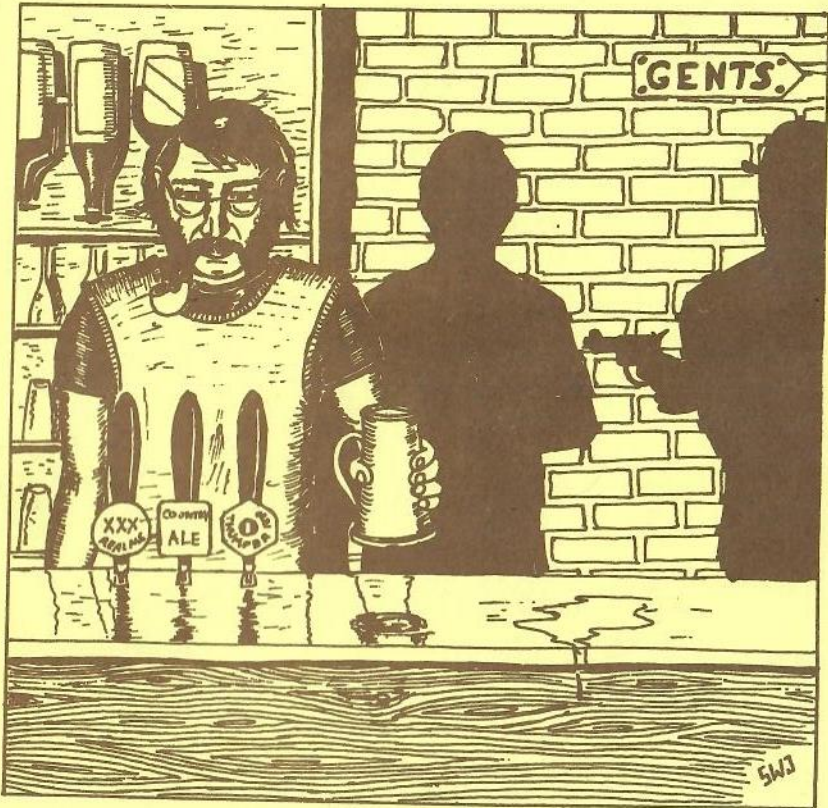


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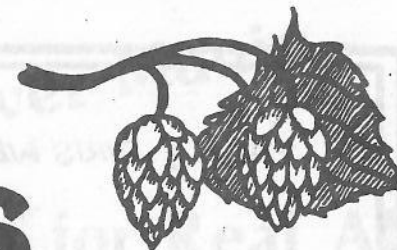
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ISSUE No 17 AUTUMN 1985

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## EDITORIAL

# Brewery Takeover Mania

## Crisis Looms for Real Ale

The last year has seen an alarming escalation of brewery takeovers. Long established breweries have been closed and some of the country's most prized Real Ales have disappeared for ever.

The notorious 60's saw many independents vanish in the holocaust of takeovers and mergers which led to the formation of the national combines. The survivors subsequently experienced a relatively calm decade, but now it seems the takeover juggernaut has begun to move again.

Last year, after a fierce (bitter?) campaign, CAMRA persuaded the Office of Fair Trading to intercede in Scottish and Newcastle's attempt to takeover Camerons of Hartlepool. The OFT brought the matter to the attention of the Monopolies Commission and as a result S&N withdrew their bid. This year the 'Tartan Terrorists' are at it again, (see last Hop Press). At the receiving end are a very reluctant Mathew Brown of Blackburn, also in the news recently through their controversial takeover of Theakstons.

The Monopolies Commission have imposed a six month block on the proceedings, but the futures of Mathew Brown and Theakston are still hanging in the balance.

Also last year, Marstons, in a surprise move, bought out Border Breweries and immediately closed the run-down Wrexham brewery. Border beers are now brewed at Burton.

Just before Christmas, Lancaster pub-goers were horrified to learn that popular local brewers, Yates and Jackson, had been grabbed by Thwaites of Blackburn. The brewery was sold

off to neighbours, Mitchells, Y&J's mild and bitter were discontinued and all forty pubs became Thwaites houses.

This year, news broke that Mansfield had bought out Northern food's Hull brewery in a behind-closed-doors deal. True to form the brewery was closed. Mansfield's half hearted commitment to Real Ale can bring nothing but cold comfort to the Hull drinkers.

July was catastrophic. Firstly, Liverpool independent, Higson, 'merged' with Boddington. The pubs and beers remain unchanged as yet... but for how long? Then came the shock news that struggling Black Country brewers Simpkins had been snatched by Greenall-Whitley. The brewery was instantly closed, (without the staff being informed!), and the brews in process were poured down the drain, ending the popular Simpkins range forever.

Now we learn that Bateman, a small family concern in Lincolnshire, is in trouble; a family split has resulted in 60% of the shareholding being put on the market. If George Bateman, the remaining shareholder, is unable to raise sufficient cash to buy a controlling interest, it needs little imagination to predict Bateman's future.

