a CAMRA newsletter. Dunno, says I, Up the Arsenal, I'm the editor, so I'll print what I like. As editor of this wretched publication that no bugger ever reads I'm always looking for subjects of interest (?) to fill my pages with. Page 3 girls, I hear you say, sorry, but the wife and my budget won't allow it. I know, Geoff's always going on about the Isle of Wight as well as bloody hovercraft, computers and trains (who the hell was Sir Nigel Gresley), let him write an article about the I.O.W and its beer.

"I'm an engineer" I hear him say, so he gives me back issues of the Isle of Wight County Press and says "you're good at that sort of thing, get on with it and don't mention the **sea**, it makes me homesick.

Sea, Sea, Sea - the Isle of Wight is surrounded by it. A ferry from Pompey (Pompey Royal, now there's a drink, oops! sorry it's a Whitbread beer and they're worse than Tottenham Hotspur - is anybody worse than Tottenham Hotspur? - sorry Steve, he's another CAMRA member and he can write the next bloody article if he doesn't like this one, 'he's single and always sodding off all over Britain and Europe 'cos he hasn't got a bloody mortgage, so it's his turn for feature no. 2. What are you

laughing at Hackett, you're nearly as bad - anyway I like Castle Eden as well, so bollox) - will take you across the **Sea** to Ryde I think, **Sea** I do listen sometimes Geoff - well you've got no bloody choice when he's buying, have you.

Now, I know he said they've got a brewery on here somewhere. Harry's was it? No, that doesn't sound right. Burt's that's it, Where the hell are they though, Ventnor of course. According to Geoff, they brew one of the cheapest beers in Britain (Is the I.O.W. ours or does it belong to the froggies, dunno, they can have Portsmouth as well if they want it, now that Pompey Royal aint brewed there no more.

Burts Brewery

What do they brew, well there's Light house Bitter (OG 1030) a light bitter but the sods don't make much of it, so its hard to find - what a good start. Then there's the BMA Mild (OG 1030) a very dark, almost black beer, with a faint aroma of malt (that's what it says in the Good Beer Guide description and that must be right 'cos another one of our members Mr Moorhouse is on the CAMRA tasting panel and he's important, writes articles for What's Brewing (the CAMRA national newspaper), but not for the bloody branch newsletter though! Still he's a busy man. What else, yeh there's Yachtsmans Bitter (OG 1040) formerly VPA a malty drink with a hint of toffee, there you are a drink and a sweet all in one.

Lastly, there's shortly to be a new brew, Needles Bitter (OG 1050) so get quickly across that choppy **sea** and try some now. What about the brewery itself, yeh! what about the brewery I hear my vast army of reader(s) cry. Well, they were founded in 1840 - still using some of the same water an 'all I hear from the back, no, that's not fair, this is a serious article for the intelligent amongst us, like Endersby - another member, he's so intelligent he works for British Rail and admits to it, so we made him our secretary - but hit trouble in 1991 and the Phillips family

were forced to relinquish 85 years of control, and the Brewery was sold to a Mr Ken Bruce, who had no previous experience of the industry, but had been a Burts drinker for years - obviously went to his brain!

Capital Investment

He plans to invest £250,000 on new equipment and machinery in the existing premises. This would increase Burts capacity to 22,000 barrels a year.

The Pubs

What about the pubs, well I haven't been to the Island for 20 years, so what would I know. I'll ring Geoff up, go out for a pint and find out.

Sorry about that I'm back now. Well, apparently, Burts have five pubs, all on the Island - The Hare & Hounds at Arreton, The Stag at Lake, The Millbay, Volunteer and Terminus all in Ventnor.

Mr Bruce intends to increase the tied estate to 20 pubs, his immediate problem being that neither Whitbread or Gales will sell off any of their pubs.

The takeover has reportedly improved the quality of the beers, but what's this we hear, another brewery being opened on the Island.

