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THE LONDON DRINKER

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



THE PRICEY PINT

This month 'London Drinker' begins a series on the ever increasing price of beer

This month

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We must apologise that due to pressure of space, we have had to hold over to a future issue the article by RON ATKINS on Jazz in pubs and also the home brewing piece by VIRGIL.

Hard times?

The licensees' Trade Paper, the "Morning Advertiser" has been full of tear-jerking propaganda lately on how the 3p price increase which most brewers are after is necessary to help keep publicans out of the workhouse. As an example of how this deprived section of our society is suffering one need only look at the special holidays for licensees which the same paper is advertising. Some examples:-

17 Days in East Africa for £447

11 Days in Barbados for £479

14 Days Mediterranean Cruise for from £330 to £595

We can only applaud the organisers of these exclusive-to-licensee hols for helping the poor folk to get away for a summer break. But it seems a pity that something better couldn't be fixed up. It can't be much of a holiday going to places which will be filled up with their public bar customers.

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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Editors

Brian Sheridan
Ron Atkins
Robin Bence
Mike Hammersley

Artwork and Layout

Mike Hammersley

In defence of Mild

A PERSONAL VIEWPOINT

Following last month's article (by accident unsigned, but in fact by RON ATKINS) which took an unfavourable view of Mild and some of its defenders, we present the other side of the coin. TOM PEPPER writes.....

Your anonymous correspondent in March's LONDON DRINKER seems to have a pretty low opinion of Mild and those who drink it. But may I suggest that his deprecation of CAMRA's efforts on behalf of Mild is misplaced?

I would be the first to admit that Mild is a minority taste in the London area. But isn't the preservation of choice - including the choice of minorities - what CAMRA is all about? In any case, your correspondent doesn't question the reasons for the decline in the demand for Mild. I don't accept the view that people are simply 'going off' Mild, and that changes in taste, somehow spontaneously generated, are responsible for the decline. I suspect that it's a bit more complicated and a bit more sinister than that.

You need only look at Beer advertising to-day to see how the Big brewers spend their money on promoting some products and not others. When did anyone last see a commercial for cask beer on T.V? No, the idea of advertising is to promote the products that you want the punter to drink - and that usually means the beers which carry the highest profit margins and which are convenient for the brewer to handle - i.e. keg beers and lagers. Mild Ale, being a cheap pint, and carrying lower profits per pint, is simply not being given the boost which the premium brands get. And even though many drinkers are discerning enough to let their own palates act as judge, if they are not even aware that Mild is still available, how are they to carry out this judgement?

I would suggest also that your correspondent is a bit unfair to those CAMRA members who drink mild in "conspicuous fashion." It may be the case that some of them are "indulging in a form of trendy one-upmanship," but a lot of them, and I number myself among them, do genuinely enjoy a different flavoured pint from time to time. And if conspicuous consumption draws attention to the existence of the product then it can only do good. On aesthetic grounds, I would much rather see a group of sincere drinkers behaving in this mildly eccentric fashion than have to put up with second rate ham actors talking in exaggerated Northern accents on the box about some foul-tasting muck that sells at 40p and tastes of sod-all.

On page 7 of the last LONDON DRINKER you report the possibility of price increases of up to 7p a pint in the coming few months. If this does happen, there are a lot of people who will have difficulty in paying for their pint of bitter - pensioners, the unemployed, and the low-paid for example. The excellent value for money which Mild still represents may very soon become an important feature. But one should not think of mild as simply a poor man's drink. It is a drink which can be very pleasant; which can have its own character of flavour; and which is often stronger than the much-advertised lagers which cost around 10p a pint more. Brewers like Fullers and Courage who are in the process of killing off Mild may be choosing the wrong time to do so. If they thought more of trying to promote this drink they might well see a comeback for a beer which does not deserve to die.