CAMRA is deeply concerned that many other small and regional brewing companies are becoming increasingly

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more vulnerable to takeover; this is not necessarily because the recession is making them unviable, (Mathew Brown, for example, has a very bright future), but can be attributed to several other causes.

In the case of small privately owned companies, some are on the danger list because there is no apparent successor to the last of the family line, or because a surviving heir has no interest in brewing. The fates of many larger breweries are subject to the whims of the money market, since city institutions (such as Brittanica Assurance) have vast investments in the brewing business, but little interest in pubs and beer. Others are part owned by their larger counterparts, (such as Whitbread, who own large chunks of several regional companies under their 'umbrella' policy); they would have no qualms in selling off to a high bidder if it suited them.

A major underlying reason, however, for the threat of takeovers is the problem of over-capacity.

By the mid 70's, national brewing combines were fat with cash gleaned from their large profit margins. Following several years of steadily increasing beer sales, they forecast a continuing demand for beer in the eighties. 'Megabreweries' were built to cope with the predicted demand, but with the arrival of the recession, beer sales fell steadily from 1980 on.

Now faced with a huge excess in brewing capacity, new outlets were needed. Firstly they went for the Free trade in a big way. Cheap loans to clubs and free houses, often tied to a barrellage agreement, ensured some return for their investment in new brewing capacity; however, with the recession biting harder, still more outlets were required. The answer? Buy up smaller brewries, close them and use the tied estate to sell their own products. And that is what we are starting to see happen today.

The latest takeover attempt, though, happens to be 'political'. The £1800 million 'raider' bid for giants Allied Lyons by Elders IXL (Australian owners of Carlton and United breweries who produce Foster's Lager), in consortium with unknown others, would be the biggest takeover deal in British history. I think we can guess the general direction that would push Allied's brewing interest in!

Put all these reasons together and it becomes very clear that the remaining independents and their products are under grave threat.

What is CAMRA's and the customer's role in all this? CAMRA can continue, with public support, to fight each takeover bid; we have been successful in preventing them in the past. We won't, of course, win them all and in those cases the course to follow would be to press the successful bidders to retain the Real Ales of their victims - not always an easy job in view of the profit to be had in persuading the customer to drink what the brewery wants.

CAMRA has set up a fighting fund to help finance the struggle against takeovers, (donations, please, to: Takeover Fund, CAMRA Ltd, 34 Alma Road, St Albans, Herts). An Extraordinary General Meeting at Queen Mary College, Mile End Road, London E1, on Saturday 19th October, has been called, to face the crisis and discuss the strategy to be adopted.

We may be able to prevent a disaster of catastrophic proportions, as we did in the early 70's in saving Real Ale from extinction.



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■ PUB Grub with a difference at the Cross Keys, near Ripon, Yorkshire. For the pub was the setting for Britain's maggot Grand National. The event started out as a joke but now fills the pub. Chasing the first prize of a silver engraved maggot on a chain were such menu non-attractions as Young Larvae and Bluebottle Boy.

Pub Caterer June

## FORTHCOMING REGIONAL EVENTS

The next Wessex regional CAMRA meeting will be held in Simeon Arms, Simeon Street, Ryde, Isle of Wight on the 26 October at 11.30 am.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Southern launch of the 1986 GOOD BEER GUIDE will take place in the Masons Arms, St Mary Street, Southampton on the 29th October at 11.30 am.

\*\*\*\*\*

All are welcome to both these events. Contact Ian Drinkwater, Eastleigh 611075 for further details.



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# SCREW TOPPED!

(Another Space Saga)  
by Ken Hill

Huge Xylonite photon sails spread to catch the radiation storms of space, the sleek black bottle shape of the Big Six flagship "Main Castle" oozed through the dark void towards the Magellanic Cluster and the 229th Intergalactic Festival of Real Ale (and Derivatives). With its Xylonite sails, Xebec rigged masts, Xenon construction and Xylo propulsion units, it was known as "XXXX Main Castle".

On the control deck, the evil DeWitt Bred, senior Captain of the Big Six fleet, was in consultation with his first lieutenant, What Knee. "This trip should mark a significant victory for our Masters" he muttered darkly to Knee. "When we arrive off H2 and deliver the cargo (and here both men sniggered at the mention of the word 'cargo') those snivelling troublemakers in Camra will have their infantile bloody festival ruined".

"And the best of it is" gloated the evil-looking Knee, "they'll never know what hit them. It was a brilliant idea to disguise our latest lethal brew as real ale and label it 'Old Budgies'. One hearty swig of that and their taste-buds will be ruined".

"Yeah", replied Bred, "And the final touch of adding 'OG 1190' to the labels was a stroke of near-genius by the Bosses. Knowing that lot (meaning the Camra boys) they'll be fighting to sink a pint before the gunge has settled" and both men cackled at the thought.

