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Southern Hampshire CAMRA Diary

Sat. June 26 - Winchester walkabout, meet St James' Tavern, 8.15 pm.

Sun. June 27 - Family Social, South Western Arms, St Denys, 1.00 pm.

Sun. July 4 - Independents Day walkabout, Shirley. Park Inn 7.30 pm.

Tues. July 13 - Monthly business meeting, Phoenix, Twyford, 8.00 pm.

Sat. July 17 - Real ale ramble to Flower Pots, Cheriton.
Start from Shawford Station at 10.45 am, walk is about 8 miles.

Sun. July 25 - Family Social, South Western Arms, St Denys, 1.00 pm.

Aug. 3-7 - Great British Beer Festival, Olympia, London.
See advertisement inside rear cover.

Tue. Aug. 17 - Monthly business meeting, venue to be arranged.

Oct. 22-23 - Eastleigh Beer Festival, Old Town Hall, Leigh Rd.

More details: Mick or Hilary Jazuk, 0703 556907 (h)

HOP PRESS



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EDITORIAL

Apologies, as too often before, for the inordinate delay since the last issue. As ever we pledge to do better, lest you should give up entirely and stop looking out for *Hop Press*. Of course, being only amateur, 'bozo' typesetters we take time to get things vaguely presentable!

However, to more important matters – what did you make of the (then) Home Secretary's seemingly off-the-cuff ideas for more reforms to the licensing laws?

In CAMRA's opinion, bringing licensing reform to the fore and especially using the vehicle of a Consultative Paper, can do nothing but good. The 1988 reforms have been very successful, with little of the adverse effects prophesied by some, the time is now right for further liberalisation.

CAMRA welcomes the proposed Children's Certificate system, which would permit accompanied children into suitable licensed houses. We believe that the only criterion for the certificate should be the genuine suitability of the pub – no other conditions such as special times or food service should matter. Some Scottish benches (where similar certificates have been available for some time) are imposing such arbitrary conditions.

CAMRA has no objections to the idea of café style premises being licensed but we cannot see the need for any new form of license to allow this – the existing law is quite able to encompass any such outlet.

The Consultation Paper seems to assume that cafés would always have more benign

drinking atmospheres than any pub. This seems to be a totally unsubstantiated idea and cannot be allowed to be a basis for legislative policy. There seems to be a suggestion that a café licence could be available without having to establish any 'need' but that an ordinary pub licence would still have to pass such a test; this bias would have a profoundly adverse and unfair impact on our pubs and publicans.

We believe that the whole area of the conditions to be met for the granting of new licences needs to be discussed openly. At present, the Justices have totally unfettered discretion in granting or refusing a licence, no reasons have to be given and only a limited number of people can give evidence for or against any application.

In enacting a further tranche of licensing legislation, CAMRA believes that a high priority should be given to rationalising these decisions. In particular, *refusal of a licence* should only be based on clear, statutory grounds – after all this has been the case for club registrations for many years without any problems.

One especially unfair and ill-thought item in the Consultation Paper are the proposals for Sunday opening in Wales. Currently some areas of north Wales are still 'dry' on Sundays and there are ten-yearly polls to see if public opinion wishes this to continue. The 'dry' areas have decreased at every poll but now the Government are proposing abolishing the polls and freezing the situation in perpetuity. This is completely unfair and unacceptable – not much citizen's empowerment there!

SPECIAL EDITORIAL REPORT

June 1st – Brewers' day of infamy

On the first of June the method of assessing excise duty on beer changed, for the first time since its inception over a hundred years ago. Until then, the Customs and Excise office, one of the senior arms of the tax authorities well outstripping its junior the Inland Revenue, had charged the tax on beer at the moment that the yeast was added to the fermenting vessel. As the tax was meant to be related to the alcohol in the finished beer yet at the point of calculating it, before fermentation, *there was no alcohol*, estimates had to be made based upon the gravity of the un-fermented wort. Furthermore, in the subsequent week or so of fermentation and the racking and casking there was always wastage – leakages, evaporation, beer lost in cleaning and so on. To allow for this the Excise had, since Victorian times, allowed brewers a 'wastage' margin of six percent.

This June the country finally came into line with the other European states and adopted the sane 'factory gate' tax regime; from now on beer will be taxed on a simple formula based only on the quantity sold and its alcoholic content.

The old system had become completely discredited – big brewers with giant plants have advanced somewhat since Victorian times, their wastage is now nearer to one percent; at the same time the new micro and pub brewers can have wastage of over six percent. In effect, the Bass and Fosters of this world were being allowed to sell about one twentieth of their beer tax free.

The 'small fry' were being penalised. The Government, possibly sensitive to their support from the brewers, held extensive discussions with the Brewer's Society before the change was brought in. Now the big brewers are crying foul!

Allied (Tetly-Carlsberg), Bass and Fosters (Courage) have suddenly decided that they do not like losing the cosy five percent tax perk from which they have profited for so many years. They want to recoup it. However, they thought that a simple price hike might be a bit too crude and might be noticed by the public, so they all came up with the same wheeze. They have all *lowered the strength of their beers* to compensate for the loss of their ancient perk!

Changes were unannounced and are not uniform, some are quite large. Perhaps the biggest are Lamot Pils (Bass) which drops from 6% to 5% and Holsten Pils (Fosters) which goes from 6% to 5½% (this when Holsten Pils is subject to a promotional offer and the salesmen were not even told of the impending alcohol cut!). These are, of course, disguised price increases – big ones too, knocking a sixth of the alcohol out of a Lamot is like putting the price up at least 10p–15p a bottle.

Again brewers have shown the drinking public how contemptuously they see them, they will get away with this rip-off unless you do something – note which beers have changed and **boycott them**, hit these brewers where it hurts, in their balance sheets!

