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June 79

THE

LONDON DRINKER

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Produced by the London branches of the Campaign for Real Ale Ltd



Red is Dead!

This month

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Harp split

The break-up of the Harp Lager Consortium of Courage, Scottish and Newcastle, and Guinness had been expected for some time, but the details which finally emerged produced something of a surprise. It had been half expected that S & N would take the Alton Harp brewery, thus giving them the base in the South which they have been allegedly looking for. In fact, they have got no further south than Manchester, whose Harp plant they will be taking over. This suggests that the present pattern of trucking beer from Edinburgh will continue for the present, and that the other rumours of S & N takeovers of Southern Breweries will be revived.

The Alton Harp brewery has in fact been acquired by Bass, from outside the original consortium. They have announced that Harp will continue to be produced at Alton until 1982, when their own beers will be phased into production. At present none of Bass's own production comes from anywhere South of Birmingham, although Charrington Crown Bitter has from time to time been brewed for them by Tolly Cobbold of Ipswich. It could be that by switching motorways, Bass Charrington could bring their beers for London up the M3 from Alton instead of down the M1 from Brum.

* CAMRA's new guide to Real Ale in the Capital, "REAL BEER IN LONDON" is due out next month. It will give details of around 1500 pubs in the London Area which sell the Real Stuff. The price will be 95p, and we will announce details of how to obtain your copy in the July issue of LONDON DRINKER. Don't forget you have the chance to win a copy in this month's Crossword Competition.

Advertising

Advertising in LONDON DRINKER is not expensive, and should reach more and more drinkers and pubgoers with each successive issue.

For details of introductory rates (Display or Classified) write to Brian Sheridan, 6 Ashburton Road, Croydon, Surrey, or telephone during the day (Monday - Friday only) on (01) - 211 6698

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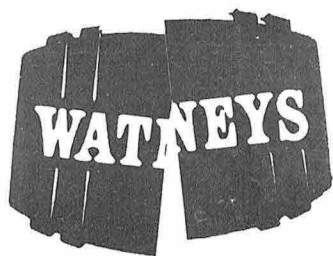
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Red is Dead!

The news of the demise of Watney's Red, though treated in lighter vein elsewhere on the pages of LONDON DRINKER, has its serious side too. Though in itself the news may not mean very much, as Red is just one of the major keg beers, and cynics will expect Watneys simply to switch to promoting some other joke drink like the unspeakable Special, or lager, there is a message. Watneys Red was killed off by the drinker himself; by the ridicule to which the beer was deservedly exposed; by the efforts of bodies like CAMRA and SPBW who showed drinkers what beer could taste like. And this was achieved in the face of multi-million pound telly and other media advertising campaigns.

Despite the tone of TV advertising for beer, which treats the man in the pub as if he were a moron, a large section of the drinking public has shown that it knows better. By opting for Real Ale, ale with taste, character and individuality, he has shown that in the end it's the product which matters and not the promotion.

But if the death of Red is one important symbolic victory for the drinker, it is only one battle. The big brewers are still trying to force lager (low carbohydrate being the latest version) down our throats. They have to because they've got a problem. By dint of some rather dubious and naive statistical projection they came to the conclusion that lager was going to sweep the country, and so their investments in lager megafizzeries were made on that assumption. But the signs are that the growth of lager has reached a plateau and will not capture a much bigger market share after all. Indeed the latest excursion into the low-carbohydrate field smacks of desperation. With the growth of lager slowing up rapidly, they need to think of something else to keep their factories going. It will probably end in yet one more ignominious balls-up, but the brewers are not too bothered. You, the drinker, by insisting on drinking what you like instead of what you are told, will just have to pay higher prices to pay for the mistakes of the Big Six. Serves you right for not being more co-operative.

The conclusion must be that the death of Watneys Red should serve as encouragement but not as an excuse for complacency. The brewers may be brewing more Real Ale these days, but they would still rather not. We must campaign all the harder for better beer, and fairer prices. If we don't, the Big Six could easily change direction yet again. Red is dead. Let's make sure it stays that way.

The country mourns - see page 11

The 'Big Six'— Courage



In the second article of our series on the Big Six, NEIL HARRIS discusses COURAGE. Neil is CAMRA's National Liaison Officer for the Courage Group, and a member of the Campaign's Monopolies Working Party.

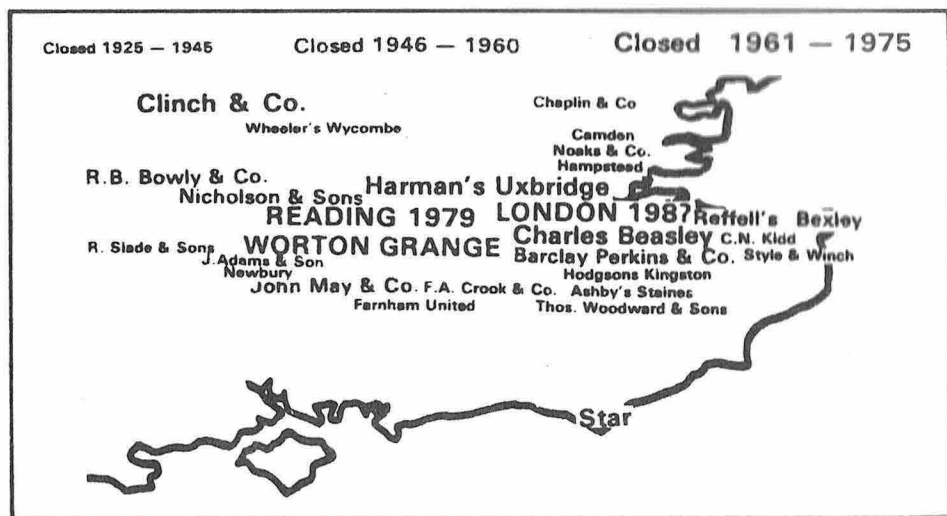
THE BREWERS

The Courage Group brews 8% of the beer consumed in this country. Along with Scottish and Newcastle Breweries it is one of the smaller of the "Big Six" brewers who with Guinness produce some 90% of the beer we drink.

