



# Not Taken



NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTHAMPTON BRANCH OF CAMRA

## Campaign News: Do They Really Need 3p a Pint?

Most pub prices have already risen in this area, as Watneys/Manns and Courage/J. Smith were among the first of the Big Six Brewers to raise their prices by the "standard" 3p a pint, while Allied/Ind Coope and McEwan/Youngers prices also rose by 3p a pint. Bass/M&B and Whitbread applied for similar increases but have both been held for 3 months for investigation by the Price Commission.

Amongst the smaller brewers in this area, Hook Norton, Tuddles and Home Brewery all put their prices up, while it is believed Wells prices will rise before the end of the month. Marstons, Everards, Greene King, etc. won't be far behind, as such well known efficient brewers as Beddingtons and Hardy & Hansons have already grabbed their increase, so what brewery accountant worth his salt could resist grabbing the "going rate" while the customers have been softened up by the big boys?

The steep price rises haven't only upset the customers, the landlords are worried too. The Chairman of Manns Tenants Association in the Kettering/Wellingborough area said his members feared the price rise would cause hardship to small pubs. "Customers are going to tighten their belts and this is going to hit smaller pubs worst.... We have got to pass the increase on because it is too much for us to absorb."

Obviously brewers' costs have risen like everyone else's, but some were in a good position to resist this inflationary trend and increase their market share. Watneys in particular returned record profits last year - the parent company, Grand Metropolitan increased profits by 50% to a record £115.9m. The public houses and brewing divisions made the biggest contribution to this record rise after price increases last year of just 1p a pint, which was only half that of most of their competitors. As a result Watneys increased their market share and their profits. Have they learnt nothing?

The poorest profits were recorded by Courage, whose results are buried in the accounts of the Imperial group.

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## New Real Ale Guide to Northamptonshire

The new guide has been launched early this year in time to take the sting out of the savage price increases which are hitting beer drinkers this month.

Most breweries have already put their prices up by 3p a pint without regard for individual circumstances, so drinkers are in need of some incentive to keep on going out and handing their money over to these same greedy companies. This new guide gives that incentive with enticing prospects of good drinking in unexplored pubs when spring arrives at last.

The new guide costs only 40p, no increase on last year, but contains many more pubs with a lot more information on the pubs' histories, facilities and interesting features nearby, as well as the usual section on beers and breweries. It is available through Northampton CAMRA branch and selected bookshops and pubs. Anyone having difficulty in obtaining one should send 50p (includes p & p) to Brian Wilmot, 23 Kingsway, Northampton, to receive one by return.

THOMAS WETHEREDS bitter has been on sale for over two months at the Pluto, a Whitbread pub in Gainsborough Road, Corby, where it is selling well, thanks to the enthusiasm of the landlord. It is served by handpump in the lounge but can also be ordered in the bar, where the landlord has put up his own publicity material, until he gets another pump to serve it there.

BASS has been introduced on handpump at the Falcon, Priors Marston, an ex-M&B pub, now a free house with M&B beers.

The White Horse at Lowick, the only Paines pub in Northants, is selling Bass from the barrel now if customers request it, instead of under pressure as before.

The Bell at Weldon is to sell draught Bass besides the usual Hook Norton.

MARSTONS Burton bitter, Pedigree and McEwans 70/- are all available on handpump at the reopened Holly Bush at Priors Marston, which used to be a CBC listed pub with Davenports before its closure last year for alterations. Owd Roger is also on sale from the cask.

CHARLES WELLS IPA is on sale at the Bridge Hotel, Thrapston straight from the cask, which is almost hidden behind the bar. The Feathers, Rushden, High St. is selling Fargo from cask in lounge.