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ELDRIDGE POPE A DORSET SUCCESS STORY

Vic Dennis

Eldridge Pope and Company started life at the Green Dragon Brewery in 1837, owned and by Charles and Sarah Eldridge. After her husband's death, Sarah went into partnership with an Alfred Mason in 1846. When she died ten years later, Mason took a local solicitor, John Tizzard, as a replacement partner. Although Tizzard owned the major share, Mason was the driving force and kept the brewery's name as Eldridge, Mason and Co. Mason retired in 1870 and his share was bought by two brothers, Alfred and Edwin Pope. The brewery finally took its current well-known name in 1873 after Tizzard's death.

By 1880, the brewery had outgrown its original premises and moved to the present site, adjacent to what was then the London and Southwestern Railway. Eldridge Pope saw at once the immense increase in transport potential that the railway had over the horse and cart. Within a couple of decades tied houses were built throughout the L & SW R network, usually large houses near to the major stations. The evidence is, of course, still there – fine Victorian pubs in Brockenhurst, Southampton, Eastleigh, Portsmouth, Winchester, Guildford ...

The company is still basically a family business, with the Popes represented. Anthony Pope being presently the senior family member on the board.

The brewery is a middle sized independent, brewing for nearly 200 tied houses and a very extensive free trade. The maximum capacity is 600 barrels (172,800 pints) per day. With the trading area including many holiday towns, the trade is quite seasonal and in quiet months brewing may only take place on two days of each week.

The buildings have evolved on the site with a number of extensions but the lovely red-brick frontage onto Weymouth Road remains unspoilt and is one of the town's most prominent buildings; more so by the perhaps surprising use of brick in a county where stone is so popular. Like almost every brewery of its era, it was self-contained with its own barley maltings. Today malt is bought-in and the old malting buildings have been converted into a meeting and hospitality suite – a very pleasant venue as anyone who has been on a brewery tour will confirm!

The brewery plant is also a mixture of old and new – two of the three mash tuns are still in good order after over seventy years. There are also three coppers, two manually controlled copper ones and a new stainless steel automated unit. The 28 fermenting vessels have a range of sizes from 50 to 150 barrels, allowing the flexibility to brew a wide range of beers from a small amount of a specialised brew to large volumes of a popular one.

Eldridge Pope brew five cask-conditioned beers (ie Real Ales). These range from the

light session beer, **Dorchester Bitter** (3.3% abv) to **Royal Oak** (5% abv) a strong, fruity bitter. Between these there is the 3.8% abv **Best Bitter**, a fairly bland beer more often found in a filtered keg form, and the 4.2% abv **Thomas Hardy Country Bitter**, a hoppy beer recently introduced to replace one that many will remember – IPA. The Thomas Hardy Country Bitter recently took the Silver Medal at the Brewing Industry International Awards Competition. The fifth Real Ale is also new, a fine dark beer, **Blackdown Porter** (4% abv). This beer won an award at the 1991 Great Western Beer Festival within weeks of its introduction.

These ales can be found in many of the Eldridge Pope houses in our area, the *Good Beer Guide* pub, **The Gate**, in Southampton's Burgess Road, had the full range at the last visit. Most houses however, only have two or three of the beers, and in a number of cases the beers are served with pressurised gas.

In addition to the Real Ales and some keg and lager beers, the brewery also produces a remarkable bottled beer. This is one of the strongest beers in the world, at 12% abv it is equal to the strength of a normal wine! The beer, brewed as a batch from time to time, is the famous **Thomas Hardy Ale**. This beer will keep for twenty or more years and is said to improve for at least the first ten [*more, I hope, I still have some from the '60s – Ed.*].

The brewery can be visited by organised parties and a warm, convivial welcome is extended. Dorchester's most famous son, Thomas Hardy, is prominently quoted in the hospitality room with his approving description of the local beer a century ago:

"... full in body yet brisk as a volcano; piquant yet without a twang; luminous as an autumn sunset; free from streakiness of taste; but finally rather heady ..."

Would that Mr Hardy was alive today and on a CAMRA tasting panel.

BREWERY NEWS – NEWTON & RIDLEY

In the April edition of CAMRA's newspaper, *What's Brewing*, in anticipation of CAMRA holding its AGM in Salford, home of Granada TV, we printed an appeal for the producers of *Coronation Street* to bring the soap up to date by re-introducing handpumps to the *Rover's Return*. After all it is nowadays quite unthinkable that any independent regional brewer, especially in the Manchester area, would be selling only keg beers.

Within a month the job was done! The Rovers now is complete with a nice set of new handpumps, complete with appropriate northern swan-necks and sparklers. Perhaps not quite as nice as the original black and silver 'policeman's truncheon' handles that were in place for the initial episodes in the sixties, but acceptable nonetheless.

Only one thing seems still a little incongruous, can you imagine the keg beer being banished from your local after over twenty years without *one single customer* making even a passing reference to the newly improved situation!

A Granada spokeswoman said: "Newton & Ridley have a policy of updating all its pubs, the Rovers' was next in line."



ELDRIDGE POPE

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Eldridge Pope have been brewing traditional cask conditioned ale in Dorchester since 1837. More than 150 years of experience has gone into our award winning beer range; you can sample a selection of our fine cask ales at any of the Eldridge Pope pubs listed here and at selected Free Trade outlets throughout Hampshire:

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Hook Common, Hook

Royal Mail

Upper Market Street, Eastleigh

Chamberlayne Arms

105, High Street, Eastleigh

Eldon Arms

15/17, Eldon Street, Southsea

The Gate Inn

140, Burgess Road, Southampton

The Highlands

96, Highlands Road, Fareham

The Joiners

141, St. Mary's Street, Southampton

New Bridge Inn

Portsmouth Road, Woolston

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HOGSBACK BREWERY

Mick and Hilary Jazuk

After an account of an established success in our neighbouring county to the west, we now turn to a new venture just over our eastern border. After leaving Farnham, the A31 Guildford road crosses the Surrey boundary and starts to ascend the famous Hogsback hill onto the top of the North Downs – following the old pilgrim's way. Just north of the road, under the escarpment, is the little village of Tongham.

The brewery was established here by John and Martin Hunt and their friend Tony Stanton a year ago in the summer of 1992. The picturesque premises are somewhat older – the brewers are pleased to point out to American visitors that they date from 1768, eight years before their colony left us.