Courage came together as the result of a series of mergers and take-overs that essentially combined two London Brewers, COURAGE & CO LTD. and BARCLAY PERKINS & CO LTD in 1955 and subsequently H & G SIMONDS LTD of Reading (1960), GEORGES & CO LTD of Bristol (1961), JOHN SMITH'S TADCASTER BREWERY LTD (1970) and PLYMOUTH BREWERIES LTD (1971).

In 1972 Courage themselves were taken over by the giant IMPERIAL TOBACCO COMPANY and they now form the Brewing Division of the Imperial Group.

This process of growth by acquisition brought together almost six thousand tied public houses under Courage control and most of these remain, providing a secure and protected market for much of the group's output. However, in the half century before Imperial bought Courage, more than fifty breweries taken over by the companies which eventually formed the Courage group were closed. An irrecoverable slice of British heritage - local beers, local firms, local traditions - was put



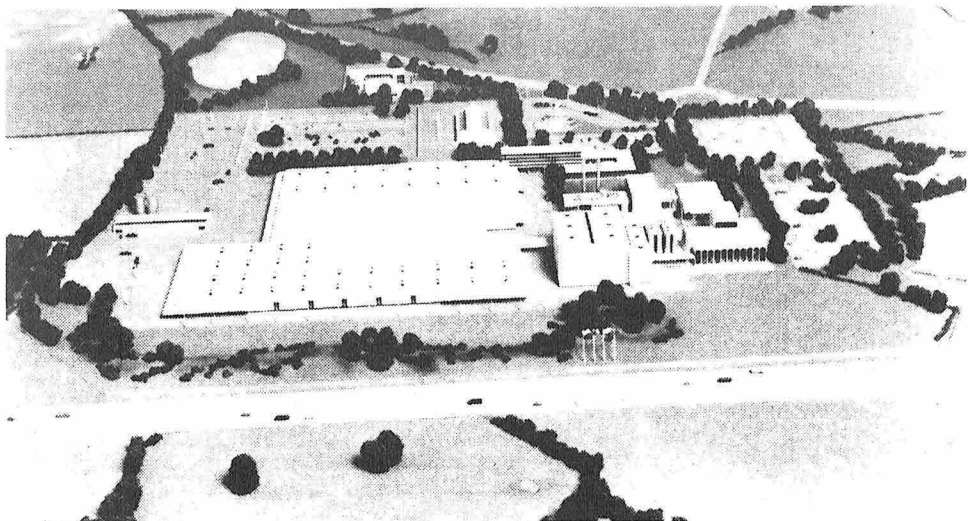
to the sacrifice on the altar of centralised production of nationally distributed, mass-advertised "brand names". Keg Tavern, Keg John Courage Harp Lager, Kronenbourg, and Hofmeister are best known among the range, which also includes several other characterless processed bitters and milds.

Large-scale centralised production has many fatal drawbacks in these times; vulnerability to industrial unrest; transport costs; the scale of investment required; the inflexibility of response to demand and remoteness from the customer; consumer resistance to the reduced range and bland nature of the product; the necessary high advertising costs to overcome that resistance - to name but a few.

Yet Courage seem poised to repeat the process in the near future. A vast new "Beer factory" opens at Worton Grange near Reading next year (See LONDON DRINKER, April 1979) and then the existing Reading Brewery will be shut. Already brewing of Reading's two fine cask beers - the magnificent Reading Best Bitter and the justly esteemed Mild - has ceased. With production at Courage's Horsleydown Brewery (near Tower Bridge) currently well below capacity, and the capacity of the Worton Grange plant greatly exceeding that of the old Reading Brewery, the writing seems to be on the wall for London's remaining Courage brewery.

The only hope is that Courage have had a change of heart, hitherto unrevealed, and are prepared to moderate the scale of development at Worton Grange in favour of promoting the products and future of the London Brewery. Is this too much to hope for? It is certainly in the interests of all beer drinkers to press Courage to re-examine fully their ever-diminishing range of options before it is too late. Notwithstanding much of Courage's treatment of the drinking public, Horsleydown has brewed some excellent beers in its time. We can only hope that the management at Imperial do both their shareholders and their customers a favour and ensure that it continues to do so for a long time to come.

An impression of Courage's new plant at Worton Grange. No Real Ale seems likely, and the London Brewery may have to be shut to cover up this expensive mistake.

