

VISIT TO THE ELDRIDGE POPE BREWERY, DORCHESTER

On 12th August 2002, the BHS was invited to tour the Eldridge Pope Brewery in Dorchester. Public tours stopped several years ago, so this was a rare opportunity to see this magnificent and expansive brewery. The brewery itself is run by Thomas Hardy Brewers and contract brews for a number of commercial customers. Eldridge Pope, on the other hand, are purely a pub retailer, having ceased brewing their famous Dorchester Ales.

Here is a brief history of the company and some photos taken on that trip.

In 1760, Emmanuel Bowen inscribed a note about Dorchester on his map of Dorset which said:-

“Dorchester is the chief town in the County, and of great antiquity, the Romans having had their station here, as appears by the great quantities of their coin which the people here call Kingdoms Pence. ‘Tis also famous for a sort of cakes call’d Dorchester Cakes, and for brewing the best and finest beer in England whereof great quantities have been of late years exported and consigned to London.”

The history of Eldridge Pope starts with an advertisement which appeared in the Dorset County Chronicle & Somerset Gazette on the 31st October 1833 when Charles Eldridge announced to the *“Nobility, Gentry, Commercial Men and the Public in general”* that he had just entered upon the Antelope Hotel, Dorchester.

He and his wife, Sarah (they had married in March 1829), evidently prospered at the Antelope and must have lived up to the best traditions of Dorchester brewing, for in 1837, they expanded the Green Dragon Brewery. Prior to this, the Green Dragon had been run by Sarah and her first husband, John Balson, as a tavern that was leased by Sarah’s parents. The Eldridges continued vigorously to build up their enterprise until Charles’ death in 1846, but Sarah Eldridge was obviously a force to be reckoned with for she continued it in partnership with a brewer named Alfred Samuel Mason under the style *“Eldridge, Mason & Co”*. In November 1856, Sarah died and thereupon Mason entered into partnership with a Weymouth solicitor, one John Tizard, who was Sarah’s son-in-law. The business still traded under the name Eldridge, Mason & Co.

Legend has it that Alfred Mason had a son who, it is said, was killed as a result of an accident in the brewery. Legend also has it that he had struck up an acquaintance with a young solicitor, Alfred Pope, but leaving legend aside, Mr

Mason definitely retired at the end of 1870 and he definitely sold his one third share to Alfred Pope's brother, Edwin. It is also certain that Alfred took an active part in proceedings arranging, amongst other things, the finance with the bank which, correspondence shows, was a pretty dusty encounter! In any event, it was then that the name Eldridge, Pope & Company was born.

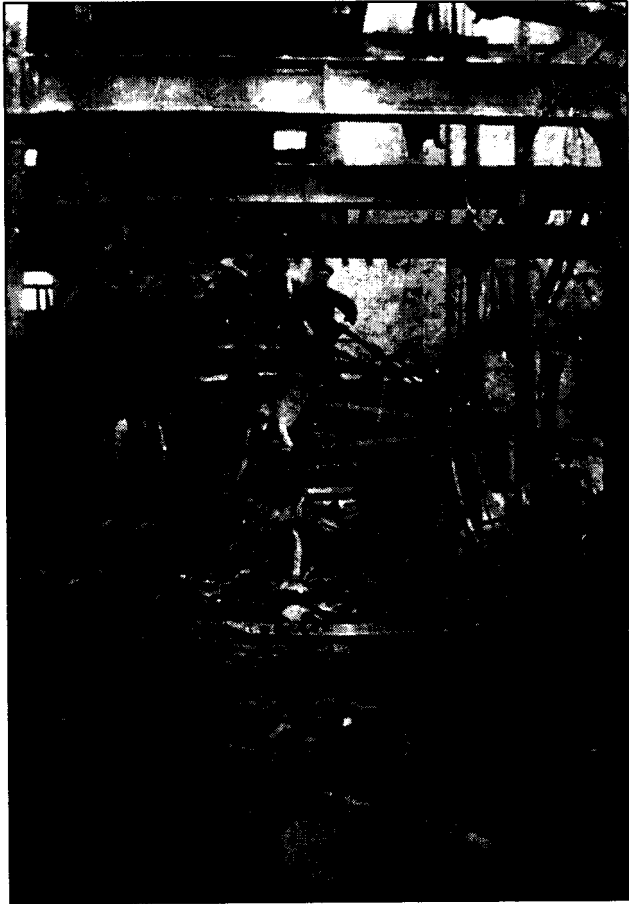


John Tizard was still the senior (if sleeping) partner of the business although Edwin brewed the beer and managed its affairs. The relationship, no doubt at Alfred's behest, was formalised by an agreement of February 1872. As events were to prove, it was as well that this occurred for amongst other terms, brother Alfred had written an option into the agreement under which Edwin was enabled to buy out John Tizard's share if he should die. Only a year later, Mr Tizard succumbed and within a month Edwin exercised his option only to find that because of a conflict between the agreement and Tizard's will, he was in dispute with the executors. The matter was eventually settled in Chancery when the Official Umpire found (in 1874) that the option was valid.

Now the brothers really set about developing the business. By the late 1870s, it was evident that the Green Dragon site had outgrown its usefulness. In 1879, they purchased the Prince of Wales estate from the Duchy of Cornwall, retaining a four-acre site next to the railway (which was to play a vital role in the pattern and expansion of the company's licensed estate) upon which they constructed in 1880 the brewery of today. Matters prospered and in 1897 they floated the present company. Two years later their brother, George, who had an excellent business in Poole, joined them and the foundations of the modern company were well and truly laid.