The brewery is a 'ten-barrel plant'; that is it can brew a batch with a volume of ten barrels (2880 pints). The first style of beer brewed was **Traditional English Ale**, soon affectionately known as just 'tea'. This is made with a mixture of two malts to a best bitter gravity of 1042 (around 4% abv). During the last winter a strong triple malt winter ale was added; the 1066 gravity **Old Tongham Tasty** inevitably became known just as OTT! This summer there is due to be a lighter session bitter.

The company takes the art of brewing very seriously; all of the plant was designed by the brewer and based upon many years of personal research. The three men are

dedicated to quality control, sampling takes place at every stage of the process and the designer's attention to detail is evident even down to such minor items as the sampling cylinders – these are made with detachable bases to ease cleaning. A final sample of each brew is kept in an 'advancing cupboard'. By accelerating the maturation any problems with a brew can be discovered before any of the beer reaches a thirsty customer's glass.

Yeast is supplied by the Oxfordshire brewery, Hook Norton. Yeast is replaced completely every seven brews, to propagate further, the brewers believe, would compromise quality of the end product. More controversially, they intend to move to oak casks which they feel are right for their products and will be more economical than many might think. It will be interesting to see if this succeeds, against all of the industry's adverse opinion on wooden casks for their problems of hygiene, handling and damage.

In addition to the brewery, which is open to visitors every Wednesday evening, the premises also encompass an off-licence and a beer agency. A wide range of interesting bottled beers include both Belgian and German as well as British types; there is farmhouse cider and English wine; delicious beer and fruit cakes are on sale and to complete the spectrum the head brewer produces pickled onions with hops!

The beers are available in about twenty free houses, mainly quite near to the brewery although the South Western in St Denys has featured Hogsback beers as 'guests'.

EDITOR'S POSTBAG

In our last issue we carried a letter from a Marston's licensee, critical of some of our comments on Marston's policies. This issue has received a letter from a reader taking us to task for *not criticising* an area of Marston's operations:

Dear Sir,

Marston's, the 'independent' brewer with the most presence in the Southampton and Winchester areas – and thus the greatest relief from the awfulness of Whitbread beers, pubs and prices – has changed the recipe for its staple draught beer (Burton Best Bitter, now Marston's Bitter). The publicans I've spoken to have been unable to offer any explanation other than "change for change's sake".

It seems a very odd thing to do, given that there must be hundreds of drinkers like me who have for many years used only Marston's houses because of their excellent and distinctive bitter. The new brew is a decent enough beer, a bit maltier and more full-bodied than the old, but markedly less clean on the palate. But it isn't the beer so many of us were happy with. It's no longer a beer to seek out.

Given the importance of this brew from a local real ale drinker's viewpoint, I would have expected *Hop Press* to comment on the change. But your Winter 1992 issue has not a word on the subject. Has someone pulled the watchdog's teeth?

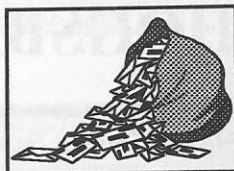
Stephen Harvey
Chandler's Ford

I feel that I have to agree with Mr Harvey, with our concern for the effects of some of Marston's personnel policies we dropped our guard when it came to the beers! I also personally agree about the new Bitter although equally a number of other branch members consider it an improvement on the previous Burton Bitter.

The recent, praiseworthy experiments that Marstons have conducted (the *Brewer's Choice* range of eight test brews) I believe show developments along the same line as the changes to the Burton Bitter. Although these beers covered the whole spectrum of beer styles and although many of them were excellent and although only a couple were remotely in the same area as the Bitter, to me they all displayed one common characteristic. *For each style of beer involved, to my taste, the hop rate seemed somewhat too low.*

Is this a considered marketing decision – that the public are looking for slightly less astringent beers, beers with less 'bite'? Some notably bitter beers, Youngs Ordinary Bitter as an example, seem to be going this way. Of course, a less sinister explanation is that my taste buds are just getting exhausted!

Also commenting on a point raised in the last issue I have a letter from a Lyminster reader who is even more dissatisfied with the tastes of some present day products:



Dear Sir,

I was interested to see your observations in the Winter '92 issue of *Hop Press* regarding the fall in the sales of low alcohol beers.

Apparently, within the affluent pastures of Surrey, is a most excellent institution known as the *Beer Research Association* which had a small piece published in the *Independent* about their latest piece of science. This is a hybrid yeast which, when brewed, completely consumes the sugar and yet produces an ale virtually free of alcohol which tastes exactly like the 'real thing'. The article claimed, however, that none of the brewers was particularly interested due to the poor sales of their present low alcohol products.

In my opinion, the poor sales of the present products are due to the fact that they taste like gnat's p**s! From those on doctor's orders on the flab versus consumption thing, I am sure that the first man to invent a pint of Slimline HSB that tastes like real HSB is down to make a fortune. At £12.80 a gallon [*and much more – Ed.*] the working man's drink has got to be some sort of rip-off but it is for the flavour that we keep on submitting to it. Indeed the same is true for the host of new small brewers versus the fizz that is made in Cheltenham.

Keep up the good work.

A J Siggery
Lyminster

There is no doubt that Mr Siggery is right in his opinion of the flavours of the current range of low and zero alcohol beers. However, I am not convinced with the rest of

his analysis. I believe most of us drink beer *because* it contains alcohol. Not to get drunk but because we want to experience the relaxation and easing of social tensions that C₂H₅OH engenders.

If other considerations prevail – medical or social (driving, for example) – then ersatz beer products have no advantage over any other non-intoxicating drink. As a vegetarian (don't mention finings, I'm also hypocritical) one constantly gets a similar approach, being offered all sorts of vegetable products that aim to simulate meat, none of these evoke any interest.

What do you think? Letters on these, or any other topics, are welcome – Editor.

THE CHERITON BREWHOUSE

*Paul Tickner & Martin Roberts
brewers of fine ales*

The Cheriton Brewhouse, at the Flower Pots Inn in Cheriton is now in full production. An all brand new plant, capable of 10 barrel batch brews, fully attenuated fermentation and cooled conditioning room.