Bred then turned on the Astro Navigator, an inoffensive, 'Mild', from the planet of that name, and with extra venom asked, "Where the bloody hell are we now, you snivelling Mild, you? Stung to the bung, the A/N came back with a snarl, "How many times do I have to tell you this isn't a brewers dray? You don't keep asking where we are every ten minutes - I have to work in light-years and parsecs. You can't follow the pub signs and churches out here you know. I reckon we'll be in

optical instrument range in about two days" he added hastily, seeing the gleam that had entered Bred's eye, the snarl that twitched the corner of his slit-like mouth, and the positron blaster that had appeared a half-inch under his nose.

Then it was Knee's turn to attract attention. "Don't just stand there, you shandy-drinking ponce" Bred yelled. "Go and get that apology for a crew wound up ready for the action." He swore a mighty oath - "Pale Ale, if only we had something stronger than lager on board, I'd get drunk and come with you to kick a few arses". Knee turned paler than Pale Ale at the thought of facing his 'crew' of cut-throat Antipodean roughnecks, recruited from the bars and dives of football grounds and cricket ovals around Terra. Not one of them less than twenty stone and five foot three high, covered in scabrous tattoos, and capable of the most outlandish oaths in the Galaxy. Led by Old Rog (known as Rodger the Rodger out of earshot - or gunshot), they were quite capable of revolting on the spot (not that they were ever very pretty).

Meanwhile, in another sector not shown on the "Star Trek" board, the shimmering silver shape of the "Mars Ton", flagship of Camra, was also pursuing a course that would eventually take it to H2.

Note for new readers: The saga of H2 was told in "Hop Press" - May 1985 issue. Serves you right for not getting it - now you'll never get all these terribly "in" jokes that refer back to "The Last Drink"!

Lounging luxuriously in the Snug were our four heroes, P'Jon, V'ngang, C'excie and Son O'Jed (see, told you you'd not understand the jokes), idly quaffing pints of Old Crudgie, the one with the pleasant, fruity, nutty taste and the kick like a mule.

"Should be a good Festival" mused Sonojed, the eternal optimist. P'Jon granted assent: "Ought to be, we've got 721 brews this time, thanks to the

John & Heather Snelgrove

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natural springs on H2 itself - and with what we're carrying in there" jerking a thumb towards the cargo bulkhead, "for the locals, we should make a few bob".

"About time we did" interjected V'ngang, the eternal HonTres. "Bloody good idea of yours to collect a few vintage barrels of Terra water for the folks on H2 - since we discovered them last Festival, and their penchant for H2O, we've done really well in trading good old earthwater for their local brews. Still strikes me as funny, though, that they not only prefer the more dubious waters but give 'em fancy names and ratings like O.G. I mean, who could smack their lips over "Old Ganges - rated - 1105: a dark, muddy brew reminiscent of Arcturian Swamp Water when young with slightly malty overtones". Are you SURE they're not taking the p...?"

He was interrupted by a shrill bell coming over the intercom. "Sorry, gents" came the voice of Ab'Norm skipper of the "Mars Ton", "It's not 'Time' but we've picked up something

suspicious on the viewscreens that I think you ought to look at. Please come to the Lounge Bar Bridge where we can discuss". Our four heroes leapt to their feet with alacrity (or as much alacrity as null gravity and three pints of Old Crudgie would allow) and made their way aft (or was it forrard - not being a nautical type, I get confused): anyway, up to the bridge.

Gathered around the greenly-glowing viewscreen, the quartet peered at the shape dimly made out on the screen. V'ngang twiddled the contrast knob, C'excie the brightness, and P'Jon, the only one with an engineering background, the volume control, and suddenly the "XXX Main Castle" stood out, vividly limed against the starry backdrop of space in all its menacing glory (good stuff this, ennit?) As one man, they gasped. "It's that bloody "Main Castle" gasped Son O'Jed. "What are they up to?" gasped V'ngang. "Ouch" gasped C'excie, with P'Jon's full 18 stone on his left foot.

Just then, the VidCompViewPhone in the corner emitted a soft "ping" (well, phones never just ring in these stories, do they?) and the face of the Beloved Boston swam into view.

"Attention, "Mars Ton" he barked ("Alsatian" whispered Son O'Jed: "No more like Collie" riposted V'ngang). "Our agent in the Big Six, codenamed 'Keg Buster' tells me that Brad and Knee are on board that ship and up to no good.

They are, apparently, trying to ruin the next Festival by smuggling in a noxious brew (a cross between Pale Ale and Lager, with a not unpleasant nutty flavour and an O.G. of about 1020) with a secret formula added by the House of Brut. This secret ingredient destroys the taste buds for up to three weeks. You can imagine what that would do all the Festival. They must be stopped at all costs. Get to it, lads. I have every confidence in you. This is a personal mess...personal mess...personal mess...(ping!) message. Over and out".