To say that the building of 1880 is the brewery of today is not strictly accurate because a disastrous fire destroyed much of it in 1922.



*The devastation caused by the fire in 1922 is clearly visible in this photograph.
Courtesy of Eldridge Pope Ltd*

However, the resurrected building was a faithful reproduction of the massive and imposing style of Victorian industrial architecture and is a classic of its type. Ironically, one excellent feature of the fire was that the brewery was modernised and much of that equipment is still in use today. The first brew with the new plant took place on 5th February 1925, thus restoring full working order.

Extracted from "The Fascinating Story of Eldridge Pope" published 1997.

A Chronology of Eldridge Pope & Co. Ltd

- 1791 Birth of Charles Eldridge
- 1797 Birth of Sarah Eldridge
- 1827 Charles engaged as wine steward by Robert Williams of Brideshead
- 1829 Marriage of Charles & Sarah (widow of John Balson landlord of the Green Dragon Tavern & Dragon Brewery, Dorchester)
- 1831 Birth of Emily
- 1833 Birth of Charles
- 1835 Birth of Sarah Albina
Further daughter by Charles first marriage Sophia
- 1837 Dragon Brewery enlarged (land on 10 year lease from Williams family)
- 1846 Death of Charles
- 1850 Death of Charles (son)
- 1851 Alfred Mason joined Sarah as partner in the business
- 1850 Sophia (step-daughter) marries John James Besant a Dorchester brewer
- 1852 Emily marries John Tizard
- 1856 Sarah dies. 2/3 of her estate goes to Emily Tizard; the balance remaining with Alfred Mason. The Besants fight this in the courts & lose. John Tizard now becomes Masons partner
- 1870/71 Alfred Mason retires. Alfred Pope, with the help of his father John Allen Pope, purchases Alfred Masons 1/3 share of the business on behalf of his brother Edwin who had been trained as a brewer
- 1871 Death of John Tizard. Edwin Pope has 6 months to exercise an option to purchase John Tizard's interest in the business
- 1873/74 After various legal battles the business is in the sole hands of the Pope family
- 1873 4th April, Edwin & Alfred Pope trade as partners under the name of Eldridge Pope & Co.
- 1879 Alfred & Edwin purchased some 20 acres of land from the Prince of Wales

- 1880 The partnership agreement between Edwin & Alfred is formalised
- 1881 The new Dorchester Brewery opened, complete with railway sidings
- 1897 The Partnership was dissolved & a Limited Company was formed (Eldridge Pope & Co.Limited). The capital being raised by means of debenture stock to the value of £300,000 @ 4% p. a.
- Alfred's eldest son Rolph had by now joined the Company as a Director. The board consisted of Alfred Pope (chairman), Edwin Pope & Alfred Rolph Pope "The Major"
- 1900 Edward Alexander (Alex) Pope, Alfred's second son was made a Director
- 1900 The company purchased the Poole Brewery from George Pope (the third son of Alfred) and George was admitted to the Board of Directors which now comprised Alfred, Edwin, Rolph, Alex & George
- 1913 Clement Pope (Alfred fourth son) joins the brewery to take over from Alex due to the impending war
- 1919 Death of Alex from wounds received during the First World War
- 1921 The trade mark Huntsman (thought up by Clement) established with trading rights below that mythical line between Bristol and the Wash
- 1922 The brewery gutted by fire (brew house)
- 1922/24 The new brewery designed & being built under the supervision of Rolph
- 1924 Cecil Pope (elder son of Rolph) joined the brewery
- 1925 New brewery in production with Rolph responsible for production & Clement for retail sales. At this time an assistant brewer was appointed (the first non Pope)
- 1928 Death of Edwin. The Brewery Recreation Society received a bequest from Mr.Edwin's estate to enable each employee to have at least one good meal a year
- 1931 Death of Clement (succeeded by Philip Pope, second son of Rolph)
- 1934 Death of Alfred Pope, Rolph appointed chairman
- 1935 Expansion & improvement to the estate by raising capital via a further debenture. Philip being responsible for this expenditure

- 1939 The first pub manager appointed. War declared. Philip in forces 75th.Light A.A.battery. R.A.Rolph now over 70. Cecil running the brewery
- 1945 Cecil appointed Managing Director
- 1951 Death of Rolph Pope
- 1951 Cecil Pope appointed Chairman (Philip being appointed Managing Director)
- 1961 Anthony Pope (grandson of Alfred Pope) & Christopher Pope (great grandson of Alfred Pope) join the Board of Directors
- 1975 Cecil Pope retires as Chairman his place being taken by Philip
- 1974 Christopher Pope (elder son of Cecil) appointed Managing Director
- 1976 Death of Cecil Pope
- 1977 Martin Cree (great grandson of Alfred) joins the Board
- 1982 The Company's Shares quoted on the USM one of the first to enter the USM
- 1982 Philip resigns as Chairman. Christopher appointed Chairman & Jeremy (eldest son of Philip) appointed joint Managing Director with Christopher
- 1986 Dear Cousin reunion, all the descendants of John Allen Pope (who had retained their shares) arrived from all over the world
- 1988 Jeremy appointed Managing Director, Christopher - Chairman
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