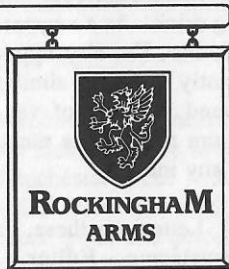
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WHITBREAD DISCOVERS REAL ALE ... MAKES MONEY!

Rob Whalley

Throughout the 1980's, Whitbread regularly spent hundreds of thousands of pounds altering swathes of local pubs to conform to the latest bright idea from the whiz kids of their marketing department. It was normal for pubs in the managed estate to have 'the treatment' every three years or so, yet, at the same time many tenanted pubs were left to decay slowly. In the last couple of years however, few pubs have been touched; almost certainly due to the confusion and upheaval brought about by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission investigation into the brewing industry. This temporary lull seems to have passed and the Whitbread marketeers now believe they can glimpse the future! During the early months of the year a huge amount of money has again been lavished on a number of local Whitbread pubs, with, to be charitable, only varying results.

One major policy, of obvious interest to us, has been the creation of **Cask Ale Houses** under a general banner of the **Hogshead**. To find the origins of this pub style we have to go back to 1979 when David Bruce opened the first of his 'Firkin' pubs in London. These pubs brewed their own beer, had Spartan decor with bare boards, simple furniture and a generally brash approach fitting well into the get-rich-quick ethos of the early eighties. Bruce's chain expanded rapidly and their apparent profitability soon attracted the big brewers who

tried to join the bandwagon by opening their own brew-pubs. Unhappily these brewers did not have Bruce's flair and most of their attempts have long since disappeared (how many readers now remember the **Gate Brewery?**)

However, although most of these copycat exercises were failures, they have left an important legacy. There is now an established image of a 'real ale pub', both in the minds of some of the general public and of the big brewery marketing departments. This concept now hangs like an albatross around CAMRA's neck. No matter how often we reiterate that *any pub* that serves real ale (and that is now the vast majority) is a 'real ale pub' - a Victorian street corner local, a sixteenth century village inn, a four-star hotel, the newest chrome and neon pub in a marina - we know that the brewers know better! *They know* that a 'real ale pub' *must have* bare boards, flagstones, basic furnishings and beer served direct from the cask, there has to be acres of blackboards, upended casks as (uncomfortable) stools and an odd collection of brewery paraphernalia that most of the staff could not even name.

Locally, this style was introduced to a number of pubs purchased by Devenish from Whitbread. The **Rising Sun** in Shirley, the **Old Tap and Barrel** opposite Southampton's Crown Court (the inclusion of 'old' or preferably 'olde' in the title always helps, even if the pub was a former motor cycle showroom) and the **Steak and Stilton** at North Baddesley are three

Short pint 'scandal'

A SIX-MONTH survey by Birmingham City Council watchdogs has revealed drinkers are being cheated by an average of 6p a pint through short-measure. The head of the council's Public Health and Environmental Protection Committee, Mike Hilburn, said short measure has a national scandal.

What's Brewing, June

Pubs pull a fast one

More than 80 per cent of pubs visited by trading standards officers in North Yorkshire served short measures of hand-pulled beer, costing customers an average 5.5p.

Guardian, June 12

Marston's Brewery have a long and distinguished brewing heritage. Famous for their cask conditioned ales. Marston's still brew using the Burton Union system.

Marston, Thompson & Evershed p.l.c.
The Brewery, Shobnall Road, Burton upon Trent, DE14 2BW
Telephone: 0283 31131

examples. The majority of the beers were associated with Whitbread and in some cases were served in less than perfect condition due to the casks being behind the bar, with inadequate cooling systems. Another real ale myth – that it should be warm. Ideal ale temperature is 13°–14°C, a bit low for ambient in a comfortable pub! Despite these problems, the pubs increased their trade and this was obviously noted by Whitbread. In November last year they held Cask Beer Festivals in a number of pubs, with a good variety of beers, all at £1.40 a pint. The experiment was a success and so this year we have seen the conversion of a dozen or so Whitbread pubs in our area into ‘Hogsheads’. In passing we might note that the 54 gallon hogshead, the largest cask used by any brewer, cannot to be found in any Whitbread establishment, being deemed too heavy to handle.

All of the pubs have similar decor, with identical displays of equipment vaguely associated with brewing. There has only been a token effort to give these pubs any individual identities – an anathema to big brewery designers. The floors are the usual combination of bare boards and flagstones, although the *Eagle* in Southampton’s East Street has managed to keep a few areas away from the anti-pile drivers. The ceilings are criss-crossed with many false beams, decorated with names of breweries, often ones that Whitbread have closed. Congratulations are presumably due to the *Alexandra* in Southampton for at least spelling *Wadworth* correctly, unlike the other pubs which presumably took the spelling from Whitbread’s publicity or price lists where it appears as *Wadsworth*. This incorrect spelling has been appearing on Whitbread documents and material for

many years and it speaks volumes for the combined knowledge of the entire company that *not one person has noticed!* After all they only had to look at a pump clip ...

So to the beers. There are usually eight beers served by handpump – unfortunately mostly through tight sparklers and swan necks, an abomination that is being forced upon southern drinkers to satisfy both the advertising man who like to take photographs of partly full pints and the accountant who likes to see the maximum amount of beer come out of each cask – but we digress ...! In addition there are three or four other beers served direct from the cask and kept on a shelf which has a flow of cooled air to control the cask temperature. The system works fairly well although it must be very inconvenient for the manager since there is almost no room to manoeuvre the casks and no arrangements are provided for drip trays. *Boddington’s Bitter*, *Whitbread BB* and *Flower’s Original* are the Whitbread beers usually available although *Castle Eden Bitter* and *Porter* and *Fremelin’s Bitter* have also been spotted. Other regulars, from the Whitbread depot portfolio, are *Morland’s Old Speckled Hen*, *Brakspear’s Bitter* and *Marston’s Pedigree*, all from breweries in which Whitbread have, or recently have had, a major financial interest. *Wadworth’s 6X*, *Gale’s HSB* and *Fuller’s London Pride* have also made an appearance but these have been available in local Whitbread pubs for a number of years. New beers include *Greene King Abbot*, *Brain’s SA* and *Adnam’s Broadside*. Managers have to order these beers from a specified agency and so choice is restricted to those beers on the agency’s books. Thus it appears that licensees are generally unable or unwilling to offer locally brewed beers from the many new

small breweries that have sprung up over the past decade.