Enter Hartridges

The serious piece. In Autumn of 1991, soft drinks manufacturer Hartridges opened the first new brewery on the Island for 150 years, at their Newport depot.

Hartridge supply soft drinks to regional brewers in the south of England, but are no strangers to brewing. The Hartridge family were brewers in Kent in the 17th and 18th centuries, before moving to the Alliance Brewery, Hambledon on the mainland in 1882, where because of one of Mr Hitlers droppings, brewing ceased in 1942.

The beers currently brewed are Nipper (OG 1038), which I'm told is a remarkably full malty bodied beer, belying its OG. You greenies out there will be pleased

to read that no adjuncts are added. Priced at a little over a £1 a pint, it is indeed a beer drinkers dream.

The other brew, Newport Best Bitter or NBB (OG 1045) selling at around £1.25 per pint is also very good value for money.

The beers will not be made available on the mainland, although Geoff's promised to bring some back from his Christmas trip home. There are however 40 outlets on the I.O.W. including The Travellers Joy - Northwood, Prince of Wales and Rose & Crown - Newport, The Hotel Ryde Castle - Ryde, The Star - Wroxall and The Wight Mouse - Chale.

Good Sales

The beers have sold well thus far and plans are afoot to double brewing capacity in the near future. A Wight Winter Warmer (OG 1060) should now be available.

CAMRA Friendly

Indeed this resurgence of good ale on the Island has tied in with the rebirth of the local CAMRA branch who are giving their full support to the new venture, feeling that Hartridges have the right attitude towards CAMRA and exactly the right approach to brewing. They are intent on producing beers at a good price and are prepared to limit their production in order not to compromise that quality.

Certainly, Nipper is being sold at a price of 50 per cent cheaper than many real ales supplied by Whitbread and Gales, the county's two largest supply brewers.

Hopefully my article has proved of interest and brought a ray of sunshine into your mundane little lives. No bloody interest at all, if you're not planning a trip to the Isle Of Wight.

Any requests?

Hopefully, future newsletters will cover other areas of the country. Send any requests to the editor and I'll completely ignore them.

ALLIED AND WHITBREAD IN MERGER ?

Following on from the effects of the MMC report detailed in our last newsletter, we now hear rumours of another upheaval in the brewing industry. According to press reports two of the 'Big 6' are planning to create a large new company, enabling them to control over a quarter of the British beer market.

Allied Lyons and Whitbread are believed to be contemplating a merger codenamed 'Operation Pacific'. A complex deal would bring together their brewing operations into a separate company from their pubs.

By forming a brewing company and a pub retailing company, they would be able to sidestep new MMC regulations aimed at forcing them to release thousands of pubs from the tie, whereby publicans are told which ales to sell.

A Whitbread spokesman stated that his company intended to stay in brewing and would not cede control of its plants! Also that it was unlikely that they would be allowed to purchase 'all' Allied's seven breweries - prompting speculation that the group might bid for some of them. At the moment Allied and Whitbread are still being faced with having to grant freedom to tenants in about 2,000 pubs by the end of 1992 - **unless they quit brewing by hiving off beer production into a separate, newly created combine.**

Currently Allied has over 6,000 pubs, but as noted in our last newsletter, they have been selling off packages to regional and local brewers. Also recent rationalisation has reduced the number of trading companies, and it is likely that such restructuring will continue.

Whitbread have about 6,200 pubs and have an appalling record of brewery closures. With 13 sites between them, it would be a foregone conclusion that further breweries would be closed or sold, and that some brand names would be lost forever.

As regards market share, the 'Big 6' would become the 'Big 4' with Allied-Whitbread controlling about 27%, Bass 23%, Courage 19% and Scottish and Newcastle 10% dominating 80% of the market between them.

Whilst any merger would bound to be investigated by the Monopolies Commission, the Government did allow Courage to takeover Grand Mets breweries - which include Watney Truman and Ruddles. The most likely bone of contention would be the length of any supply agreement under which Allied and Whitbread pubs would have to purchase beers from the new brewing combine.

