

Half and half to mother-in-law: a history of beer 1837-1914

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On June 28 1838, the day of Queen Victoria's coronation, thousands of people around the country sat down to big, celebratory open-air dinners which consisted pretty much universally, it appears, of three staples: roast beef, plum pudding and beer. In Barnsley the 3,000 working men who ate 4,200 pounds of beef at a dinner on Market Hill were served with one quart of porter each to ease it down. This was still the age of porter, some 120 years after the style was developed, and the big London porter brewers, such as Barclay Perkins in Southwark, Meux in Tottenham Court Road, Truman in the East End and Whitbread on the edge of the City were still the biggest in the country, which meant the biggest in the world.

Beer was by far the most popular drink. Sir Walter Besant, writing in 1887, said that when Victoria succeeded her uncle, 'Beer was universally taken with dinner', and 'even at great dinner parties some of the guests would call for beer. In the restaurants every man would call for bitter ale, or stout, or half-and-half [ale and porter mixed] with his dinner, as a matter of course'.

For those who ate at home rather than in restaurants, the potboy still performed a valuable delivery service, ferrying drink from the alehouse, inn or tavern. George Dodd, in *The Food of London*, published in 1856, described the pot-boy and his 'tray filled with quarts and pints of dinner-beer, carried out to the houses of the customers', though Dodd complained that the pot-boy's tray 'seems to have undergone some change, for it is less frequently seen than "in days of yore"'. The potboy carried the pots in an open wooden container with a handle, rather like a carpenter's tool box, he wore an apron, and he seems to have advertised his services by bawling out. A poem by the 18th century writer Mary Darby Robinson called *London's Summer Morning* says that amid 'The din of hackney-coaches, waggons, carts', 'the pot-boy yells discordant'.

Outside many London pubs was a bench and a table where ticket porters, who waited at stands in the street to be hired, could put down their loads and order a pot of beer to keep them going: a porter is visible in Hogarth's *Beer Street*, drain-

ing his pot, while another porter can be seen in a picture of the White Hart pub in Knightsbridge from 1841, resting and drinking. There were at least two public houses called the Ticket Porter in London, one in Moorfields and the other (which was only closed and demolished around 1970) in Arthur Street, near London Bridge. Charles Dickens invented a riverside pub called the 'Six Jolly Fellowship Porters' in his novel *Our Mutual Friend*.

Victorian porter was already different from the drink as it had been known for much of the 18th century. Previously it had been made solely with brown malt, until the development of the saccharometer in the latter half of the 18th century showed what poor value for money brown malt was in making a strong beer, with much of the fermentable content destroyed by the heating that gave the malt its colour. Brewers then started using pale and amber malts in their porters, with enough brown malt to try to give it some darkness, often adding liquorice or burnt sugar to add to the depth of blackness. A man called Daniel Wheeler came up in 1817 with a patented method of roasting malt at 400° Fahrenheit or more for up to two hours in an apparatus very similar to a coffee roaster. The resultant black malt, or 'patent malt' gave 'extractive matter of a deep brown colour, ready soluble in hot or cold water ... A small quantity of malt thus prepared will suffice for the purpose of colouring beer or porter'. The big London porter brewers all took up

Wheeler's patent malt: Whitbread in 1817, Barclay Perkins in 1820, Truman by 1826.

In 1822 John Tuck was lamenting that 'the real taste of porter, as originally drank, is completely lost; and this by pale malts being introduced ... Our ancestors brewed porter entirely with high dried malt; while in the present day, in many houses, high dried or blown malts are entirely omitted'. However, Tuck admitted that although 'to say the truth, there is little of porter left but the name ... the taste of the public is so changed, that very few would be found to fancy its original flavour'. Originally porter had been kept for up to two years before being set out, with the tart, aged beer being mixed in the pub with newer, 'mild' porter to the customer's taste. But by the second decade of the 19th century public tastes had changed so much that 90% of porter was being sent out 'mild', or unaged.