Arguably the best aspect of the whole scheme is the reintroduction of real milds into the local Whitbread estate, for the first time since the closure of the *Brickwood’s Brewery*, ten years ago. *Boddington’s Mild*, *Adnam’s Mild* and the recently revived *Fuller’s Hock* have all been on sale but at a price of £1.87 a pint, the same price as the much stronger and usually more expensive bitters, this can do little to encourage a mild revival. Indeed, the whole pricing policy appears to bear little relation to the ex-brewery cost of the beers and positively encourages the knowledgeable drinker to consume the strongest brews as better value-for-money, surely not something a responsible pub company should be doing? Whilst the pubs go to great lengths to advertise the ABV (alcohol by volume) of the brews on offer, as they have to by law, thereby doing wonders for the chalk industry, they fail totally to advertise the price of the beers other than those on the standard price lists. This is an area where the law needs strengthening, if only to protect the health of those suddenly faced with a request for £1.92 for a pint of *Old Speckled Hen*.

Overall the introduction of the *Hogshead* pubs has to be seen as a positive step, at least a positive step for Whitbread. The promotion of real ale by any major brewer and the greatly increased range of beers available in the pubs concerned, deserves congratulations. Yet, on the negative side, limiting the range of beers by ‘head office decree’ discriminates against the smaller local brewers. It promotes the profile of a small number of the bigger regional brewers and, in the long run, will put other

smaller brewers, who do not wish to have close ties with any major brewer, at a disadvantage.

In addition and more fundamentally, the introduction of this chain of ‘production-line pubs’ can be viewed as ghettoising real ale drinkers. This is a very sinister sign, indicating that Whitbread still do not believe that real ale drinking is a normal activity of the general public and it once again reinforces the dreadful myth of the ‘real ale pub’.

Another obvious concern must be that Whitbread’s past record would suggest that such a group of pubs will undergo another transformation after two or three years. Whilst both recent history and current market analysis suggests that the demand for real ale will continue to grow for the rest of the century, Whitbread’s commitment to real ale can very easily be reversed. Make the most of the choice while you can, if you can afford it.

The *Hogshead* group is not the only new development in Whitbread pubs. *Bowlingo*, a ten pin bowling alley of somewhat restricted growth, has been introduced to a number of pubs including the *Sportsman* at West End, the *Testwood* at Totton and *Eastleigh’s Home Tavern* (or, as they now want us to know it, *The Tavern*) and the *Bat and Ball* at Sarisbury Green which has had the further ignominy of being renamed, for no humanly understandable reason, *Flat Foot Sam’s*. The erection of neon signs at this pub was rejected when retrospective planning permission was applied for, a ploy repeated at the *Home Tavern* where planners have also asked for signs to be removed. So far Whitbread have not complied with these requests, we hope that they

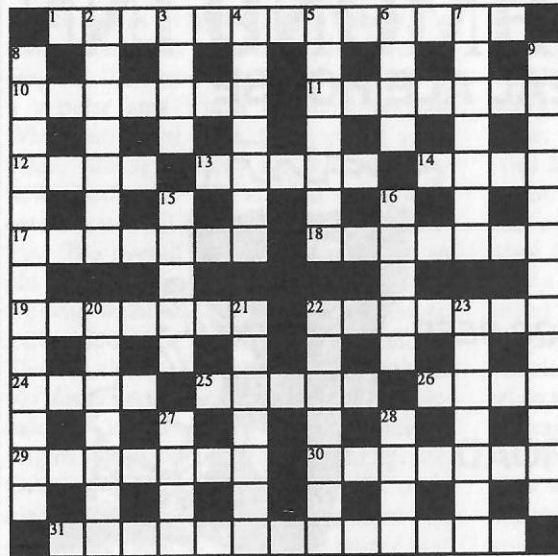
COMPETITION CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- 1 Salisbury brew that could also be a favourite in Winchester (7,6)
- 10 Endless sighting, viewed differently, provides understanding (7)
- 11 Butterfly in charge (7)
- 12 The rank of sailor to bale out (4)
- 13 A lad's mixture provides a meal (5)
- 14 Hit part of the body (4)
- 17 Bedroom on the rocks has rodents (7)
- 18 Put into danger (7)
- 19 Surprisingly the Nuffield part played by Timothy West was not Timothy West (7)
- 22 Short jacket or one of the founders of where one might be purchased (7)
- 24 Team dies in confusion (4)
- 25 Lane with a capital theatre (5)
- 26 Antipodean service (4)
- 29 The loos are rearranged in Africa (7)
- 30 International Rescue carer in Navy (7)
- 31 Limping entry with nothing after disembarking from the Yarmouth ferry (9,4)

DOWN

- 2 Ignorant of other countries (7)
- 3 Joins to back a local brewery (4)
- 4 A new brew for Alex Higgins? (4,3)
- 5 Drums give Tim pain (7)
- 6 Nearly an armful? (4)
- 7 Dog shows the effects of too many (7)
- 8 Traditional pub name, now found in Southampton (3,3,7)
- 9 Where there is a farmhouse and a hut in Eastleigh (9,4)
- 15 Mixed Roman sign points to animal (5)
- 16 Lacking, quickly dropped by Saints (5)
- 20 Chaste life, in commode style (7)
- 21 Distance in which to find Ringwood's beers at home (7)
- 22 Medic leaves country and is replaced in turn but wind results (7)
- 23 After church, girl goes through the looking glass to find a goblet (7)
- 27 Get a small case from alien you eye (4)
- 28 Snare a vehicle (4)



Prizes to the first two correct entries drawn from the hat.