By putting their breweries into the new combine, the two companies would hope that they would be allowed to retain control of most of their pubs, with their strength lying in the retailing end of the beer industry.

Whitbread have also made an attack on the rules stating that they are required to concede control over many of their pubs by November 1992, and want the timetable extended.

However, it would seem that the merger will at some juncture go ahead, even if after a fight, in a slightly watered down version. So we must more than ever support our independent brewers, if we are not going to be faced with **a choice of no choice in our beers in the not too distant future.**

BODDINGTONS MOVE FOR DEVENISH Redruth Brewery Doomed

THE GOLDEN MILLER FREEHOUSE

Like the racehorse we do a good double
'Fine food and Fine ales'

Home cooked pub meals
Served every lunchtime
and every evening except tuesday.
Bookings taken.

Served in separate dining room or bar.

Real ales available are Adnams Mild,
Adnams Bitter and Batemans XXXB

**Pauline and Dave Harber
welcome you
Caxton 0954 719385**

Reeling from one announcement we are rocked with yet another hostile takeover bid. Boddingtons, based in Manchester - and having sold its own breweries to Whitbread in 1989 - have launched a £128m bid for Devenish of Redruth, now known as The Cornish Brewery.

Whatever the outcome of the bid, the Redruth brewery is doomed. In order to prove its metal with the City, the Devenish board let it be known that it sees off Boddingtons it will close the brewery, whilst Boddingtons have firmly stated their intentions to close the brewery if successful.

If Boddingtons succeed, they would concentrate on the pubs and hotels. Devenish currently have 380 pubs, all selling real ale and are brewers of the successful bottled Newquay Steam beers, plus three real ales. The outlook for cask beer in Cornwall is gloomy, the Steam Beers can be brewed in any modern high-tech brewhouse, but neither the existing company nor Boddingtons have much interest in the Redruth cask ales. Boddingtons would be keen to sell national brands in the West Country - including "Boddingtons Bitter" brewed now by Whitbread. Reports from the West Country suggest that many Devenish tenants would welcome a change of ownership.

MAKE MINE MILD

The month of May is upon us once again. May is the month for promoting mild say the CAMRA worthies of St.Albans. Horse - manure say I. I drink it 12 months a year, and it is just as good in November as it is in May. So as a devotee of the worthy brew I feel qualified to talk about ,and share my fears with you, the drinking public.

The fact is, that despite two pieces of good news, one piece of bad news threatens to allay all the good. As always, you get the good news first.

Tolly Cobbold have started brewing again in Ipswich, and their mild (OG 1031) is widely available in East Anglia. Perhaps, absence makes the heart grow fonder, but it tastes just as good, if not better than before. Try it at The Hare and Hounds, Eynesbury, who have agreed to give it a whirl. If it doesn't sell then it won't be kept on, so support a new mild in your area. Sadly, no other pubs in this area sell it, but it does exist and thats a start.

Secondly, Charles Wells have introduced Riding Mild into some of their pubs. This is a departure that has to be welcomed. Riding Mild is a 1035 gravity, malty mild brewed by the Mansfield brewery in Nottinghamshire.

In some pubs it is available in keg form only, so if this is the case in your local, then ask

the landlord if he will try it on handpump, its much nicer.

Now the bad news, sales of Greene King XX mild have now fallen to 4,400 barrels a year, just over 1% of the Brewery's total production, and has been suffering a 15% per cent year on year decline in sales

Portfolios of the Brewery products do not include XX at all, and the general feeling is that the Brewery are just waiting for it to fall off the graph. Indeed, Simon Jamieson, Greene King's marketing manager, says: "It does not make sense to spread our resources too widely. It may be the case that brewing mild becomes uneconomic" But he stressed that there are no immediate plans to cease mild production. Currently there is a trade promotion taking place for the beer style.