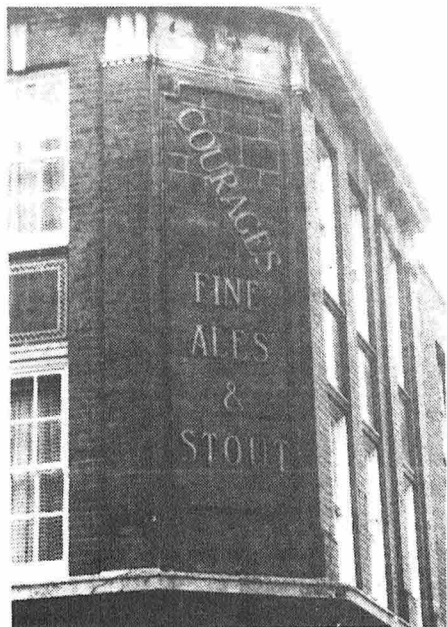


THE BEERS

It is sometimes easy to lose sight of the fact that after all the above, Courage do brew a range of Traditional beers at Horsleydown. Directors' Bitter, on the verge of extinction in the early 1970's, was revived following CAMRA protests. A strong, full-bodied, malty brew with an original gravity of 1047, it is now a popular and well-known brand whose sales rose some 60% last year. Best Bitter (1039°) is a pleasant lightly hopped bitter of average strength. Many drinkers might be puzzled why Best Bitter varies so much in taste from one outlet to another. The main reason is that much of the cask-conditioned Best is dispensed under carbon dioxide gas pressure applied to the top of the cask. This gives a much "fizzier" pint than if the beer is pulled by hand pump from a cask open to the cellar atmosphere. Even more misleading, however, is the practice of filtering the beer to produce "Bright" Best Bitter. This beer is not cask-conditioned but is filtered and pressurised at the brewery. It is a thin and gassy poor relation of "Real" Best Bitter. A little-known light bitter called PBA (1032°) is produced in small quantities for the Medway towns. The dark Mild was sadly discontinued in cask form last year.

Best Bitter won a section of the Sunday Mirror Beer Competition last year, and Directors' has won many prizes. It all goes to show what Courage can do when they try.

Finally, mention should be made of Horsleydown's most distinctive product; the dark and powerful and unique naturally conditioned bottled beer, Imperial Russian Stout. The second strongest beer in the country (original gravity 1101.8°), its rich burnt flavour defies description. It makes a classic nightcap or a cure for colds.



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Letters

Dear Sir,

In complaining about high prices, CAMRA is being two-faced. I agree that a lot of pubs in London are overcharging, especially for Real Ale, but when your own pub is charging 70p for Old Peculier, you are hardly the best people to talk.

Although I support what CAMRA is doing to bring back decent beer, I could never join an organisation which has one law for its own pubs and another for the rest. It would be interesting to know if you intend to put your own house in order before sounding off.

P.L. Hilton, Mortlake SW14

(The 'CAMRA' pub you mention is owned by a separate organisation, CAMRA Real Ale Investments Ltd. This is a totally separate company - not a subsidiary - with its own shareholders and board. Not all of those shareholders are CAMRA members; and the elected Executive which runs CAMRA has no role in deciding the policy of the Investment Co. We at LONDON DRINKER also think that the Old Peculier in the Nag's Head in Hampstead is grossly overpriced and we hope that it will be reduced by at least 10p. But in fairness, the other half dozen or so Real Ales available in that pub are much more reasonably priced - a fact which was conveniently forgotten in the recent press stories.-ED)

Dear Sir,


I was surprised to read your rather snide remarks under the heading "Hard Times" in April's LONDON DRINKER. I had been under the impression that CAMRA wished to cultivate the goodwill of licensees who after all are the real dispensers of Real Ale.

CAMRA proposes freedom of choice for drinkers but apparently opposes any such choice for licensees' holiday venues.

Rather than offend my customers who mostly enjoy four weeks' holiday per year, plus all the bank holidays, I have cancelled my annual Round-the-World Cruise (1st Class of course) and await instructions from my local CAMRA representative, together with a 48 hour pass.

John Mackett, "The Featherstone Arms", Southall, Middlesex.

(With respect Mr Mackett, we were not objecting to licensees enjoying expensive holidays. But the holidays described in the Morning Thug - sorry, Advertiser - were expensive. What we were having a dig at was the snivelling poverty-pleading in that paper when they were trying to make out that an extra 3p on a pint was not enough. - ED)

 Bedford-based brewers Charles Wells have recently introduced a new cask beer to their range. Called 'Bombadier' (What else ?) it is a middle gravity bitter. It is already on sale at the Anglesea Arms, Selwood Terrace, SW7, which means that you may prefer to wait for other outlets, more reasonably priced, before sampling the brew. We will advise of these as and when we hear news.

Opinion

Many people argue that the Tied House system operates against the interests of the drinker and should be done away with. CAMRA is less certain on this point, seeing possible disadvantages. Here, SIEGFRIED WALSONG proposes a novel solution to some of the problems.

Some years ago, before I left my native Germany to settle in this country, I journeyed down the Rhine. As a beer lover, I was able to sample different local brews in every town I stopped in. Although the Englishman's impression of German beer is that it is lager, lager and more lager, this is not the case. The range of beer types in Germany was, and still is, as wide as one could desire.

One of the reasons for this is the survival of many local brewers and the fact that the German industry did not suffer the spate of mergers which ruined the English brewing industry. The problem which now faces English beer lovers is to bring back the choice which was lost by the creation of the Big Six. CAMRA is doing very well in its campaign for better beer but I suggest that it is not getting to grips with the fundamentals. I refer of course to the Tied House system.

Although it is good to read in your magazine of small new brewers like Godson's and the Tower Bridge Brewery starting up, these courageous enterprises are likely to remain few in number as long as the problem of getting outlets remains. And this problem will stay as long as the Tied House system remains. CAMRA's idea of getting the tie relaxed is okay as far as it goes; but does it go far enough? Why does not CAMRA go the whole hog and campaign for abolition of the tied house? (Well nearly all the way, as I will describe later)

What I would like to see is the number of tied houses which any brewery could have reduced to a maximum number of no more than 500. This would mean that the small companies could carry on much as they do now, but that the bigger companies would have to rid themselves of the greater part of their obscenely large tied estates. The pubs which were taken from them could then be freed of tie, allowing any brewer, old or new, to compete for sales in them. The Big Six would naturally have their chance to compete - but I guess that they would have to brew better and cheaper beer (by becoming more efficient) than they tend to do now.