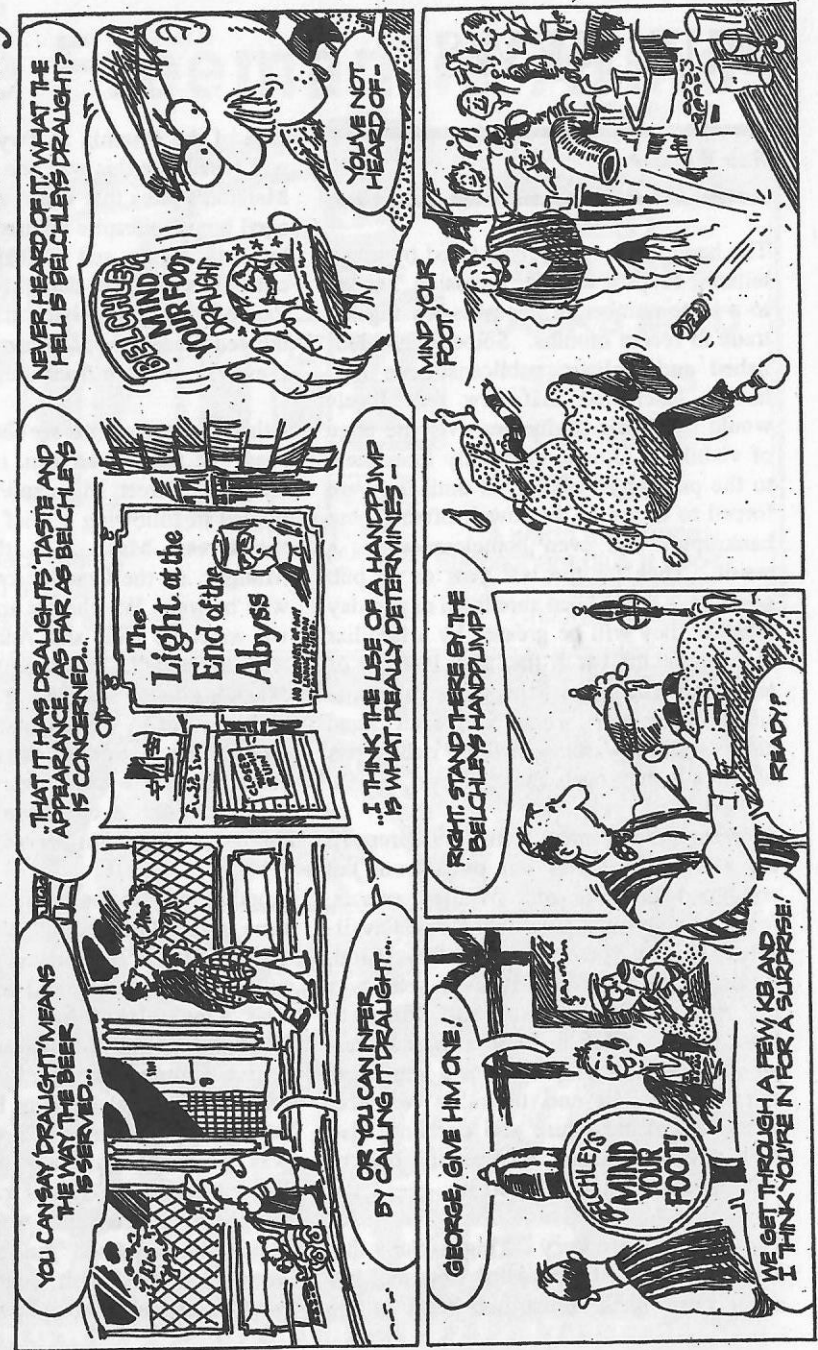
Entries, by August 1st, to:

The Editor
Hop Press
1 Surbiton Road
Eastleigh SO5 4HY

KEGBUSTER is published in CAMRA's monthly newspaper *What's Brewing*.

KEGBUSTER

Bill Tidy



PUB NEWS

Rob Whalley

The huge increases in rents faced by many tenants, coupled with the recession, has led to a large number of licensees leaving the trade in recent months. Some long established and realistic publicans have left, having calculated that new rent levels would take their businesses over the edge of viability. Others, especially those new to the pub trade, soldier on until they are forced to throw in the towel, often facing bankruptcy and even homelessness as a result. Thus for the last year or so pub goers have never been sure from day to day whether they will be greeted by a familiar face behind the bar or the latest in a line of temporary managers. In some cases the situation is even worse and their local closes without warning, with no indications of when it may open again, if ever.

A recent advertisement from Inntrepreneur, the group that leases out pubs from the combined Courage and Watney estates, featured nine local pubs with leases available. One of these is the **Abbey Hotel**, Romsey, which for the last seven years was run successfully by Paul and Elizabeth Hockey. They left in February as Inntrepreneur's idea of a fair rate for a long lease spiralled way beyond theirs! We wish them well in the future and certainly also wish any future lease holders the best of luck, they are likely to need it.

The folly of a brewery taking actions that lead to the loss of successful licensees has never been better illustrated than in the

case of the **Phoenix** at Twyford. Readers will recall that this was one of six tenanted Marston's pubs that were turned into managed houses, despite vociferous campaigns by both locals and CAMRA. Previous customers will be delighted to hear that Paul Mundy is now back at the **Phoenix**, as the tenant. Perhaps Marston's and other brewers *can* learn from their mistakes.

