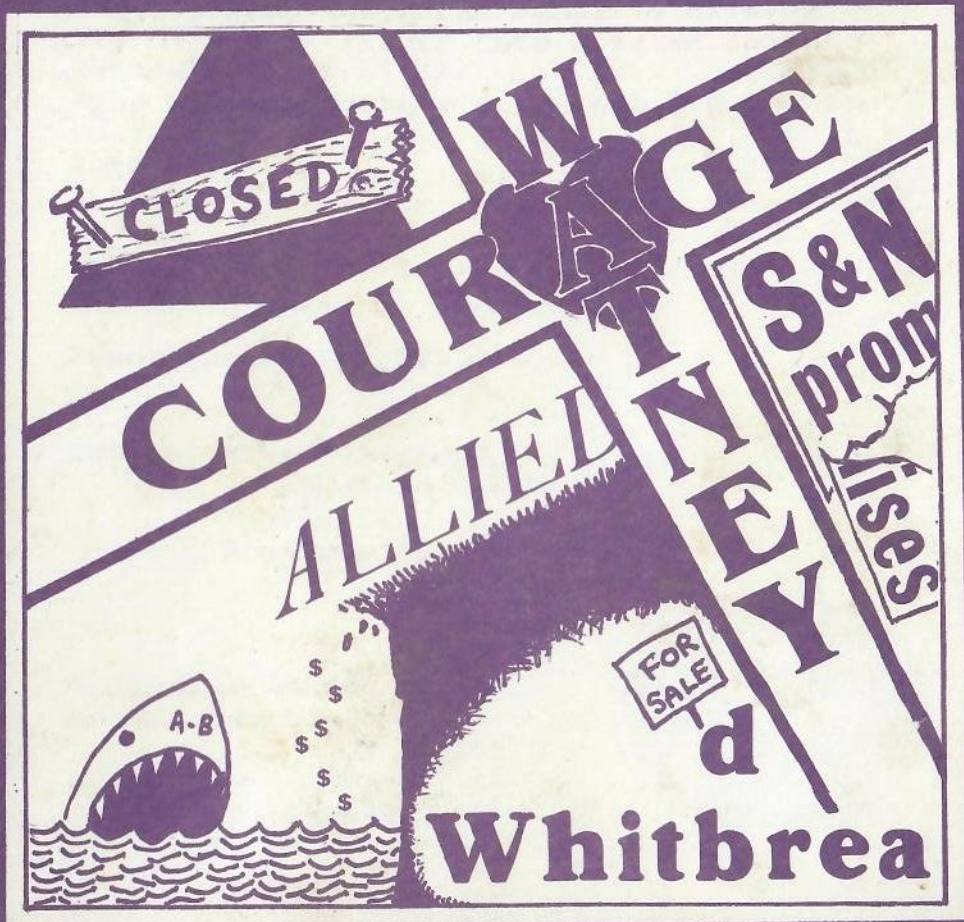


HOP PRESS

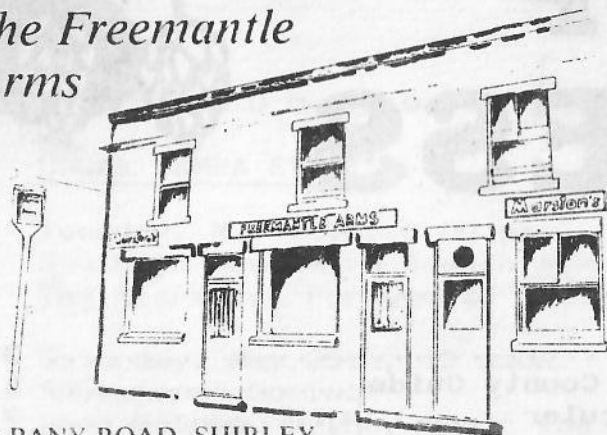
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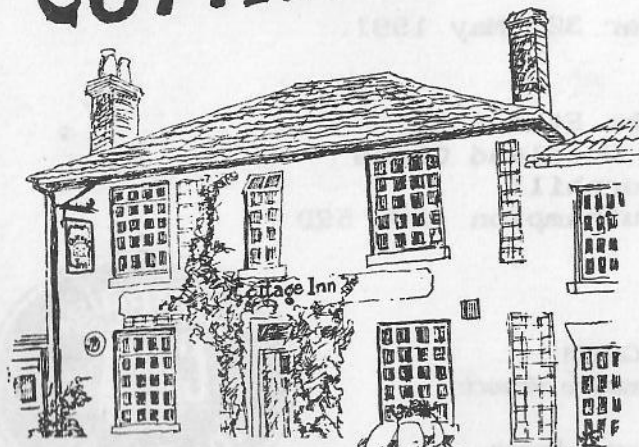
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Editorial

Firstly, I must apologise for non-appearance of *Hop Press* for over a year. I know that you have missed it by the feed back we have received from many quarters. As the new editor, my first task must be to thank the previous occupier of this seat, Dave Neale, for his efforts. As regular readers will appreciate, all of the production of *Hop Press* comes from the spare time voluntary efforts of CAMRA members like Dave.

If you are a new reader, then welcome to *Hop Press*. This is a magazine for the local pub goer about the good, the bad and the ugly of the local pub scene; you will find pieces of interest and news about pubs, breweries and beer. Comment on the local region is backed up by articles on the national brewing industry and the licensed trade. If you have not realised already, *Hop Press* is published by the South Hampshire branch of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, so you will not find too many favourable references to keg beers or to our British imitations of lager.