But who would own and administer all these pubs if they were taken out of the hands of the brewers? The most desirable way to have pubs run (from the drinker's point of view) is to have a landlord who has a financial stake in the pub he runs; to have the landlord freed from restrictions on what he sells and how he sells it; and to have him protected from the jackal-like behaviour of many brewers who stick his rent up if he makes a success of his pub. At the risk of having many of you choke over your pints, I would suggest one way in which this could be brought about - State (or Municipal) ownership of pubs. Let me explain.

What I would suggest is that the Government, or local councils, set up pub owning organisations to take into public ownership the pubs which brewers are no longer allowed to own, and then rent these pubs to licensees. Apart from the need to pay his rent on time, the pub's licensee would have no other obligation to the owning organisation, and all the commercial judgements would be his own.

There are other possible advantages which would be possible with such a scheme. We know that in country areas many brewers have shut pubs with callous disregard for the effect on village life. A local authority would always have the ability to assist publicans in small villages by charging low rents - in effect, subsidising socially desirable but low profit-making houses not from the rates but from the income from the more profitable urban pubs.

But the problem of village pubs is not the only one. Some brewers are beginning to realise that pubs in City centres have a higher value as sites for the property developer than as places to sell beer. The accountant-dominated boardrooms of the big brewing giants are already showing that they have cottoned on to this, and when you have companies who are in business to make a fast buck first and to brew and sell beer a poor second, then the loss of fine town pubs is by no means improbable. Once again, a State or Municipal pub company could resist such pressures on behalf of the people.

I know that the English tend to shudder when they hear such expressions as "Nationalisation" or "State intervention" but what I have proposed is a rather different and unconventional version. It would leave the Brewing Industry in the realm of Private Enterprise, and would even allow more Private Enterprise to come into the field in the form of new brewers. (It might also be possible for new firms to acquire tied houses subject to whatever maxima were laid down) It would also preserve another important facet of Private Enterprise which is currently under some threat - the independent publican. If anyone thinks that working for a Big brewer as a manager, or even acting as one of their tenants is Free Enterprise, then they must have a very optimistic view of life.

No doubt the worthies of CAMRA also are opposed to the State's involvement as much as most people. But if they stop to think about it rather than let dogma rule their thinking, they may see that the ideas I have put forward have very real possibilities. The prospect of having the kind of choice of beers that I had on that long-ago Rhine journey is one that makes the idea attractive to me.

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Drinker Xword 4

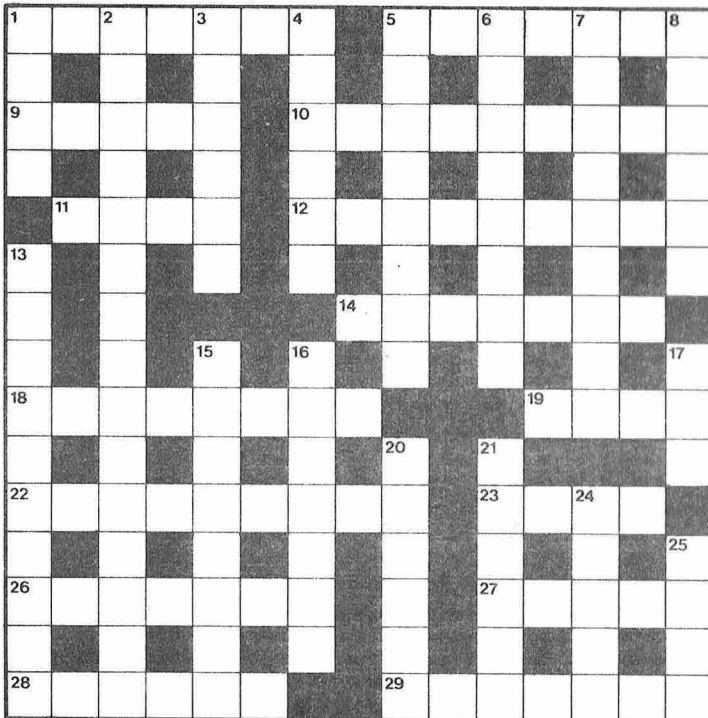
Entries to Brian Sheridan, 6 Ashburton Road, Croydon, by July 8th.
The first **Three** correct entries drawn from the hat will win a
copy of the Brand new "Real Beer in London"

Across

1. Caped Crusader in East for Brewer (7)
5. Robert lost blood and went up and down (7)
9. Walk for what Pat might need with 4 dn (5)
10. Frog grub (9)
11. Toast the lager? (4)
12. Famous German Beer (9)
14. Praise and go to pieces (5,2)
18. Large beer-mat, or morning after state (8)
19. Mine passage (4)
22. Time nodes slightly dampened (9)
23. Topless Bristol for food (4)
26. Where all beer ends up, but where keg and lager taste as if they originate too (7)
27. This big cat must surely weigh more than 28 grams (5)
28. Leisurely walk
29. Adnams county (7)

Down

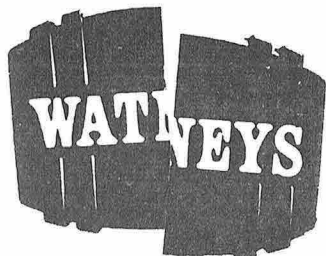
1. Tankard's comes from CO₂ (4)
2. The other brew from the Peculier Brewery (9,6)
3. Little Ted mixed up dark ale for the Centre (6)
4. Require the French for sharp tool (6)
5. Support Greenwich's boss for his company's attitudes (8)
6. A bag of crips, nuts or scratchings, for example (3,5)
7. Appear spherical and inspect (4,5)
8. We hear talk of an athletic event (6)
13. Ind Coope KK, Boddington's Best and Gales XXX for example (5,5)
15. Kick Panny for West's last resting place (4,4)
16. You may soon need fifty for a pint (7)
17. Pig's house (3)
20. Amin and mixed up set - they're both this (6)
21. Alight or be acquitted (3,3)
24. The last Parisian dance ? (5)
25. Physical jerks over McMillen's Mild to get the top of condition (4)



Aprils winners

A. Hart SW19
J. Scroggie SW18
A. Hasler N4
D. Quinton N5
B. Green W2





A nation mourns

Britain was plunged into deep gloom yesterday when the death was announced from Mortlake of Watney's Red. Red had been sick for some years, and had been in the intensive care unit of Mortlake Hospital in a carbon dioxide tent. When doctors found no evidence of life, the decision was taken to switch off the support system and pronounce the clinical death of Red.