"Crumbs", "Crikey", "Blow me down" (Oh, come on - how far DO you intend to strain the credulity of my readers? When did you last hear Camra members swear like that? Ed.) "More to the

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point" said Ab'Norm gravely, "How are we supposed to stop them. They have all the big guns on their side (not so much a political comment as a statement of fact) and all we've got is a couple of personal blasters".

"We could organise a protest march" mused V'nang. "We could write about them in Hop Press" hotly denounced Son O'Jed and C'excie, as one. "NO" said P'Jon, in a voice of doom. "They'd only threaten to sue us again. No, what we must do is this..." and he dropped his voice.


Slowly the two ships converged in the penultimate sector from H2. On board the "Main Castle" Bred and Knee were keenly watching the "Mars Ton" on their viewscreens and wondering if their bluff would succeed. For they had broken out a Camra flag from the after masthead (NOW look up Xebec and see what it means!), allowed CeeMeePeedThreeOh, the Camra crew's robot, to be shuttled across with TV camera (then made the cut-throat crew lounge around in attitudes of repose with copies of "What's Brewing" in their hands - mostly held upside down) and allowed spurious snatches of (apparently) drunken song to be heard on the audio circuits.

Then P'Jon's plan swung into action. "Ahoy" sang out Ab'Norm ("Tenor" whispered Sonojed. "Mezzo Soprano" came back V'nang) "Nice to see a fellow traveller to the Festival. Care to join us in a tippie? Not "Bishop's", I'm afraid, but we do have a drop of rare stuff we're shipping to H2 as the star of the show. Barrel coming over - we can only spare one", and with that, a barrel of Old Ganges floated across the intervening gap on a tractor beam. Sure enough, the villainous crew of the Main Castle had no discipline. After parsecs of Pale Ale and light years of Lager, they fell on the barrel as soon as it was broached.

With awful swiftness, P'Jon's plan took effect: what he'd guessed (rightly, it turned out) was that such a crew would live almost entirely off takeaway meals. The effect of a swift pint of Old Ganges caused the entire crew to collapse, throw up or reel around helplessly retching. The Main Castle looked like one of those miniature snow scenes, with fried rice floating around in free fall like a blizzard.

"Come on, lads" screamed Ab'Norm ("Falsetto" whispered Son O'Jed. "Shut up" said V'nang) and the boarding party from Mars Ton swarmed aboard the black hulled villain. There was no struggle to speak of. Once the crew had been clapped in irons (and kettles, saucepans, and anything they could lay hands on), they were whisked off back to the brig of the Mars Ton. Then P'Jon had his ultimate idea. Taking the stock of "Old Budgie" from the cargo hold, he had it strapped around the perimeter of the Main Castle, pointed the ship at the nearest star (being unable to find a convenient sun) and, from a safe distance, broached the barrels with the hand blasters. With an enormous "Whooooooosh", the Main Castle streaked off, spewing a jet of suds parsecs long (well, a couple of hundred yards then). Thus did our four heroes save the 229th Festival, a fact only now recorded ('cos by the time the celebrations had died down at the Festival itself, no one could remember much at all). By the way, if ever you pass through the new Milky Way thus created, DON'T take samples!.

John and Pat  
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# THE RIVER INN DISNEYLAND COMES TO EASTLEIGH

By Aged Swill

'England's most unusual pub'; 'The Loveliest Riverside Pub in the country'; 'An Aladdin's cave'; 'A traditional English pub' - this is how 'entrepreneurial publican' Tom Porter's press release describes his new 'free' house in beautiful downtown Bishopstoke.

Unusual it certainly is, and in Mr Porter's 'one man stand against theme pubs, light shows, disco music and similar gimmickery', he's installed holograms, a Chinese water clock, collections of (blow-up?) dolls, sewing machines, cigarette cards, stamps, coins, barrel rings, eggs and German helmets, a tropical fish tank, electronic star sculpture, a computerised video system to tell people when their sandwiches are ready, and a replica of the crown jewels, just to show you people out there what a 'traditional English pub' should be like. (According to the press release, this represents the 'culmination' of his stand - so presumably we won't see the exercise repeated).

Its acre or so of split level crescent shaped floor space offers 'warm and homely atmosphere' (enhanced, no doubt, by the green flowered wallpaper on the walls and ceilings, with matching scarlet carpets). Children play happily in the lower area, mingling with the jolly toppers, isolated from the bar by two massive nine-inch steps and a wooden balustrade - doubtless satisfying the licensing magistrates with this interpretation of the law.

A warm welcome is offered to almost any group of six males or less, (so much for the dart team!) or to those who arrive with 'human coloured hair' (sorry Granny), but 'adapted to suit the needs of every pub goer,

including the family and single people' (gays, ethnic minorities, PR firms, Latvian speakers,...).

To complement the largest collections of just about everything imaginable, this 'traditional pub' dispenses one of the smallest collections of Real Ales. Solitary Draught Bass is the only one on offer, amidst a host of other products, most of which emanate from the Bass stable. (This, surely, can't be the same Tom Porter who recently penned the irrational, ranting, anti Real Ale article, in 'The Publican', on the grounds that he didn't understand how to keep it?)