Since the last edition, the brewing industry has been continuing in a state of turmoil, stemming from the changes introduced by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's 1989, *Report into Beer*. The intention of the Commission was to release the stranglehold on the industry that the big six brewers held by virtue of owning both the production (breweries) and the retailing (pubs) - vertical integration in business jargon. The two main proposals were for the largest national brewers to have to sell off, or at least "untie", a majority of their pubs to increase competition and

for the remaining "tied" tenants of these national brewers to be free to buy one cask conditioned beer (real ale) from some other supplier of their choice.

In practice, the MMC's efforts have not produced the great competition boost that they may have hoped for; far from increasing choice and in any way fragmenting the brewing industry, the result looks like being an increased concentration of power into fewer hands. Courage and Grand Metropolitan (Watneys) are engaged in a complex deal that will amalgamate all of their breweries under the Courage banner and hive most of the pubs off into a separate, jointly owned company. This large retailing group, of over 6000 pubs, has been allowed to avoid the MMC's attention since it is not a brewing company - notwithstanding the fact that part of the deal's set up was a tie for beer supply to the new Courage company! For the future of the Watney, Ruddles, Websters, Ushers, John Smith and Courage beer ranges, your guess is as good as mine. Mine is that they may all go down the tubes (of Fosters that is)!

The recommendation allowing tenanted pubs of the big brewers to stock an alternative "guest" ale has started off very slowly, largely due to un-adventurous tenants. However, we cannot be very surprised at a landlord's reluctance to try another brewer's beer, when we hear from these landlords how the big brewers have "put the frighteners on them". Unexpected rent reviews, cancellations of proposed building or furnishing improvements, setting up spurious "guest beer portfolios" under their own supply,

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even producing pettifogging regulations on use of cellar cleaning equipment and bar space - the list goes on and on. Consequently we heartily congratulate those of you who have brought in an ale from one of our independent brewers, we know that you will gain from your individualism, allowing your customers to enjoy a wider choice of ales. For those who might be thinking of braving their big brother's wrath, remember, you do not have to take a beer from your tied supplier's list, even if they tell you that it is a "guest", it is your right to go to any supplier you like. There are plenty of local brewers - Ringwood, Hall & Woodhouse, Gales, Bunces, Hopback and Ballards for example - why not give one a try?.

With most of the national brewers announcing that they intend to move more toward leases, rather than traditional tenancy agreements, many tenants must feel uncertain about the future. Not surprisingly the leases are more expensive than the equivalent tenancies and with fixed terms, commonly 20 years. Many older tenants may not want to take on that commitment and will simply leave the trade. Although the lease may give the leaseholder better security, many of the earlier leaseholders went out of business as they found that they could not keep to barrelage targets set by their brewers. Many landlords have told me they are not interested in leases, but they may be forced upon them. I am probably safe to predict many licensees leaving the trade in the next few years and an acceleration in the shutdown and sale of low turnover pubs.

Finally on a happier note, Gales the long established Hampshire

independent brewer, have recently been expanding their estate; buying 43 pubs from Allied and acquiring another 20 on the Isle of Wight on twenty-year leases from Whitbread. Incidentally, Gales have been producing both Pompey Royal and Winter Royal, for Whitbread, at their Horndean brewery, with the help of equipment purchased from Whitbread's closed Fremlin's brewery in Kent. Morrells in Oxford are making Strong Country Bitter, ... it is a funny old world ...!

County Guide

The Southern Hampshire branch of CAMRA, along with the other three branches in Hampshire, have now started surveying every pub in the county, in preparation for an all new "Hampshire Pub Guide", to be published this Autumn.

Five years have passed since the last guide was printed, years in which both the brewing and the pub scenes have changed dramatically. The new guide is urgently needed.

Over 1400 pubs are being surveyed by the volunteer CAMRA members. The finished guide will give details of every one, although we do not promise very lengthy entries for the few still not selling real ale. In addition to listing the pubs, with their beers, meals, facilities and features there will also be sections on the breweries and the beers to be found in the area. Amongst the special features, there will be articles on family pubs, 1992, the recent brewery and beer legislation and, of course, on the brewing of beer.



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13-17TH AUGUST 1991

THE BEER FESTIVAL THATS SOMETHING ELSE



Court Circular

February saw the 1991 round of General Annual Licensing Meetings at courts throughout the country.

All premises that serve alcohol to the public, for consumption either on or off the premises, have to obtain a licence from the local licensing justices (note, the law does not require private clubs to have a licence). The CAMRA Southern Hampshire branch area falls into parts of the following Licensing Districts: Droxford, Eastleigh, Hythe, Lymington, Ringwood, Romsey, Southampton, Totton and Winchester. In addition to the annual meeting a number of ordinary licensing meetings are held throughout the year, usually about every two months.

Hop Press attended the Southampton annual meeting on the 12th of February. The meeting began when four members of the licensing committee, which is made up of magistrates, entered the courtroom at 10.00 am. There are fifteen magistrates on the Southampton Licensing Committee and five are listed to appear at each meeting. The minimum number for a meeting is three. These numbers vary from area to area.

Chief Superintendent Eddie Day started proceedings with the annual police report. He gave details of the number of licence applications during the past year and the number of premises which had been visited by the police. The report continued with details of alcohol related crime - cases of drunkenness, drink driving and under-age drinking for example.

The chairman of the committee then gave his response to the police report. He welcomed the intro-

duction of the 'proof of age' scheme and said that he would be looking for evidence that licensees were supporting it.

In previous years the next part of the meeting was always taken up with the renewal of licences. There were usually a number of licensees who had forgotten to re-apply for their licences and it was also a useful way of getting the details of closures, transfers etc. The 1988 Licensing Act, however, changed the annual renewal to a three year cycle.