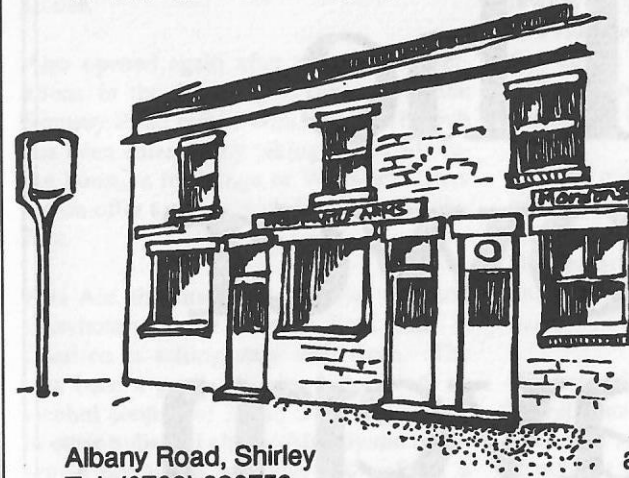
Other Marston's pubs are seeing new licensees. At the **Queen Inn**, in Winchester's Kingsgate Street, Mike and Sue Offer have moved in following a brief stint nearby at the **Green Man**. At the **Rack and Manger**, on the Crawley cross-roads midway between Winchester and Stockbridge, we welcome Neil and Annie Sherin and wish them well. This is another house that Marstons have changed from tenancy to management. We understand that John Green, the out-going tenant from 'The Rack', have now taken over the **Mash Tun** in Winchester; a considerable increase in the range of draught beers is also reported.

Another conversion to management, this time in the Bass empire, is the refurbished **King's Head** at Hursley. This is now being run by David and Margaret Baker. The **King's Head** had, for generations, housed a set of bowls that had belonged to Oliver Cromwell's son, Richard (Richard built the original Hursley House). There was great concern in the village when it was rumoured that Bass intended to turn the pub into some sort of karaoke fun pub so previous licensees, Arthur and Myra Davis, have passed the bowls into the keeping of the Parish Council. They are now being looked after by village butcher

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Phil Pratt although there is a possibility that they will eventually be returned to Hursley House.

Also opened again after substantial alterations is the **St. James Tavern**, on the Romsey Road hill in Winchester. The pub has been enlarged by taking in the adjoining house, a full range of Wadworth beers are on offer together with Badger's Tanglefoot.

Pots Ale, the first beer from the Cheriton Brewhouse at the **Flower Pots Inn**, at Cheriton is selling very well there. The new beer, a good 'drinking bitter' with an alcohol content of 3.8%, is also appearing in other pubs and clubs. Already the brewery is producing at some 700 gallons a week. A second beer, Brandy Mount Bitter, a stronger brew at 4.8% is just becoming available as we go to press. As well as celebrating a new beer landlady Pat Bartlett is also celebrating 25 years at the Flower Pots, an occasion that was recognised by the presentation of gifts from customers and a decorated bar mirror from CAMRA.

The pubs of Totton have seen a number of changes in recent months. The **Coopers Arms** is now under the sign of **Players**. Although the plural plague, will not be to everyone's taste the good news is that real ale is now on offer, with Courage Directors and 6X available at the time of our visit. An advertisement suggested that this was the first time that real ale had been served at the pub but as it was built in the 1930's this seems a little less than likely! Also serving 6X now is the **Station Hotel**. The **Red Lion** has greatly changed, with the emphasis very much on the food side of the

business. An application to build a pub at **Hanger Farm** has been re-submitted following the previous granting of permission in 1991. Let us hope work starts soon and that Totton drinkers will be provided with an increased range of beers in an area so dominated by Whitbread.

Moving out into the Forest, the **New Forest Hotel** at Ashurst now sports a hundred cover 'conservatory' restaurant. The **Green Dragon** at Brook has undergone substantial alterations, as has the **Swan** near Lyndhurst.

We noted in the last *Pub News* that New Forest planners had ordered the illuminated Heineken sign at the **Bolton's Bench Inn**, Lyndhurst to be removed. Department of the Environment inspectors have now rejected the pub's appeal against the decision and the sign has now been removed.

Ringwood Brewery's own home town pub, the **Inn on the Furlong** is now being run by Andy and Debs Morgan who were previously at Hythe's **Lock 'n' Quay**. Those of you who are fans of Ringwood's beers will be pleased to hear that they will be available at the New Forest Show in July.

Ringwood Bitter is one of the beers available at the **Star Inn**, East Tytherley. The Star is now a free house, owned by Carol Mitchell who had been renting the pub from Gales. Gales were not the owners of this large country inn, the pub was leased to Gales from Bass and Bass put it on the market as part of their response to the Monopolies Commission findings. We understand that Gales prevaricated over their response to Bass and Carol went straight to Bass with an offer that was

accepted; Gales were less than pleased! The pub features a no-smoking restaurant and bar whilst the popular skittle alley has been refurbished.

Nearer Romsey we wish a happy retirement to Joan Rickman who had been landlady at the **Malthouse Inn**, Timsbury since 1969. Her son Martin is one of the new joint licensees.

Eastleigh planners have had to deal with two pubs wishing to add hotel accommodation in recent months. While Bishopstoke will be allowed 25 rooms for visitors at the **River Inn** an application for a 20 bedroom Travel Inn to be attached to the **Windhover** at Bursledon has been turned down. Just down the road, at the western end of the Hamble River bridge, the **Swan**, which was a Berni Inn, is now something called a "Mulligan's Fish Restaurant", the bar is devoid of real ale.

Whitbread have been asked by Hedge End Parish Council to clean up the **Maypole Inn** site which they describe as "now an eyesore". There are many who considered the Maypole Inn to be an eyesore from the moment it was built. There are rumours that a pub may reopen on the site, whether it will be a pub or just another Maypole remains to be seen.

Another former pub which may be reopening is the **Canute** near Ocean Village, although it will be a bar/restaurant rather than the more traditional [*ie basic? - Ed.*] pub of former times. In Ocean Village itself the **Delta Belle** is now **JFK's** following a £120,000 facelift and it is run by Glendola Leisure who also run the **Dog and Duck**.

A Southampton pub which may be undergoing substantial changes is the **Crown** in Shirley. An application has been made to use part of the deceptively large building as a shop and offices. This is one of the former Watney pubs acquired earlier this year by Morlands Brewery of Abingdon.