'Tradition' spills out into the riverside garden too. The largest tree house in the universe world England, has been constructed to let children play forty feet above concrete mushrooms and the River Itchen. According to the press release, regular inspections by 'staff' will ensure that it's 'quite safe'. It was built by an assault course designer (maybe he also designed the route to the bar).

Rich and important Mr Porter (he must be because he says so himself), also runs another pub near Wimborne, which, in 1983, was voted 'pub of the year' by Babycham drinkers. He learnt about the licensed trade as a Whitbread marketing manager (Ahah!) before being made redundant, which probably explains his philosophy of '...adding interest and excitement to the traditional English pub, without resorting to gimmicks...'

Critics have called the River Inn the 'joke pub to end all joke pubs', but it has to be said that it has added a little bit of interest to an area of South Hampshire which, as far as the pub scene is concerned, has about as much personality as a breeze block.



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# KEG BUSTER

BY BILL TIDY



KEG BUSTER appears every month in "What's Brewing" the monthly magazine for CAMRA members



# INN-SIGHT

## The Compasses Inn



DAMERHAM

by Charlie Excell

The village of Damerham lies between Fordingbridge and Cranbourne on the B3087; it is a quiet village of cottages and well kept gardens. The Compasses easily fills the role of village pub, providing a welcome to villager and traveller alike.

The building, which dates from the mid-eighteenth century, was originally a small farm, the pub being built on at a later date.

There are several reminders of days when farming was as important as selling beer. A small dairy remains, complete with slate slabs used for curing pork; the garage was once the stables, and the best flowers grow where the pig sties used to be.

The pub was a home brew house until the early twentieth century. Opinions differ as to when brewing stopped, but it was probably in the 1920's. The brewery remains intact and is well worth a look. It consists of a brick tower, at the bottom of which is a fire which boiled the water and roasted the malt. On top of the oven and boiler is a fermenter, lead lined and with a capacity of about one barrel. Water came from a well just outside, a pump drawing it up to the boiler and then up to the fermenter.

There are two bars, a pleasant lounge which opens into a restaurant area and a public bar which is well decorated and roomy.

Adorning the walls and beams are a collection of bits and pieces from bygone times, ranging from agricultural implements to part of what appears to be an old gear box. There is still room for two dart boards and a fairly unobtrusive pool table. Friday night in the lounge is jazz time and the live bands attract customers from far and wide.

Two real ales are on offer, Courages' Best and Directors bitters, both served by handpump. The cellar is at ground level, and replaces the original found under the old kitchen, and far too small for modern needs.

Outside, an extensive garden with swings and play area looks over the village cricket pitch towards a timeless view of the church.

An interesting tale relates to the car park. Several years ago a local clairvoyant asked if there used to be a coach house nearby as she had just seen a black coach and four drive through the car park and disappear. Another local resident confirmed that the old squire used to keep his coach there, and that it was all black, with black horses.

Life must have been pretty busy for the landlord and his staff when work included running the pub, brewing the beer and looking after the farm animals.

Today all their efforts are directed to running the pub, providing fine ales and good food in a truly traditional pub atmosphere. Accommodation is also available and I'm sure that Hugh and June Reilly and their staff will make any visit to the Compasses a memorable one.

# Quick Halves

## Hidden charges

LABOUR MP, John Fraser, who as Minister of State for Prices introduced the law compelling licensees to display prominent price lists by the bar, claims many pubs are now breaking the law.

In a letter to Minister of Consumer Affairs, Alex Fletcher, he urged him to press local authorities to enforce the law, claiming many publicans deliberately make their price list impossible to read. A CAMRA survey of 25 pubs in Brighton last month found a third had no list at all.

## Super Mac

FORMER Prime Minister, Harold MacMillan, has won his battle to stop "drastic changes" to his local, the Red Lion at Chelwood Gate, near Haywards Heath, Sussex, which Watney's Phoenix Brewery wanted to turn into a roadhouse called Hickory Hole. Wealdon Council turned down the brewery's plans after hearing from the veteran politician.

## 'Set them free'

FLEXIBLE pub opening hours received a boost late in July with the publication of a Government report aimed at examining ways of loosening the restrictions on the growth of business. The report, "Lifting the burden," called for relaxation of the licensing laws as a means of giving the economy a boost and lifting "red tape" from small businesses.

## Abbot tale

LOSSIEMOUTH lager drinker, Jock Howie, will long have cause to remember his introduction to English real ale.

Whilst visiting his son in East Anglia, he was introduced to Greene King's Abbot. So taken was he by its hoppy aroma that he consumed nearly a gallon of the stuff in one session.

The temptation of finding a parked car with its keys in the ignition, then proved too great for law-abiding Mr. Howie.

At St. Edmondsbury Magistrates Court he explained that he was not used to drinking serious beer like the 1048 Abbot. Alas, with little success. He was fined £50 and given a suspended sentence.

