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LONDON DRINKER

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



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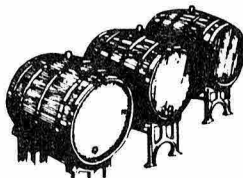
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LONDON DRINKER

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News & Views

● COURAGE UP

THE HONEYMOON with Courage may be drawing to an end. When the dust cleared after the Budget fiasco it looked as if Courage-draught beers were among the cheapest in London, despite being carted all the way from Bristol as a result of the closure of Horsleydown Brewery.

There appear to have been two increases, both of 2p, in recent weeks. We hope this is not the beginning of the slide which the 'Drinker' forecast a few months ago. To be fair, the conversion to handpumps still seems to be in force, while one of your editors nearly choked on a hop-leaf that oozed unsuspected-like from his pint of Directors the other day. Never happened when they brewed it at Horsleydown.

● ANOTHER BREWERY CHOPPED?

A BREWERY near London is set to close early next year. This is the Phoenix Brewery at Watlingbury in Kent, which once sold Lency's beers but has long been part of the Whitbread empire.

CAMRA outcry has been muted so far, as the brewery does not produce any draught beer. The effect of London will be minimal. However, unlike Horsleydown which had been run down in preparation for the axe, the Watlingbury brewery has been well maintained and is, we understand, a shining example of a traditional brewery which has been modernised successfully.

If this is true it would be a tragedy if it is forced to close. At present, the brewery produces Whitbread English Ale, Gold Label and other bottled beers.

● LAGER WARS

NEW LAGERS still sprout from all directions aimed at all ends of the market. At the teenybopper end Tennent's of Glasgow, the Scottish arm of Bass, have put out Charger, a weak lager which will be sold in Scotland in cans.

This is possible Tennent's response to Kestrel, produced by Scottish & Newcastle. S&N are not normally regarded as being among the

deep thinkers or the strategical wizards of the Big Six brewers, but they seem to have stolen a march on the others by brewing a lager which, low in gravity and unremarkable in taste though it may be, they sell at what in lager terms are rock-bottom prices.

You may remember a piece on lager by ALAN GREENWOOD in our December issue in which he referred to the Wrexham lager brewery, now part of Allied Breweries. He mentioned that it was set up as a proper German plant by four Bavarian exiles and that it used to brew lagers of dark colour as well as the now-obligatory yellow.

Obligatory no longer, it would appear. To celebrate the Royal Wedding, the brewery is producing a strong lager which in some forms will have a reddish colour.

On top of this, Bass are now going in for dark lagers. Their Mitchell & Butler pubs in the Midlands are receiving a lager which is supposed to appeal to people who normally drink beer. It is called Crusader and its label says "Dark Lager Beer. Brewed to the taste of our Island race."

Finally, a few words on San Miguel. Last month we said that this Spanish lager would be a Premium lager and would probably be expensive. Expensive it is, but we would like to qualify the term 'Premium'. The lager for the British market is considerably weaker than the San Miguel beers that the Spaniards know and presumably love. Technically, we are told, the word 'Premium' spans a very wide gravity band. San Miguel, British-style, is anchored firmly at the bottom end.

● A FIX OF STOUT

We are still boggling at a story in a recent issue of 'Off Licence News'. The author, Sandy Guthrie, has discovered a new type of Guinness. Readers know that Guinness comes in both draught and bottled form and that each has a different taste from the other. The more CAMRA-aware of you will know also that bottled Guinness is a real ale, ie it conditions in the bottle and has the sediment to prove it, while 'draught' Guinness in this country is a pasteurised beer to which gas is