Of course the main change brought about by the 1988 Act was the change in permitted hours which meant that pubs could open any hours between 11 and 11. This has led to another change to the annual Southampton meeting, as for many years the local LVA, with the support of CAMRA, have applied to extend evening opening hours from 10.30 to 11.00. Although this extension was granted for the summer months, winter closing remained at 10.30 despite many attempts to persuade the committee otherwise.

The next business of the meeting were requests for transfers of licences at premises where there had been a change of publican. The majority of the questioning of the applicants, indeed the running of the meeting generally, is conducted by the Clerk of the Court. In addition the Clerk of the Court also advises the committee on any points of law which may arise during the proceedings. All the decisions however are made by the licensing committee, sometimes after retiring for private discussion.

The committee also deal with applications for any alterations to pubs. Any building works that affect the licensed part of the premises not only require the usual planning permissions but also have to be passed by the magistrates before work can commence; plans presented at 'the sessions' often give us early news of impending brewery vandalism!

The remainder of this year's meeting was taken up with lengthy discussions over the licence of the Waterloo in Freemantle. Whitbread were criticized over their failure to carry out work at the pub, which they had promised to undertake at a previous meeting. As pointed out by the Committee Chairman, "Promises don't go too far within the brewery trade."

Had it not been for this particular discussion, the meeting would have closed before noon. Previous years had often continued well into the afternoon and even occasionally into a second day. The brevity of this year's meeting was largely a result of the 'streamlining' brought about by the 1988 Act.

As initially stated, the Southampton meeting was one of many in the area. Under-age drinking was identified as a major problem in many areas, although in Totton a previous improvement was reported to have been maintained.

It is interesting to note the comments made last year by the chairman of the Totton committee, Ernie Thompson, on the display of age limit notices. He said, "If a notice is not obvious when entering the bar, it serves little purpose. Badly sited notices create the impression that the landlord is perhaps lax in other

regards." The same is also true of price lists and notices of opening hours, let us hope the benches will draw these to licensees attention as well.

Another common area of concern in recent years has been the high turnover in licensees. Over the course of a year up to a third of local pubs have a change of licensee. As the chairman of the Hythe committee observed last year, "Plainly there are significant benefits to be derived from the presence in the community of experienced licensees, whose preferred way of conducting their businesses is known to, and accepted by, their regular clients." Breweries might like to reflect on this when they force out tenants through huge rent increases and convert more pubs to management, where there often seems to be nothing but a continual procession of callow youths in charge.

Ringwood

Readers will be aware of the fine beers produced by the Ringwood Brewery, which commenced production in 1978. In previous times Ringwood had a thriving brewing industry which is now the subject of a booklet by local historian Mary Baldwin. The booklet has been sponsored by the Ringwood Brewery and all of the profits are going to charity.

"Brewers of Old Ringwood" can be obtained by sending a cheque for £2.75, made payable to Ringwood Brewery, to:

Ringwood Brewery,
138 Christchurch Road,
Ringwood, BH24 3AP.

A pint of your best ...

Today it is common in marketing to try to portray something as being better than it really is; preferably this should be done without actually lying or at least by using words so elliptically that they can be interpreted in many ways. The brewing industry is no stranger to such delicate linguistics. *Best Bitter*, is a widely used phrase in the pub trade that probably deserves more study than might seem obvious at first sight. What is a Best Bitter?.

Firstly the naive drinker might suppose that *Best Bitter* will be the best bitter in the pub, or put in other terms, that it is better than some other bitter or bitters also on offer. This has never actually been the case, even for former generations. In the past the term *Best* was added to a beer (mild or bitter) to indicate that it was of a higher strength than its simple counterpart, not that it was necessarily of better quality. Typically, half a century ago, a pub might have a *Beer* (mild) a *Bitter* and a *Best* spanning, perhaps 3, 3½ and 4 per cent alcohol.

In 1991 this is too simple to be good marketing. Now the lack of a superlative is taken as detrimental to a product's chances. *Nothing* must be *ordinary* (unless of course it is regular, which as we all know, means "very small"). The marketing men must have been aghast when they first discovered that for centuries people had asked for the normal bitter as "ordinary" - how could they create an image for something that so clearly put itself down at every sale? No problem, they had the "best" solution.

The result is (a cynic might say, the intention) confusion for the drinker; especially one looking for a straightforward session beer or one looking specifically for a stronger tipple. The former will probably be on the *Best* whilst the latter will be drinking something with a new name not including Bitter at all!

Two recent examples of this practice are from Marston and Whitbread. In Marston's case, the perfectly precisely named *Burton Bitter* has added the pointless word to become *Burton Best Bitter* (not even the, perhaps more grammatical, *Best Burton Bitter*). Curiously, the much renowned Pedigree, which never used either the words best or bitter has now had *Bitter* tagged on. With an alcohol content of 3.6% (OG 1038), *Burton* is a good session beer and it is not in the least demeaned by being asked for as "Ordinary", so keep on doing so!

Our old friends Whitbread have had a keg beer called *Best Bitter* for some years but now, after a number of tests, have brought a cask version to the market, sold by handpump. The same strength as the Marston's *Best*, but with not many other similarities, this beer is backed by heavy advertising, featuring big Cyril Smith and Davy Jones (of the Monkey's fame?). If you have been unlucky enough to sample this bland boring beer you will certainly agree it is not the best; perhaps here is a case of a beer that is truly ordinary in the marketer's pejorative sense!

