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THE

LONDON DRINKER

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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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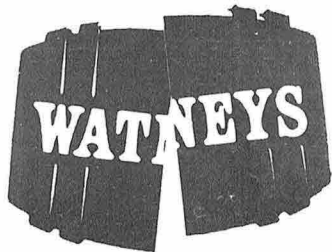
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Editors

Brian Sheridan
Ron Atkins
Robin Benec
Mike Hammersley

Artwork and Layout

Mike Hammersley



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