So sad that his pleas fell on deaf ears. Especially as one of the Magistrates hearing the case was a Director of the aforementioned Greene King brewery.

## Troubled Host?

THE Host Group is to reduce its number of operating companies from eight to six, following the merger with Berni Inns, as part of a major shake-up of Watney's 1500 managed houses — only 20 months after the last reorganisation. N. London Sovereign Hosts is to be split up and the Thames and Wessex regions amalgamated. The number of "design concepts" for the pubs are also to be cut. The changes are due to be implemented on October 1.

## Beer facts

THE UK is the fourth largest beer producer in the world — behind the USA, West Germany and the USSR, according to *Beer Facts, 1985*, the Brewers Society's annual digest of statistics. But in consumption it is eighth, with 194 pints per capita. Biggest beer drinkers are West Germany (261 pints), Czechoslovakia (260) and East Germany (258).

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# Pub News

By Aged Swill

Funny how some months it's musical chairs with landlords and beers - this time of the year seems to be very quiet. Perhaps THEY are keeping the information from us!.

Funny also that when the pub scene of Romsey and Test Valley area drifts along undisturbed for ages, this is the same month that it is almost top of the league.

Hosts Ian and Pam Skipper are leaving the Dog and Crook to take a free house in Sherborne. Though sad to see them go, we wish them well in their new venture.

Three pubs have changed hands, one so quietly that the new folks settled in six months ago without us hearing about it. (The word usually spreads pretty quickly).

Anyway, belated welcome to (Geordi) Dave Fuller and his wife Joyce at the Andover Arms, Kings Somborne, especially as they now serve Strong Country and Pompey in what used to be a fizz pub. The pub has had a spruce up too - and left well decorated but unspoilt by all accounts, with a large public bar and cosy lounge.

Newcomers are also in the John O'Gaunt free house at Houghton near Kings Somborne. We welcome Tony and Vi Fox who've cum up from Cornwall you!. The beers now on handpump are EP IPA and Royal Oak and Palmers Best Bitter.

Lastly, a belated welcome to Colin and Beryl Rolf who took over the Black Horse at Tytherly four months ago.

In the Forest we see that the Volunteer in Lyndhurst is up for sale; whilst at Ringwood's new pub the Inn on the Furlong a new lower gravity beer, Furlong Bitter, has been introduced.

A few items from Lymington. Longs Wine Lodge no longer sells Ushers BB or Founders, but now serves up an interesting combination of Burts VPA, Waddies 6X and Gales HSB. At the Kings Head Pompey Royal has gone, but Sam Whitbread has appeared. And the White Hart in Pennington now has both Pompey Royal and Strong Country.

North East to Totton, where the four bar Red Lion has fallen victim to the Whitbread pubguttery programme, to leave a single split level barn in their well known fashion, and renamed it - would you believe - Henry's. We wish best of luck, anyway, to new licencees Keith and Elaine Ashby.

Down the water to Marchwood where free house the Pilgrim has also undergone a major refurbishment. Artistically rethatched and beautifully restored (genuine beams!) it now also boasts an extension to the existing bar. (it would have been nice, perhaps, if this had been made into a second bar). Coincident with the reopening Draught Bass has been introduced alongside the two Eldridge Pope beers.

The well publicised round the Isle of Wight charity bike ride, organised by the Lord Nelson at Hythe, took place in Mid August. Your aged columnist joined over a hundred other intrepid cyclists in a bid to raise £10,000 for guide dogs for the blind. Nearly £800 was dropped into the collecting boxes on the journey - but the total sponsorship figure won't be known for a while - watch for the full Aged Swill report next issue.

Also in Hythe, plurals pub 'Splashes', reported in last Hop Press, serves Ushers, Websters and HSB in addition to Tamplins - this Host house is reported to be 'Noisy, plastic and gaudy'. Surprise, surprise! The Croft has re-opened as a Chef and Brewers eatery - it used

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to be a real pub. Though it's pleasant and quiet the prices are noticeably higher. (HSB £1.04!).

Southampton next, where we learn of a Real Ale gain; The Oxford in St Marys Road, previously all Keg, now sells Flowers Original. Another gain is at the Red Lion in Bedford Place where, after a spruce up, Flowers Original has been added to the Strong Country. And again, Flowers is the first Real Ale in the Dutchess of Wellington.

In Sholing, we welcome new tenants Mr & Mrs Voysey to the Rising Sun; and a little to the East of Southampton in West End - we wish all the best to Stephen Head (son of Diane and Gervaise Head of the Barleycorn) and his wife Rachel, who've taken over the management of the West End Brewery.

North to Eastleigh where we hear that Ernie and Olive Mills have left the Golden Hind to take over the Holbury Inn, Holbury, at the end of September. The Golden Hind has a relief manager until it's closed for Whitbread 'renovations'.