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Marston's
Traditional ales

The LVA

Many people on the drinking side of the bar have probably heard, vaguely, of the Licensed Victuallers' Association or "The LVA", perhaps fewer will know of the National Licensed Victuallers' Association (NLVA) but I imagine hardly anyone really knows what these organisations are all about. I certainly did not.

The LVA is an organisation representing the interests of landlords, who are either tenants or free trade pub owners; it is not open to pub managers, who are brewery employees. The NLVA is the national amalgamation of the many hundreds of local LVAs. The NLVA offers a wide range of benefits to its almost 20,000 members - trade protection, Parliamentary representation, pensions and insurance advice, legal advice, general business information, etc. etc. In some ways it is like a union but it also has aspects of a professional society and a social club.

As I am sure you are aware, the 1960's saw the brewing industry going through an enormous upheaval of takeovers and mergers, "rationalising" itself into much larger brewing groups. The brewers became much more business and profit driven and less like the paternalistic organisations they had been for centuries; this brought many problems in brewer/tenant relationships and landlords began to call for a national organisation to defend their rights. Hence, on January 1st, 1976, the National Union of Licensed Victuallers (now the National Licensed Victuallers' Association) was born.

The National Union has six geographical regions and local LVA's (there are over 400 in England and Wales) elect delegates to serve on their appropriate Regional Council. Each such Council, itself then elects officers and representatives to a Regional Executive whose function (not surprisingly) is to coordinate the Regional Council and to formulate policies for the region. The governing body of the National Association is the National Council to which the Regional Executives elect their representatives. Finally, from the National Council the annual conference elects the President and Vice-President of the National Association.

The local LVA's, however, are the cornerstones of the National Association. They are the grass-roots of the organisation and as well as giving members the opportunity to meet colleagues socially, their meetings provide a forum for the discussion of topics of concern and interest, which are then passed up through the organisation. In fact their organisation is almost exactly parallel to CAMRA's, although we have only half as many branches but quite a few more members!

Soon after the National Association was formed it became apparent that, with the existence now of the country-wide national brewers, simultaneously affecting local LVAs, the Association also needed a "vertical" organisation to defend and promote issues on behalf of these tenants. The Association, as a result, has set up Tenant

... continued on page 15.

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Strong Country Bitter

Whitbread's Strong Country Bitter is a relatively new beer. Older members of the readership will remember the ubiquitous "You are entering the Strong Country" advertisements throughout Hampshire, especially alongside the Southern Railway (as it then was) lines. These billboards referred to the Romsey brewery, not any specific beer. Strong Country Bitter was purely an invention of Whitbread, generations after they had taken over the Strong's brewery and only a year or so before they then closed it down in 1981.

The name was, as would be expected from Whitbread, a slick piece of marketing. There is no doubt that the image makers were very pleased with such a name, implying a subliminal comma and emphasis; as in Strong, country bitter. The resonance between country bitter and County Bitter which at the time was a major seller in the Watney empire would also not have escaped them. Overlaid on all this there was the promise of a return to the quality of some golden age, as portrayed in the old Strong's rural idyll advertisements - how could they miss?!

CAMRA was invited to Romsey to sample the test brews in the brewery and without question it was a very good quality beer, pale in colour, exceptionally clean tasting and with plenty of bitterness. How things have changed. Almost as soon as the beer was established at Romsey the brewery was closed and production was moved to the former Brickwood plant in Portsmouth; despite our fears for quality, the beer from Portsmouth was a pretty good copy

but again the axe fell. Closing down their last Hampshire brewery, Whitbread redefined the Strong Country as being around Cheltenham, the next brewery to take up the challenge.

The Cheltenham variety never ever matched up to the original, Strong Country became a bland product. The same fate befell Pompey Royal which was also transferred from Portsmouth. Even Cheltenham's own Flower's Original Bitter has the same characteristic blandness and, to some palettes, a noticeably 'metallic' aftertaste. That all of the Cheltenham beers have some similar traits suggests perhaps a common problem - inferior yeast or ingredients perhaps?

The latest reported twist in the tale may indicate that Whitbread themselves are not happy with Cheltenham's quality, for now they have contracted Strong Country out to an independent brewer. The beer is now being made a little nearer its original home, at Morrells of Oxford. This follows upon an earlier transfer of the Pompey Royal to the local brewers, Gales of Hornbeam. We are not aware of any shortage of brewing capacity within the Whitbread empire so the reasoning behind putting this work out has to have another explanation.

Whilst on this subject - contract brewing, brand imagery etc. - do not be misled into thinking that the Boddington's Bitter now so common in this area is an exotic guest beer from an independent brewer. Whitbread bought this famous Manchester brewer a couple of years ago purely to acquire the

... continued on page 16.

Euro pub hours: support grows for 24-hour trial

SUPPORT is growing for a move towards Continental pub opening hours.

CAMRA's National Conference has called for a trial experiment of unrestricted licensing hours and now licensees look set to debate the issue at this month's National Licensed Victuallers Conference in Brighton.

Tory MP Michael Cartiss has

asked licensees in his Great Yarmouth constituency to put together a written argument for the case for longer hours.

And Swindon Licensed Victuallers Association chairman Eddie Adams is putting out a nationwide questionnaire to test the views of his colleagues over the abolition of "permitted hours" to bring the UK more in line with the rest of Europe.

A report on drinking and disorder by MCM Research commissioned by the Portman Group is due to be published this month. Richard Marsh of MCM points out that nearly all pub violence occurs in the half hour either side of closing time.

The report is expected to contain outline proposals for experimental trials of 24 hour licensing.