As the news spread, activity ceased all over Britain. Factories and offices closed, and the transport system ground to a halt. The CAMRA National Executive had both hands free for the first time in years. TV and radio cancelled their normal programmes and played solemn music.

But as the nation grieved, a major political row was brewing. Former Prime Minister Jim Callaghan lambasted the new Government in the House yesterday. "Less than a month after taking office the Tories do this," he thundered. "What is going to happen over the next five years?"

But Tory Premier Margaret Thatcher blamed the Labour administration. "We got into power too late to save it," she claimed. "Red's death was inevitable after five years of Socialist misrule."

Liberal leader Dave 'Boy' Steel blamed both parties. "While they go about blaming each other, the nation bleeds to death. We need a Peoples Parliament elected on a proportional representation, single transferable vote basis. This should bring about a well-hung Parliament with me calling the shots."

But all three parties were threatened by the emergence of a new political force. Retired Naval Commander Bill Crooks announced his intention to fight the next election in all 635 constituencies on a "Bring back Watney's Red White Resident" ticket. "I shall start the campaign as soon as I've repainted my bike," he said.

Tributes were flooding in from all parts of the world. Here are just a few.

Mr. Jeremy Thorpe, speaking in Minehead, said "Bunnies and I both liked to relax afterwards with a pint of Red. Maxwell Joseph should never have allowed this to happen. Somebody should shoot him - or at least his dog."

Mr. W. Churchill (dec'd) of Tonypandy, South Wales, said "Watney's Red was the stuff to give the troops - especially if you wanted them to shoot miners."

Mrs A Phillips of Surrey said "One just loved one's pint of Red, and one's horses did too. One was in no danger of falling off after one had been supping Red."

Ms Vanessa Redgrave, the actress said that the killing of Red was symbolic of capitalist exploitation of the masses. "Red was the drink which the British proletariat had taken to their hearts and loved. It has been sacrificed on the altar of crypto-fascist multi-national monopoly profit, or something like that anyway."

Prices—more news

It looks as if the news for beer drinkers on the Price front gets more dismal by the day. The latest rumour is that when the new Tory Government ends Price Restraint, the brewers will put up their prices again. This would follow the 3p which they put on just a couple of months ago.

The Government is pinning its faith on a stronger competition policy to restrain prices. Until their proposed legislation is published, it is obviously impossible to comment on its likely effectiveness. However, one thing is obvious. Even if the Government do end up tackling the disgraceful monopoly abuse of the brewers, it will be some time off. In the meantime, without a Price Commission to hold back the floodtide, the beer drinker can expect the price of his ale to rise with regularity. CAMRA is a non-political organisation, but we at LONDON DRINKER can only describe the abolition of the Price Commission as premature; at best an act of naivety and at worse an act of cynical vandalism.

Not that we've reached the end of the story, of course. At the time of writing, Sir Geoffrey Howe's Budget was still awaited, and the question was not whether Beer Duty would rise but by how much. And another Duty increase may be on the cards if the Brussels bureaucrats get their way. They want duty rates to be "harmonised", which means in essence that the rates of duty on beer and wine, allowing for alcoholic strength differences, should be the same. As it is unlikely that the higher rating on wine would be reduced, we could be in for a rise in the Beer rate.

MORE CONTENDERS

Meanwhile, our search for good value continues, as does our search for the rip-off merchants. We must give star billing to the Royal Six Bells in Merton High Street, SW19 which sells the high gravity Ind Coope Burton Ale at only 36p in the Public Bar and 38p in the Saloon. Unfortunately, the Romford Bitter is served on top-pressure, but 33p in the Public is the cheapest we know for this brew.

All of which makes the prices of a recent addition to Real Ale seem downright bloody scandalous. The Sun Inn, Church St, Barnes, SW13 is also an Ind Coope house. One cannot find anything special about this pub to justify prices of 48p for Burton Ale and 43p for Romford Bitter. We would be most interested to hear from the guv'nor of the Sun his explanation for the 10p or so differences between his boozer and the Royal Six Bells.

Merton seems a good area for value. Not far along Merton High St from the Royal Six Bells is the Nelson Arms whose Charrington IPA is not only served in good nick but costs 32 in the Public and 34p in the Saloon.

Our correspondent who visited the Woodman in Battersea High Street paid 48p for a pint of Devenish Wessex. She was unable to establish the prices of the other beers in this "Exhibition" Free House as she was unable to find the Price list which by law every pub must display.

A surprising group of contenders for "Best Value" are the Station Bars operated by British Rail's Traveller's Fare division. Most of the main line termini have a bar selling Real Ale, and there are also handpumps at Richmond, East & West Croydon, Kew Gardens as well as on major stations throughout the country.