The pump clip is also to be revamped in the near future making it less similar to the IPA clip, with a change of colours and emphasising the mild branding. Although the beer is

clearly in need of some help, no other promotion is planned at present.

Local CAMRA members met little enthusiasm when activities such as "mild ale trail" were suggested. Greene King say: "Once the new pump clip gets the identity of XX Mild correct in terms of branding, we will see if sales increase. We would need some convincing before we invested in advertising"

What Greene King cannot grasp, is that they have a winning product. It is light, cheap and refreshing, just the thing for session drinking. But Greene King seem to feel that Mild does not have a poor image. It has no image at all! Further meetings are to be held with local CAMRA branches, and the point has to be got across to them.

So let us get out there and bugger up the graph by drinking more and more of the XX stuff.

STEVE LEADER

MAKE MINE MILD TOO

As Steve comments in his article, mild is a drink for all year round. So, although May is traditionally the month for us CAMRA enthusiasts to promote mild, the St.Neots branch are mounting an ongoing campaign to promote the drink. So drinkers and landlords, please assist us to get the beer more widely available.

We can assist, by advising Free House landlords on milds we consider worth trying, and by giving all landlords CAMRA posters promoting mild. We will obviously give good mentions in our newsletter to any outlets for mild.

If you are a drinker, then ask your landlord if he can get a mild in, he has got nothing to lose and in the current recession he might sell a few more pints of a cheaper, less potent brew. Anyone out there who needs advice on mild, please give the editor a ring.

Mild ales have a serious identity crisis. Always associated with the cloth cap, whippet racing fraternity of Fleet Street mythology and the slop-bucket, waste disposal unit image of the saloon bar pundits, the public misconception of mild ales is seriously threatening the future of many beers.

Milds come in both dark and light

forms. The heartland of dark mild ales is the industrial West Midlands, where even the larger breweries produce fine examples ie. the highly respected Highgate Mild from Bass in Walsall, and Ansells - Burton. Other superb dark milds from this area include Holden from Dudley, Batham - Brierley Hill, and the most popular Banks's - Wolverhampton.

From the north we have Thwaites Best from Blackburn and Tetleys - Leeds. Whilst in other parts of the country we have Brains Dark - Cardiff and down south King and Barnes - Suffolk and St.Austell XXXX - Cornwall.

If you prefer a stronger mild then try Marstons Merrie Monk (OG 1043) - Burton.

In East Anglia apart from the new Tolly mild we have Adnams - Suffolk, available at The Golden Miller, Longstowe, and of course the much reputed Batemans - Lincolnshire.

Mild ales don't have to be dark - if they are brewed with paler malt they will end up more or less the same colour as bitter, with a less burnt palate - If its a light coloured mild that takes your fancy, then try McMullens AK - Hertfordshire, which now, as is the fashion, no longer called Mild, but Original. A mild however, it certainly is, and a personal preference much nicer than their Country Bitter.

The subtle distinction in light milds seems

to have eluded so many drinkers that brewers have all but stopped producing pale mild ales in recent years (Greene King KK mild for one). Other last oases include Manchester, where Robinsons Best and Hydes Anvil Light can still be found.

Even when breweries are not being closed, the owners axe the milds first, on the grounds of falling demand. If they used a fraction of the cash they devote to lager to promote their milds, and had served them from sensibly small casks, then several would still be around to give refreshment and pleasure, especially to those on low incomes and to those driving who cannot partake of stronger beers. In some cases like Paine's of St.Neots, where the brewery has closed, the beers were not highly rated by connoisseurs, save for their mild. But there is sadness in looking back and seeing long dead beers that once gave much pleasure. With planning and foresight, many of them could have survived if brewers had put the consumer ahead of the balance sheet. If breweries occasionally listened to the people in their pubs they wouldn't make so many mistakes. And even now we could be enjoying more varieties of mild than we presently can.

So if you don't want the list to become even smaller, then **make yours mild.**

MIKE BIRCH