What's BREWING

Mild but not meek

It is almost impossible to produce a simple definition of *mild*, there are so many regional and historical variations. However, generally, the term is used to describe a beer which is less hoppy (and therefore less bitter) and with a lower alcohol content than a standard bitter. Milds are also usually dark in colour, although this is not a perfect rule as there are a few that are paler than most bitters. The tastes of milds vary considerably but are nevertheless quite distinct from the taste of bitter, this results from the use of different malts, added flavourings such as caramel and the lower hop rates.

Until about half way through this century mild was the normal drink in every pub; indeed the word *beer* itself is the correct name for mild, with bitter being properly called *bitter beer* to distinguish it from the standard drink - mild. With bitter seen as the modern innovation, fashion took hold and the sales of mild plummeted during the fifties and sixties; even so mild was still the biggest selling beer for a number of breweries into the seventies, especially in the Midlands. Since then however, brewers seem to have abandoned hope for mild, as all promotional efforts go into bitter and, of course, to a vastly greater degree, lager. Mild has been reduced to a minority drink and in cask-conditioned form (real ale) is not available at all in large areas of the country.

There are now, in this last decade of the millennium, some signs of a possible change of fortune for mild. This is the age of 'niche markets', 'designer beers' and so on, mild is ideally placed to be

taken up as an endangered species, worthy of saving. Mild could become a cult interest, much like the Mexican beers (drunk from the bottle so your friends can admire the labels) that are now popular with the trend-setters, but let us hope not, it deserves a much better fate than that. Mild deserves to have a market of appreciative drinkers because of its own excellent qualities - consider them:

* Mild is a refreshing drink, an ideal thirst quencher on hot summer days, with bags of flavour and a variety of taste yet without the sleep-inducing alcohol content of a premium bitter. Furthermore, for those philistines who insist on mixing lemonade with their beer mild is the *only* thing to use to make a proper shandy.

* A pint of mild contains fewer calories than a pint of either bitter or most lagers, so you can drink more of it for the same obesity! Incidentally mild has a lot less calories than 'diet' lagers and low carbohydrate beers.

* Mild has a similar alcohol content to many of the widely available standard lagers, yet it costs 20p to 30p less and it has immeasurably more flavour and character.

Whilst here in Southern Hampshire we are not as fortunate as colleagues residing in the West Midlands or Lancashire, we do at least have some milds available. Farther west we would not be so lucky. Even so, none of the national brewers are willing to supply cask-conditioned mild in any of their pubs in this area, we have to turn for help to Marstons

and Gales, they offer a number of milds, as follows:

Marston's Border Mild (ABV 3%): Thin, almost black, with a malty flavour and hints of caramel, sulphur and bitterness. Faint, malty, sweetish finish.

Marston's Mercian Mild (ABV 3.2%): A dark copper coloured beer, thin, but well-balanced. Hints of roast malt and fruit in the taste, and a sweet, mild finish.

Marston's Merrie Monk (ABV 4.5%): A smooth, dark brown brew. Has a creamy, slightly sweet flavour, with traces of caramel, roast malt and fruit. It has a malty and slightly sweet finish. This beer is unusual in that it is really brewed as Marston's Pedigree but with some additions to give it its unique character, it is clearly quite a lot stronger than a conventional mild.

Gale's XXXL Light Mild (ABV 2.9%): A pale beer that looks like a bitter but is lighter. A low aroma beer, with a malty flavour and a light bitter finish. Now found in only a few tied pubs.

Gale's XXXD Dark Mild (ABV 2.9%): Effectively made as the same brew as the Light Mild but with the addition of darkening and flavouring agents. It is a dark beer with a reddish tint. A caramel sweetness is followed by a bitter-sweet finish.

These are almost certainly the only cask milds you are likely to find in our area although on the outer edges of the county you may be lucky enough to find some King and Barnes in the East or some Morrells in the North. Eldridge

Pope are also worth praise for introducing cask milds into the guest beer programme in their tied houses, it would be good to see a return appearance of the justly famous *Brain's Dark* from Cardiff that was on offer at the end of last year.

So next time you feel like a change why not seek out a pint of mild? Here are a few suggested local pubs - not by any means an exhaustive list - that you might like to try:

In Southampton: The Bald Faced Stag, The Freemantle Arms, The Junction Inn, The New Inn and The Richmond Inn

In Winchester and its surroundings: The Bell, The County Arms and The Rack and Manger (Crawley).

Other possibilities are Sam's Hotel at Shedfield and The Three Horseshoes at Bighton.

"The LVA"

... from page 11.

Streams. A Tenant Stream is simply the grouping of tenants of an individual brewery company, regardless of geographical constraints, thus allowing for direct dialogue with the brewer.

The NLVA is now accepted and recognised throughout the country as an important voice for tenants and free trade owners and has had a number of notable victories over the years, of benefit to these licensees. For example, it was (as was CAMRA) a major contributor to the researches of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission prior to their recent deliberations.

Festival News

CAMRA's prestigious, national beer festival, the Great British Beer Festival, moves back to London this year for the first time in a decade. Not, however, to its original home at the 'Ally Pally' (although this has been fully restored since the 1980 fire that destroyed our London 'home'), this year's festival will be in a location more in tune with the nineties, the London Arena, in the heart of the developing Docklands.

The five day festival will be in August, from Tuesday the 13th to Saturday the 17th., more details nearer the date.

If London is too far to go for a decent pint then nearer to home, over the same weekend, is this year's Portsmouth Beer Festival. This is a two day event at the Portsmouth Guildhall on the Friday and Saturday, August 16th and 17th. Of course, serious students of the brewers art could attend both...