We would give pride of place among the BR bars to St. Pancras' "Shires Bar". Examples of their prices include Rayment BBA at 34p and Greene King Abbot at only 39p. Other beers are served at prices comparable to these and the condition of the ale is normally first-rate. The Shires Bar is pleasant and clean, and the food menu is good as well, offering something better than the usual Travellers' Fare standard junk food at reasonable prices. It's a pity that the place closes at 10p.m. and all day Sunday, but the Shires is well worth a visit.

The Shires is not alone in offering its beer at fair prices. All the BR bars are reasonable (how about Shepherd Neame Bitter at 34p for example?) and while some of them are not particularly inspiring (such as Victoria) the general standard of ale is high. Indeed one point which is emerging from our price investigation is that the pubs which are offering best value usually serve the best pint, while the expensive places often sell beer in poor condition.

While the nationalised BR bars are deserving of praise, the privately owned Henekey chain earns low marks. Too many of their pubs seem to be run by staff who just couldn't care less. For example, their Strand bar; when the Editor visited that establishment one Saturday evening (sober at that) only Shepherd Neame Bitter was left and it was running low. The barman, having no change for the £5 note tendered, gave our companion no time whatever to see whether he might have change but sold the two pints to another customer. (The pub was not busy so that was not the reason). We noticed that the two "pints" which went to the other customer were considerably under measure. When we had more pulled for ourselves, they too were short; only we asked them to be topped up. The barman stuck the glass under the keg Double Diamond tap! That meant the beer had to be pulled again as we refuse this polluted pint. Eventually we got what we had come for - a pint of beer - but it was not exactly in peak condition. Another mystery took some time to unravel. Since we had been unable to find a price list we did not know what this pint of brackish liquid was going to cost. Answer? 40p!

The Red Lion, another Henekey house in Kingly Street W1, did have a price list. Shepherd Neame 19p per half it said; 40p a pint we were charged. Explanation? "That list's out of date mate, we haven't got round to replacing it yet. A lot of people have complained." If the remainder of Henekeys' pubs are not considerably better than this, then the chain seems worth avoiding.



CAMRA have appointed a new supremo to mastermind their campaign in London.

He is 32 year-old Ian Mihell, a local government official in Berkshire. He is unmarried, and has his own teeth. Hobbies include Philosophy, Opera, motor-racing (he drives a Formula 3 Lotus) and Rock Climbing. His ambition is to travel although he confesses to a secret wish to sing Brunnhilde at Bayreuth. Says he is in CAMRA because "I like people"

His address is 54 Point Royal Easthampstead, Bracknell, Berks. (Tel 0344-24642 ext 241)

Gossip...

* Tolly Cobbold (Ipswich) Mild has been on sale in British Rail's Victoria Bar on Marylebone station. We have not heard the price, but it is likely to be reasonable in a bar which is good value and which serves a good pint. With luck, we may see more of this newcomer brew.

* The German Hannen Brewery, from near Dusseldorf, is looking at the possibilities of marketing its beer in the UK in cask. The beer is of the "Altbrau" variety, which means that it is more akin to English style beers than to lager. It has an OG of 1048° and is brewed to the German purity standards which allow only malt, hops and yeast to be used in the brewing. The beer is filtered at the brewery (which is standard German practice, so it would not strictly qualify for mention in a CAMRA guide. However, the beer has quite a distinctive flavour, so it is worth a try if you come across it. Inevitably, since the beer is brought over from Germany, it will be expensive - probably around 70p a pint.

* Congratulations to Frank Cogan of the Alma in York Road, Wandsworth. Frank was a regional winner in the 'Local Life' award contest. This is a Trade-sponsored scheme to recognise licensees who made a significant contribution to the local community. Frank also makes a contribution to the drinking community by selling first-rate Young's beers.

Cooking with Una

(We are grateful to S.E. London's "Hop Vine" for permission to reproduce this piece)

Christmas may well be a long way off, but the Christmas Pudding in the recipe given below should be made well in advance so that it can mature and improve. At the least, it should be made one month prior to being eaten. But a whole year's maturing is better. The pudding should be stored in a cool dry cupboard, in a covered bowl.

The mixture makes 2 two-pint puddings (it's as easy to make two as one). Each one should serve eight people, or four if they are hungry.

4 oz flour
2 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons mixed spice
2 teaspoons cinnamon
2 teaspoons nutmeg
2 oz. ground almonds
8 oz brown sugar
8 oz grated suet
14 oz breadcrumbs
1 grated apple

6 eggs
½ lb each of raisins; sultanas;
currants; cherries; and mixed
peel.

½ pint brandy or rum.
½ pint bottle Guinness.
4 oz mixed nuts
rind and juice of one orange.
1 grated carrot

TO MAKE, Mix the dry ingredients, add grated apple, carrot and orange rind. Beat the eggs and add the Guinness and the brandy or rum. Mix into the dry ingredients and stir all together well while making your wish.

Grease pudding bowls, fill with mixture and cover tightly. Boil for 6 hours each and for two hours on Christmas day.

The Guinness helps the pudding mature and gives a rich brown colour.

Now, 'Low Carb'?

The Big Brewers have clearly decided that the major growth area is that of "Low-carbohydrate" lagers, and the battle for markets will be joined by two new products very soon.

The famous "Brewed by Danes in Northampton" firm, Carlsberg, are to launch "Carlsen" which is to be brewed to an Original gravity of 1033^o. Carlsberg are claiming, however, that because of the process adopted, the new lager will be equivalent to 1042.

The strength of beer depends upon the original gravity, and the final gravity. The first gives a measure of the material dissolved in the unfermented wort, and the second a measure of what remains unfermented at the end. The difference between Original Gravity and Final Gravity determines alcoholic strength. Final gravity is important in another way however; the unfermented material is a major determinant of flavour (though not the only one). For Carlsen to be equivalent to 1042, it must mean that virtually no material is left unfermented. This would imply that the drink will be very thin and dry, and probably lacking any character and subtlety of flavour. This will be overcome by chilling and carbonating the product, so it sounds as if Carlsen is definitely not one for the connoisseur.