Two more Southampton pubs that have recently been refurbished are the other **Crown**, at Highfield, and the **Exford Arms**. The **Sidford Arms** in Shirley is a 'real ale gain' and now serves Wadworth's 6X and Boddington's Bitter. Whilst this introduction of real ale is welcomed the loss of the attractive exterior and the new standard Whitbread interior is disappointing, as is the new name, the unimaginative **Pig and Whistle**. Nearby, in another gain to the cause, real ale is now on offer at the **Englishman**.

On the other side of town, another Marston's pub, the **Brook Inn** in Portwood Road, has a new licensee, Linda Malcolm. The **Hedgehog and Hogshead**, home-brew pub, has started a new beer Belcher's Original. The beer makes a welcome addition as it is a 3.3% 'session bitter', something that was lacking in the range of generally high gravity beers at the Hedgehog.

In the last edition of *Hop Press* we noted that Easleigh's **Good Companions** had been renamed **Tuxedo Junction** but suggested that such name changes rarely lasted for more than a couple of years. *Hop Press* had barely hit the streets before the pub had closed. It has now reopened but how long before the sign writers are back in action?

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EFFY'S ROUND

a personal view

Less people go to pubs these days, beer sales have dropped over ten percent in the last few years, the brewers are alarmed. Conventionally this is blamed on the recession, on social trends, on health aspects and of course with the ever rising price of a drink often cited as why people are staying away. One area rarely questioned is that of the pubs themselves. Are they places you want to drink in or, in an increasing number of cases, are they places you want to hurry past?

Most people's ideal pub would probably be a picturesque country inn under a wide-spreading thatched roof. The bars' low ceilings a maze of black oak beams, the open log fire glowing with some aromatic fruitwood and an equally warm, friendly welcome from both sides of the bar. Not many, I imagine, would long for a large open plan room, reverberant with a cacophony of juke box, pool players, video and gaming machines. Other senses would perhaps be assailed by the lingering smell of food long since served and if your really unlucky a fog-bank of cigarette smoke that sends non-smokers running to the toilets for fresh air!

I may be being a bit extreme, but going out for a quiet drink in pleasant surroundings is not easy. Noise level increases are perhaps the most obvious signs of deterioration in the pub environment although along with the music systems, games machines and videos go the garish lights, flashing or otherwise! Licensees will argue that it is what people want, they may be right but

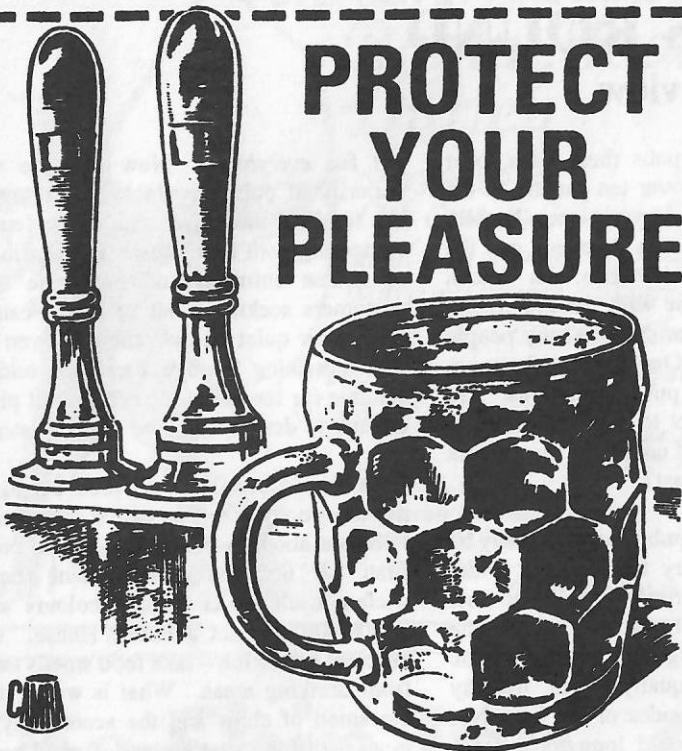
not for *everybody*. Now that the vast majority of pubs are single-bar, everyone has to share the noise, with each element competing with each other. The sharing is of course enforced and only one way, customers seeking a bit of peace cannot force their quiet on the others. Even the few remaining 'lounge bars' are seldom suitable for lounging, the carpets not plush enough to deaden the loud music system.

Pubs should certainly sell food but again not everybody wants to eat on every visit. Pubs are about beer and that should come first. If not, the establishment should declare itself under its true colours as a Restaurant and not a Public House. Get efficient extraction - take food smells away from drinking areas. What is worse than the smell of chips and the accompanying vinegar drifting past a glass of good beer?

Non-smokers used to be a minority putting up with smoky pubs if they wanted a beer, but times change. The majority population should now expect non-smoking areas or even bars where possible. If deemed not practicable then smoke filters are the minimum requirement, it is time for the licensed trade to cater for the non-smoker.

Consideration for *all* customers is needed. Brewers have been targeting their pubs at social groups, it is time to target the Public House at the Public.

We in CAMRA are also guilty of much of this at some of our own Beer Festivals, but that is another story!



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WINDPINS

POLYPINS

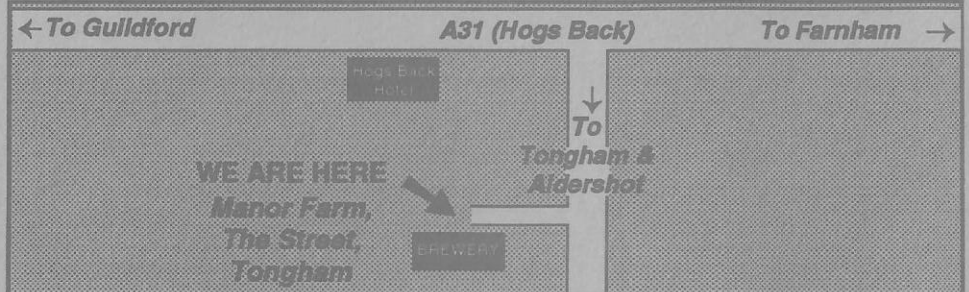
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