"Strong Country Bitter"
... from page 13.

prestige of the name, they have now made the beer one of their national brands; experienced Boddington drinkers in Landslide will tell you that the beer has never recovered from the takeover. A point to remember when ordering a pint of Boddington's, you are still just getting Whitbread!

Pole position

FROM Eastern Europe comes news that the sale of Polish breweries progresses and that Dutch giant Heineken has already announced it is interested in acquiring the Zywiec brewery. There are likely to be other bidders appearing shortly.

Shares in newly privatised Polish companies will start to be traded from June but it looks as if bids from the West could push share prices beyond the reach of the country's brewery workers who have expressed an interest in investing in the breweries themselves.

According to Heineken's annual report the company "are closely following the political and economic developments in Eastern Europe. Although there is much interest in our products locally, the purchasing power is insufficient to be able to achieve a substantial turnover within the foreseeable future. Barrelled Heineken was introduced to Poland".

Dud Czech

WITH all this Heineken flowing eastward, news reaches me that beers such as Budweiser Budvar and Pilsner Urquell are becoming more difficult to find in the bars of Czechoslovakia where they have been replaced by more local brands.

Budvar and Urquell are flowing westward to earn much needed foreign currency. It's a funny old world!

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Keg Buster appears in CAMRA's monthly newspaper "What's Brewing"

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Guest Ales.

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B.B.Q.

Beer

Garden.

Children

welcome.

Home-cooked

Food.

Innsight

Situated on the river of its name, the village of Hamble is known worldwide as a centre of British yachting. To the southeast of Southampton, Hamble is easily reached by road, and of course by river; but if coming by rail, be warned that the station is over a mile from the village itself. Hamble has five pubs, this *Innsight* concentrates on the Victory.

On your way down the narrow High Street towards the river, the Victory is the first pub reached. The listed building is about 300 years old and the simple construction - red brick, tiled

roof and small paned sash windows reveal its cottage origin. The low front doorway leads into the Lower Deck Bar which is in two parts, a public bar area and a flag-stone floored games area, the two separated by a partition with a garden shed type door.

The games area has darts and shoveha'penny and has a remarkable piece of "furniture". Mounted on the wall there is a large wooden table top fully covered with names, hand-carved by penknives. The object is thought to carry the names of locals and troops carved during World War II, the originator is believed to be one



Illustration courtesy of Mr K. Robinson.

H. Etheridge (no relation-honest!). I doubt if modern landlords would be pleased with such vandalism of the Formica and vinyl.

The Upper Deck Bar is reached from the side of the building via some steps and certainly is above the lower deck and thus is rightly much plusher. The room is oddly shaped with, opposite the bar, an alcove with a concave wall at one end featuring a mural depicting the Battle of Trafalgar. Painted in the early seventies the mural is unfortunately showing some signs of wear, I hope that this can be restored as it certainly makes a change from Laura Ashley wallpaper. Both "Decks" contain

many pictures of the Victory plus lots of other nautical items.

Marion and Bernie Morant have been the hosts for the last six years, giving a warm welcome to locals and visitors. The real ales are Strong Country Bitter and Flowers Original, served by handpump in both bars. A comprehensive range of food is on offer seven days a week lunchtimes and evenings, including some vegetarian. Normal opening hours are 11-4 and 6-11.

When you find yourself in Hamble do not miss the Victory, the mural makes a pleasant change from the stereotyped decor we have come to expect in so many pubs. However, avoid any temptations to carve your name on the table!

Prices

With the increases in excise duty and VAT brought in by the last budget, the price of a pint in our area seems to have increased by about ten pence - perhaps a couple of pence more than was required to keep the same income - although no doubt all prudent landlords will say that the extra two pence is needed to cover an expected fall in volume.

The next edition of *Hop Press* will be concentrating on prices and will be asking: "are we being ripped off?" ... "why the price differential between north and south and is it justified?" ... If you have any strong feelings, whether as a drinker or as a member of the trade, please write to me, the Editor.

Xword winners

We are sorry that there is no crossword in this issue but we do intend to re-introduce them as soon as possible. The last issue, a year ago, produced eight correct entries, two names were drawn from the hat and so congratulations to:

John Moodie, 32 Waterloo Road, Lymington, Hants.

Mr. K. Walker, 41 Lakeside, Hightown, Ringwood, Hants.

Both winners will receive a brace of Gales "corkers" which will be delivered as soon as possible (what is another week or so after a year ..?!).

Pub News

Since the last edition of *Pub News*, a year ago, there has been enough activity on the pub scene to fill the next four editions of Hop Press! Much of this activity has resulted from effects of the Monopolies and Mergers Committee Report into the brewing industry, which highlighted both the monopolist position of the big brewers and how they have abused this position to the disadvantage of you, the drinkers.

All over the country the big brewers have been offloading pubs. In many areas of Southern Hampshire, Whitbread own an overall majority of the pubs and it is these pubs which have seen the greatest changes. In this edition of *Pub News* we will list the major changes in pub ownership which have occurred over the last year, along with some of the more interesting snippets of news from recent months. Some of this may be history to many readers but we are sure that there will be some changes new to most. With so many changes we may have missed a few but we will endeavour to keep readers up to date in future editions of *Pub News*.

Starting in the Romsey area, the King's Head is to become Piau's Wine Bar and will be run by the proprietors of the Mill Arms at Dunbridge, who will continue to run the Dunbridge pub. The Shoe at Plaitford has been sold to the incumbent licensee and is now a free house. The famous Red Lion at West Dean has finally been sold and we wait to see what changes will be made to this pub which straddles the county boundary.