At least Carlsen is aptly named. Our Danish is not too hot, but we think it means "Son of Carl". Whitbreads are resorting to the German for their new joke drink. Brewed to 1030^o they are calling it "Heldenbrau" ("Brew of Heroes), presumably in an attempt to capture the loyalty of Wagner fans. Since 1030 is about as low an OG as you are likely to get, and Whitbread have not claimed that it will really be equivalent to 1039^o, we can only wonder how any hero would react to a pint of the stuff. Fafner would have had little to fear from Siegfried, because if the lad were juicing up on Heldenbrau, he would more likely to carry a handbag than a sword. We suggest that Whitbread consider alternative names such as "Kindenbrau" (Brew of Children) or Onanbrau (Translation deleted).

Such is Whitbread's confidence in this new fizzy drink that they plan to spend a cool £2 million in advertising. This is in some contrast to the sums spent in promoting their excellent cask beers, some of which are also new, and it makes it rather clear that the lager drinker is regarded as more susceptible to TV jingles than the cask drinker who presumably learns of new beers by word of mouth.

Incidentally, low carbohydrate beers are not to be confused with low calorie drinks. Obviously the drinker is led to infer that he will be getting something less fattening. Not so. The calories are still there, only in a different form. So since your beer belly will not be diminished by switching to a low carbohydrate lager, why pay extra for it and forego the flavour of normal beer?



Campari and Gin and Tonic drinkers unite! A new device is being touted around the trade which threatens you. Called the Lemonaid, it can apparently slice a lemon far thinner than can be done by human hand and knife. Landlords are exhorted to buy this because they can save on the cost of lemons. How low can you get?

The Bitter Experience



Bringing you the best in real ale, Fine Wines, and Home brewing, Now in SE LONDON you can have traditional ale fresh from the barrel in your home, just bring along your own container, or if you prefer, take away in one of ours, for only a small deposit extra. We also stock a complete range of Fine Wines including a specially selected House Wine, offering extremely good value. Popular varieties of bottled and canned beers and lagers plus 30 or more bottled beers from traditional real ale breweries are also available. The range of draught beers varies each week, with always 6-8 to choose from. A wide range of Polypins and furkins are available for parties. Glasses for loan, no charge.

129 LEE Road, Blackheath, SE.3
Telephone 01-852-8819

Open till 10pm every day - except Sunday 12-2.00pm

Experience
Tells

■ A new Real Ale Off-licence has recently opened which is worth a visit. "The Bitter Experience" in Lee Road, Blackheath, sells Real Ale in Poly pins and firkins for the party trade. Those wanting to take home smaller quantities can be served straight from the cask in their own containers, or in containers provided for a small deposit. The choice of beers varies but there are always between six and eight to pick from. The cask beer is kept in a "cellar" separated from the shop by glass doors, so that you can your ale being drawn from the cask. The "cellar" has its own air conditioning to ensure that the beer is kept at the correct temperature. A selection of wines, including Fine Wines is available as is a wide range of bottled beers from independent breweries.

The "2 Brewers" Off-licenses, in Forest Hill and in Pitfield St N1, have added to their already wide range of draught ales. The additions are Penrhos Porter, and Milds from Jennings of Cockermouth and from Hook Norton. Real Mead, made from honey, yeast and water only, is also on sale.

New 'Real' Pubs

The number of Pubs selling Real Ale in London continues to grow. The following are the latest of which we have news:-

In BARNES, the Sun Inn, Church Road SW13 is selling Ind Coope Burton Ale and Romford Bitter on handpump. In our view, however, the prices charged do not represent good value for money.

In BOW, the "Little Driver", Bow Road, E3 is now serving Bass and Charrington IPA.

The "Harvest Home", Beddington Lane, CROYDON, also now has Charrington IPA.

In FINCHLEY, the "Five Bells" 165 East End Road, N2 has Truman Tap, served on orthodox handpump instead of the more usual air pressure system.

"The Dagmar" Cornwall Road, HARRINGAY, N15, has Whitbread (Wethered) Bitter.

Both Fullers ESB and London Pride are available in LEWISHAM's "Roebuck", Rennell Street SE15

Yet another new Courage Directors' House - The "Red House", Park Road, MARYLEBONE, NW8

The same brew, together with Best Bitter is now available in the "Railway Tavern", Sheen Lane, MORTLAKE SW14.

PECKHAM's "Sailor Prince", Gordon Road, SE15 has added Devenish Wessex, Sam Smith's Old Brewery Bitter, Fullers' ESB and London Pride to its existing range of Real Ales.

In PLUMSTEAD, the "Melbourne Arms" in Sandy Hill Road has added Shepherd Neame Special and Bitter.

"The Neptune", Rupack Street, ROTHERHITHE, SE16 has started selling Ind Coope's Burton Ale.

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Courage Best Bitter has been added in "The Albert", Harrington Road, SOUTH NORWOOD, SE25.

Two new Peal Ale pubs in WATERLOO have come to light. The "King's Arms" 25 Roupell Street, SE1 is selling Ind Coope Burton Ale and Romford Bitter, while the "White Hart" in Cornwall Road SE1 has Draught Bass.

Finally, in WOOD GREEN, the "Springfield", Bounds Green Road, N22 has Ind Coope Burton Ale and Romford Bitter.