Finally, our last stop is Winchester. The Black Boy, (For reasons see the Editorial) no longer serves Simkiss. Perhaps another unusual beer will take its place. Lovers of Wadworth's

Farmers Glory may want to know that the St James Tavern will serve it during the Winter only from now on, due to lack of demand in the Summer (!!) months. And talking of Wadworth, we are delighted to learn that they've leased the Golden Lion in Andover Road from Whitbread; the formal handover is expected to be early in the new year.

The Ship Inn's new tenants have arrived. We greet Ron and Sara Bannister, late of the 'World Turned Upside Down' Reading - who believe in Real Pubs and Real hospitality. They're also keen on unusual pub food - mushroom and oyster pie, for example. For those who fancy themselves on the ivories, the piano will be arriving shortly.

Regular at the Kings Arms (and most other pubs within walking distance), Ian Smithers, for a decade buried under pounds of hair, had his locks short for charity recently. Problem was the hair had eventually been removed, a foot was revealed; he'd fooled everyone by walking around on his head for years!

Lastly, connoisseurs of 6X may like to be reminded that the cheapest is to be found in the Southgate Hotel, where it's still only 84p. a pint.



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## Branch Activities

### BRANCH MEETING

10th September - Green Man, Winchester

### BRANCH OUTING

14th September - Cotswolds

### COMMITTEE MEETING

24th September - First in Last Out, Winchester

### WALKABOUT

5th October - Evening - Lyndhurst

### BRANCH MEETING

8th October - Prince of Wales, Northam

### EASTLEIGH BEER FESTIVAL

18th/19th October - Town Hall, Eastleigh

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# DORSET COAST

Walking long distances in early summer certainly works up a thirst. The Dorset Coast Path has plenty of stops where it can be assuaged.

The path is about seventy five miles short, running from Shell Bay in the East to Lyme Regis in the West. The walker (drinker) passes from Whitbread's territory, through Devenish's and on to Palmer's land. A fact finding mission last May involved your intrepid editor and two assistants, using the Sandbanks to Shell Bay ferry as a starting point.

The first pub reached was the Bankes' Arms Hotel at Studland. Here the walker, still fresh and keen, can stop for a pint of Strong Country or Pompey Royal in an old inn, which also provides food and accommodation, and has a beer garden overlooking the sea.

Onwards to Swanage, via Handfast Point and the spectacular Old Harry rocks. Swanage is hardly a beer drinker's paradise, but there is plenty of Whitbread real ale. Devenish is available in the Purbeck Arms, an expensive town centre free house, and in a small local's pub, the Royal Oak at Herston (about two miles from the sea front). The Anvil Bar of the Durlstone Head Hotel offers a reasonable selection of ales and a good restaurant menu. All the beers were in indifferent condition on our visit, with the Eldridge Pope Royal Oak being decidedly 'off'.

We fared no better with the menu either, only bar food being available unless one had booked in advance.

No effort was made to replace the undrinkable beer, and there was no response to our query as to why a

menu was displayed, and a newly opened restaurant advertised locally, when it happened to be closed.

The disappointment brought on by this experience was lifted by thoughts of the Square and Compasses on the morrow.

The Good Beer Guide describes this pub as 'a bastion of the Purbecks'. What more can be said of this solid building standing firm against the weather, looking out to St Aldhelm's head?

Inside the thick walls there is no bar, just a flag-stone floored passage leading to a hatch with several rooms leading off. Beer is Whitbread's served from the cask, kept in excellent condition by the Newman family for the past eighty odd years.

Leaving Worth Matravers, the next port of call is Lulworth. Real ale is available in several of the bars at Lulworth Cove itself (Courage Directors and Best Bitter). Just up the road however, there is the Castle Inn, a Devenish house serving well kept Wessex Best Bitter and meals guaranteed to satiate even the long distance walker's appetite.

Westwards ever Westwards, over some of the highest cliffs and most spectacular and isolated scenery of the South Coast. The path continues, climbing the steep headlands of Durdle Dor with its rock arch, Sugre Head, the vertiginous Bat Head with the Bat Hole at its base (for those who dare to look over the edge to the sea about 550 feet below). Then comes White Nothe with its row of Coastguard cottages standing silent sentinel, and just about man's only impression on the landscape. Relief comes with the steady descent to Ringstead Bay,

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but one's thirst can only be quenched with a cup of tea or iced lolly at the caravan which acts as tea-shop cum beach store, bright with coloured balls, kites and buckets and spades.

We carried on, speeding up on this flat stretch at sea level. The land rises to low cliffs and then descends to Osmington Mills. The path passes the Smuggler's Inn, thatched and touristy, which caters mainly for holiday makers from the local camps. Courage Directors and Best Bitter are sold side by side, and strangely, both at the same price of ninety pence a pint; the food is very good value however.

Leaving Osmington Mills, the path remains fairly easy with Black Head the greatest obstacle before Weymouth.

Weymouth was once two towns; there are probably some locals who say it still is. Melcombe is on the East side of the river Wey, Old Weymouth on the West. It is soon obvious that this is a brewery town, with the name Devenish prominent on many of the pubs and bars.