Last year the choice of beer was increased in the Romsey area when

the Wiltshire Brewery bought both the Hatchet at Sherfield English and the Andover Arms at Kings' Sombourne.

Many Whitbread pubs in Southampton have changed hands in the last few months. The Pensioners, in Bedford Place, is now a Marston's pub. The Gate in Burgess Road and the Hinkler at Thornhill have been bought by Eldridge Pope. It would be nice to see the mini brewery in the Gate, which still has its equipment in place, start producing beer again. How about it EP? If it does it will be in competition with the nearby Hedgehog and Hogshead (formally the Stile) which was opened by the well known London pub-brewer David Bruce in October. The three strong beers brewed, Belchers Best, Hogbolter and Prickettickle do not conform to CAMRA's strict definition of real ale as they are served from large tanks with the beer kept under a blanket of carbon dioxide.

Another mini brewery should start production in the next few months if brewer John Gilbert succeeds in his attempts to buy the Waterloo in Freemantle from Whitbread. John aims to offer customers his prize winning 'Hop Back' beers from the Wyndham Arms in Salisbury and use the Waterloo to produce special one-off brews. [Note: latest news, John has been successful and the pub will be open by May - Ed.]

Another Southampton pub which used to brew its own beer, but which had not done so for a number of years, was shut down in November on safety grounds as the floors were deemed to be unsafe. The Frog and Frigate was up for sale at the time and was subsequently

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unlucky enough to be also hit by an arson attack. It has now been bought and the Bournemouth company, Coastline Leisure, also hope to have it reopened by May.

The docks area has suffered two other pub closures in recent months. Whitbread were forced to close the Canute on safety grounds due to the state of the building and it is currently covered in scaffolding. They hope to reopen it later in the year. Also closed is the 'prefab pub', the Sun. It seems unlikely that it will reopen as there are plans to replace it with an office block. It is a shame that we look like losing a unique piece of pub history - it was put up in the war (WW2 that is!) as a temporary pub to make up for the ravages of the bombing in the city area. CAMRA, along with others, have written to the city council to express their concern. However, there is a new real ale outlet in the area, in the unusual shape of the Delta Belle in Ocean Village.

Staying in Southampton, Devenish have bought Tanners in Swaythling and have renamed it the Old Black Cat. When the same brewers changed the name of Lymington's Old English Gentleman to the Famous Black Cat in 1988 it was claimed that the name was chosen because an imprint of a cat's paw was found in a brick during refurbishment. *Pub News* remarked at the time that we were amazed that this breakthrough in scientific research, which enabled the brewers to establish the colour of a cat from the shape of its paw print, did not receive more publicity. Are we to suppose that the new name of the Swaythling pub refers to the same cat, albeit somewhat older?

The Portswood Hotel is now a free house, going under the name of the Hobbit and the Duke of Wellington has been bought by Star Hotels who also own the Master Builder in West End and Southampton's Star Hotel.

It is pleasing to report that Devizes brewers, Wadworth, have been increasing their presence in the area. Last year they bought the Stratton in Shirley, the Red Shoot in Linwood and the Coach House in Lymington. Now we hear that they have bought a batch of pubs from Whitbread. The pubs in our area are: the Duchess of Wellington, Freemantle, the Millers' Pond, Sholing, the Plough, Spars-holt, the Waggon and Horses, Walhampton and the Star, Romsey.

Another local brewer, Gales, has also recently increased its estate but the only change in our area is in the New Forest with the Alice Lisle at Rockford now offering the Hordean brews.

Although the majority of recent news has meant a better choice for drinkers there have been some closures. The latest in a long line of pub closures by Whitbread in Romsey is the Fleming Arms, which is to be replaced by offices. The Wheatsheaf at Saint Cross (Eldridge Pope) is now an off-licence and in the centre of Winchester the Bird in Hand free house is now Da Biz, a non-alcohol pub for teenagers.

In Southampton, Scullards is now Chili Barrons restaurant. The Bargate has closed and the building is now part of the Bank of Scotland. Just across the road the Classic Corner was for a while called the Frock and Jacket. It then became the Los Arcos Mexican

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bar. The bar was only open for a few months before it closed after a customer died as a result of drinking a lethal cocktail as part of a drinking "game". The lease is now up for sale.

Continuing down the High Street, the Nags Head is to be renamed the Fiddlers. Nearby the Gamekeeper, which was previously the Glasgow, is now Dixies. Also joining in the name change game is Bogarts, which is now the West Park Tavern, almost a return to its previous name the Park. At Bishopstoke the Prince of Wales is now the Barge (some time since the local canal saw any traffic!) and Shedfield's Black Horse is now the Vintage Inn.

Hythe's Waterside, which had reverted to that name after a period as Splashes, is now The Highlander after being taken over by Ian Crockard and Kim Slater, who own other pubs in Dorset and Wiltshire. Moving further west, Lymington's Old Bank House is now Pier 68 after a complete revamp.

A totally new pub is on the cards for Totton. The Grade II listed Hanger Farm is to be converted into a hostel. The 19th century barn is to become the main pub, while the 400-year-old farmhouse will also provide a drinking area.

One pub which has been feeling its age is the Railway, near Botley railway station. It had to close after cracks appeared in the building. Owners Marstons have now applied for permission to carry out work so that it can reopen.

While on the subject of Marstons, earlier this year Winchester depot manager Michael Trotman retired after 23 years with the company.

Mike has been a good friend to CAMRA over the years and the South Hampshire branch wish him a long and happy retirement - hope we will see you again over a pint of Pedigree!