Branch Diary

The following is a list of CAMRA Branch Meetings in the London Area this month. Where no entry is present, you should contact the Branch representative listed under "CAMRA Branch Contacts"

- CROYDON & SUTTON Monday 18th June (8pm) "The Croydon", Park Street, Croydon (Branch Meeting)
- E.LONDON & CITY Thursday 14th June (8.30pm) "The Little Driver" Bow Road, E3 (near Bow Road Stn) (Social)
Tuesday 19th June (7.30pm) "Spurstowe, Greenleaf Rd Dalston. (Near Hackney Downs Stn; Buses 22, 22a, 30, 38, 277) (Branch Meeting)
Tuesday 26th June (5.30pm) "Ship", Hart Street EC3
- ENFIELD & BARNET Monday 11th June (8pm) Folk and Ale Evening in conjunction with CAMRA S.Herts Branch and Ranters Folk Club. "The Merryhills", Bramley Road, London N14 (near Oakwood Tube) Entrance 75p. Guest artist Adrian May.
Wednesday 13th June (8pm) "The King's Head" Market Place, Enfield Town (Branch AGM - Guest Speaker Joe Goodwin, CAMRA National Chairman)
- KINGSTON & L'HEAD Thursday 21st June (8pm) "The Victoria", Surbiton, (Opposite Surbiton stn) (Branch Meeting - with guest speaker from Hannen Brewery, Dusseldorf)
Saturday June 23rd (7.30pm) Dwile Flonking at "The Foley Arms", Claygate v pub's team
- NORTH LONDON Saturday 9th June. Trip to Hook Norton Brewery Coach departs 9.30am from Midland Road next to St Pancras (LMR) Station. Return around 11pm. Contact Derek Thorne 637-7141 x66 for details
Tuesday 12th June (8pm) "The Starting Gate, Station Road, Wood Green (Branch Meeting)
Tuesday 9th June (8pm) "Salisbury" Green Lanes, N4 (Darts Social)
Thursday 28th June (8pm) "Winchester Hall Tavern" Archway Road N6 (Social)
- SOUTH EAST LONDON Wednesday 13th June (8pm) "The Gipsy Queen", West Norwood (close West Norwood stn) (Branch Meeting)
Friday 22nd and Saturday 23rd June - Greenwich Real Ale Festival (see separate advert for details)
Thursday 28th June (8pm) "Village Blacksmith Closedown 1st Anniversary Social" - "Queen Victoria Woolwich, SE18"
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SOUTH WEST LONDON

Saturday 9th June Outing to Brighton. Meet at Victoria Station 9.45 am for 10.10 train (also calls East Croydon 10.25)
Thursday 14th June (8pm) "Spread Eagle" Wandsworth High Street SW18 (Branch Meeting - Guest Speaker Mr A. Charalambides of Truman's)
Wednesday 20th June (8.30pm) "Market Tavern Wandsworth Road, SW8 (near Vauxhall stns) (Social)
Sunday 1st July (noon) "Duke of Devonshire", Balham High Road, SW12 (Social)

WEST LONDON

Tuesday 19th June (7.30pm) "Red Lion", 281 High Street, W3 (Branch Meeting)
Monday 25th June (8pm) "Royal Standard", 8 Sale Place, W2 ('Pub-of-the-Month Social)

BRANCH CONTACTS

BEXLEY	- Bob Belton	303-4590
BROMLEY	- Bob Darvill	697-1631(h) 491-7050 x246(w)
CROYDON AND SUTTON	- Dave Hamer	647-0992(h) 215-3683(w)
E.LONDON AND CITY	- Bas Clarke	531-6933(h) 222-4213(w)
ENFIELD AND BARNET	- Brian Seymour	803-4062(h) 366-1112 x329(w)
KINGSTON & LEATH'D	- Andrew Hayward	942-9834(h) 623-9834x2706(w)
NORTH LONDON	- Derek Thorne	637-7141 x 66(w)
RICHMOND & HOUNSLOW	- Rick Brown	572-1616
ROMFORD, BARKING, DAGENHAM, ILFORD (SW ESSEX BRANCH)	- Chris Cashmore	Brentwood 283-1030 x356(w) 211703(h)
SOUTH EAST LONDON	- Mike Warner	852-7759(h)
SOUTH WEST LONDON	- Laurie Bishop	942-2045(h) 928-8933 x438(w)
WEST LONDON	- Graham Johnson	969-2488 x202(w)
WEST MIDDLESEX	- Keith Wildey	422-9560(h)

● Adrian May will be the guest artist at a Real Ale and Folk evening organised by CAMRA's Enfield & Barnet Branch in The Merryhills, Oakwood on Monday June 11th. See Branch Diary for details.

● The Bromley Branch of CAMRA are staging their 3rd Bromley Real Ale Festival on Saturday June 23rd. The venue is Norman Park, Hayes Road, Bromley, and the festival, which will feature more than 25 Real Ales, runs from 2pm till 11pm. There will also be food and entertainment. Tickets are £1, which includes free souvenir glass, and can be obtained by writing to Roger Mayhew, 27 Sandy Ridge, Chislehurst, Kent.

● The Village Blacksmith in Woolwich, CAMRA Investments' second London pub, is now expected to open in early June. Details of the range of beers (and their prices) should appear in July's LONDON DRINKER

Mourners for Watney's Red - Praying for Resurrection ?



I wish to become a member of Campaign for Real Ale Limited. I agree to abide by the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Campaign, and I enclose £4 (£6 joint husband and wife membership) as my annual membership subscription. (Any additional amount will be welcomed as a donation.)

FULL NAME (Block capitals) _____

FULL POSTAL ADDRESS (Block capitals) _____

SIGNATURE _____

Cheques should be made payable to Campaign for Real Ale Limited. Applications should be sent to Membership, CAMRA, 34 Alma Road, St Albans, Herts. AL1 3BW.