Tiredness brought on by a long day's walking meant that only the King's Arms and The Albion were visited.

The King's Arms is a lively harbour side pub full of nautical bits and pieces, including a full size diving suit and hand operated air pumping machine; the Albion is a basic bar pub opposite the central Post Office. Both pubs serves John Devenish Bitter and Wessex Best Bitter from handpumps.

We arrived in time for lunch at the Ilchester Arms, an old inn in a picturesque village. The beer was good (Devenish John Devenish Bitter and Wessex Best), the food was fine but recent alterations had surgically removed all character from the pub. Bar staff seemed to think that this was a

good idea, principally because it allowed more eaters into the premises and a faster throughput. As for the old locals who once entertained the visitor with tales of old Dorset, the barman informed us that they were all in the churchyard, which was the best place for them!

So much for the Ilchester Arms; a quick detour was made to see the old barn, famous not only for its age but also because it featured in the film of 'Far from The Madding Crowd'.

It may not be far from Abbotsbury to West Bay, and there are no major ascents, but the few miles spent walking on this beach are by far the hardest of the whole path. It's like walking through treacle, very slow going. Only the thought of Palmers kept us going.

Arriving at opening time three thirsty walkers sat outside the pub supping IPA in the sunshine. Then, after a short walk up to the Crown Inn, some more Palmers IPA was sampled while arranging accommodation. The Crown is a pleasant pub between West Bay and Bridport, where the landlord, landlady and their alsatian dog give a warm welcome to tired and thirsty travellers.

We were soon ready to walk into Bridport and sample the delights of this old Dorset market town and rope making centre of England.

The first two ports of call were a great disappointment. The Ship, remembered from a previous trip as a fine town inn with a large range of pub games, is now all fizz. The second, the Foresters, offered us a pint of what is normally sprinkled on fish and chips. Unfortunately, there was no other real ale to replace it with, so with money returned we went on to the King William, where the Bass was in excellent condition. The Greyhound, formerly a comfortable hotel, was now a noisy disco bar, and so we repaired to the Bull's Head Hotel, where a pint of

Joan & Bill Welcome you

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Eldridge Pope's IPA was followed by Hall and Woodhouse "Bull's Head Bitter"(really Hector's) and Bass. We also sampled one of the extensive range of malt whiskies kept in this quiet hotel bar.

We returned to the Crown, just in time for a night cap before sleeping off a hard day's walk and just a few pints.

The next day the section of the path West of Bridport was fairly easy going, even though it has the highest point on the South Coast along its way.

Golden Cap rises to 650 feet and its name describes it well; it can be seen for many miles; but it is best viewed from the West, when it glows with the final rays from the setting sun.

A lunchtime pint was found at the Anchor, almost on the beach of Seaton. A Palmer's house, it serves both IPA and BB on handpump, but is obviously geared to holiday makers with plenty of money in their pockets.

A short stop at the top of Golden Cap to look back at the coast stretching back to Portland in the far distance and Westwards to Lyme Regis, then on.

Charmouth with the excellent Coach and Horses Hotel was missed (it was mid afternoon). The walks continued along the crumbling cliffs famous for their fossils, until Lyme Regis appeared through the woodland.

Accommodation was found at the Angel, a back street Palmer's house well known to CAMRA members. This is a popular local's pub in a town where tourists are heavily catered for; it is a haven from the overpriced beer and junk food on paper plates found elsewhere in the town. The Royal Standard is worth a visit, down on the waterside with a walled yard looking out onto the beach; again the brew is Palmers.

The Dorset Coast Path officially ends at Lyme and the S. Devon Path takes over (both form part of the South-West Peninsular Path). For us the walk was to end in the small Devon seaside town of Seaton. This was reached after the strangest part of the walk, through the landslips West of Lyme. The area is a total jungle, as thick as anything found in the Amazon basin; the path winds its way through rough terrain, broken by many landslides. Neither the sea nor sky can be seen through much of this stretch and the path must be followed carefully. Suddenly the wood disappears and the sea and sky reign again.

A turn inland and then over the golf course and down the last hill leading to Axmouth, where herons fish in the ebbing tide, to the Ship, where Devenish beers are sold. Almost immediately it's over; we strolled through the streets of Seaton as if we were holiday makers just out for an afternoon stroll along the prom.

By far the best pub in Seaton is the George, a comfortable bar, with good Devenish ale and a cheerful landlord who welcomes visitors and locals alike, making it a fine place to spend the last evening of the journey. There we mull'd over the seventy odd miles we'd walked over the previous week whilst downing the final few pints of our enjoyable trip.



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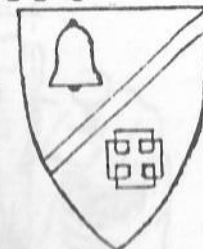


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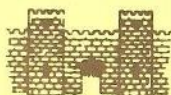
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