Still going strong is New Milton landlady, Gladys Walker, who recently celebrated 40 years behind the bar at the Rydal. She took over the pub with her husband Fred after they visited the area on holiday and has continued to run the pub since Fred's death in 1979.

Finally we cannot leave this edition of pub news without marking the retirement of one of the nation's most famous licensees. He was committed to making sure his customers were always served a first class pint and his eccentric nature always ensured good entertainment. Pub News wishes Amos Brearley a happy retirement.

Eastern promise

SAKE could be ousted as Japan's number one drink if the latest survey by Euromonitor on the world beer market is to be believed.

Euromonitor claims that beer consumption in Japan has doubled in the past 20 years. A large part of those sales has been via the two and a half million beer vending machines which sell four out of every 10 cases.

Ushers doubts

WITH the Grand Met/Courage deal now signed and sealed we still await news of the fate of the Ushers brewery in Trowbridge. Although a management buy-out is still the favoured option the delay in a final announcement does not auger well.

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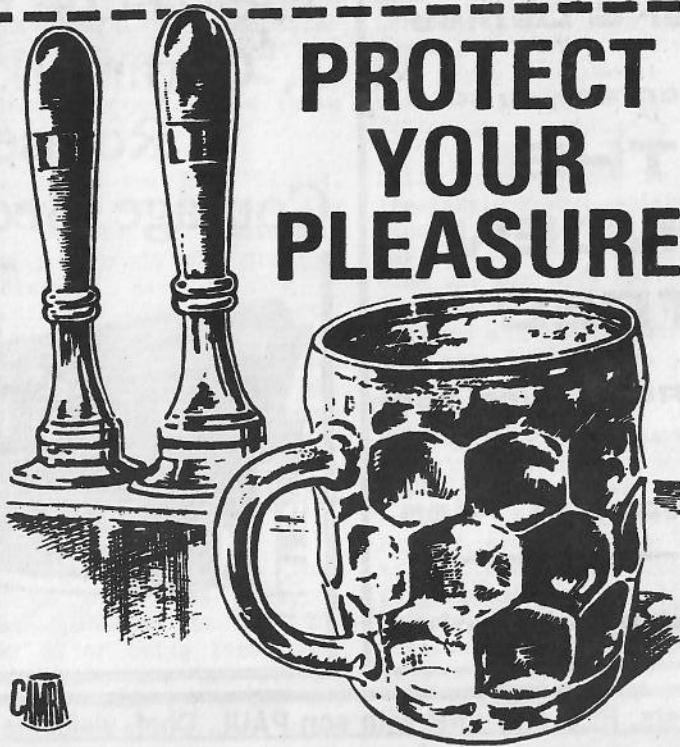
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Devenish doomed

BELEAGUERED West Country brewer Devenish is fighting for its life following a £127 million bid from the Boddingtons Pub Company.

Boddingtons, which sold its own breweries to Whitbread in 1989, made it plain in its proposals that it would close the Redruth brewery.

Michael Cannon, chairman of Devenish, branded the Boddington's bid as "wholly inadequate. It fails to reflect Devenish's current value and future prospects.

"The directors strongly advise Devenish shareholders to take no action in respect of these unwelcome and unsolicited offers."

Boddingtons is offering to swap 10 of its own shares for seven in Devenish. Alternatively, Devenish investors can take 210 pence a share cash.



— Courtesy The Guardian

Whitbread Investments, which owns shares in both groups, cannot intervene on either side.

The Manchester-based pubs group wants to boost its number

of outlets by adding Devenish's 368 outlets to its own 490.

A large retail empire would give Boddingtons considerable muscle in getting good value on beer supplies with brewers.

As a result of its breweries sales to Whitbread, Boddingtons has to take a sizeable proportion of its beer from the national giant. It would like to reduce that commitment by getting cheaper supplies elsewhere.

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

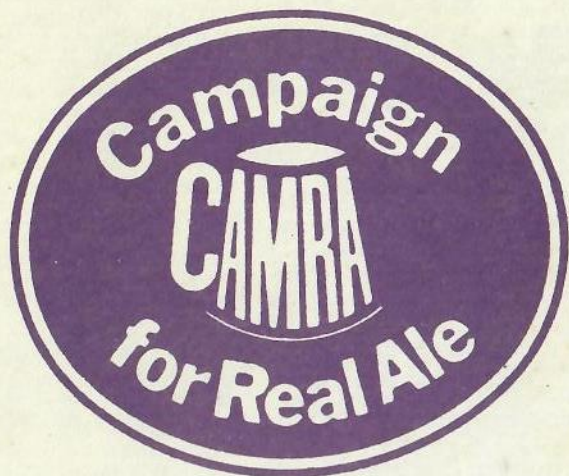
The outlook for cask beer in Cornwall is gloomy. Devenish's range of bottled Newquay Steam beers can be brewed in any modern high-tech brewhouse but neither the existing company nor Boddingtons have much interest in the Redruth cask ales.

Boddingtons would be keen to sell national brands in the West Country — including "Boddingtons Bitter" brewed now by Whitbread.

Michael Cannon, whose smaller Inn Leisure group took over Devenish, is no mean fighter and may relish a battle with Boddingtons. His weak link is his own licensees.

Reports from the West Country suggest that many Devenish tenants would welcome a change of ownership. They do not like Cannon's anonymous style of ownership, his identikit "Canonisation" of pubs and the swing from tenancy to management.

● Both Marston of Burton-on-Trent and Wolverhampton and Dudley could also be planning counter bids for Devenish.



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