The London brewers continued to use brown malt in their porter mashes, with Whitbread, for example, in 1850, brewing to a recipe that was 80% pale malt, 15% brown malt and five per cent black malt. But in Ireland, within a few years of the invention of patent malt, brewers were abandoning brown malt entirely: Guinness, for example, which had been using between 25% and 47% brown malt in its porter up to 1815, was probably using only pale malt and patent malt by 1824, and certainly by 1828. The result was a divergence in flavour between Irish porter (and stout) and London porter (and

stout), with the former now drier and, because of the burnt flavours from the patent malt, more bitter.

However, although when Victoria succeeded William IV porter was still widely admired and as widely copied - a writer in 1838 said that although porter was 'imitated by most of the countries of Europe', though 'in the manufacture of this liquor the English have not been excelled by any other nation', its popularity was declining in parallel with the gradual disappearance of the men who had given the drink its name.

Through the 19th century the ticket porters and fellowship porters lost their economic power, and dwindled in numbers and importance. When the West India Docks opened to the east of the City in 1802, the company that built them barred the ticket porters and fellowship porters from exercising any right to work there, a policy followed by most of the other dock owners as more big docks were built down-river. The railways arrived in London in the late 1830s, and the railway companies easily made sure all portering duties at their termini were done by their own staff, not the uptown ticket porters, who had once expected a monopoly on parcel and package carrying in the City. Rowland Hill's penny post removed much of their business carrying letters about. The fellowship porters had fallen to fewer than a hundred men earning their living from the trade in the 1860s, and by the late 1870s the ticket porters had vanished.

Porter the drink meanwhile had seen output in London hit 1.8 million barrels in 1823 the highest ever, after a continual rise that had lasted 50 years. But this was a peak that would never be surpassed: by 1830 porter production would be down 20 per cent on its 1823 level. Instead the increasingly popular drink was proper 'mild' beers, unaged - which is what mild meant - made for quick consumption, still quite dark, still with an OG or around 1050, made with some higher-dried malt and thus also dark in colour, but because it was unaged, sweeter and less acid than porter.

The 10 or 11 big porter brewers in London, found themselves losing business to the 80 or so ale brewers in the capital, some of whom, such as the Godings of Knightsbridge and the Red Lion brewery on the South Bank, Courage, opposite St Katharine's Dock, and Mann's and Charrington's in the East End, were growing to a size that rivalled the black beer brewers. The porter brewers soon began brewing mild ale themselves. Whitbread, then the third or fourth biggest brewer in London, whose production was entirely porter up to 1834, started brewing mild ale in 1835. Ale quickly rose from nowhere to more than 10% of production at Chiswell Street by 1839, and more than 20% by 1859, when Whitbread's porter sales had dropped by almost 30% compared to 25 years earlier. At Truman's, then fighting with Barclay Perkins to be London's biggest brewer, the swing from porter was stronger still, with ale making up

30% of production by 1859. All the same, London still had the reputation of selling the best porter, and pubs elsewhere would advertise the sale of the local ale, but London porter.

Although porter made up three quarters of London beer sales even in 1863, the pace against it was increasing. The rising clerical classes - the 'nobby' clerks, often ridiculed in contemporary newspapers for aping the 'nobs', their social superiors - were preferring the new Burton-style pale ales, which were seen as having more cachet, while the manual classes were turning completely away from the aged, stale beer their fathers drank. In 1872 the last porter-only brewery in London, Meux & Co, off Tottenham Court Road, gave up and began brewing ales as well. Around the middle of the 1870s both Whitbread and Truman (and, undoubtedly, the other historically big London porter brewers as well) began selling more ale than porter. By 1887 porter was down to only 30% of the London trade.

For smaller brewers the fall was even greater: at Young's of Wandsworth, porter had been 70% of production in 1835 and was down to just 16% in 1880. The result was the disappearance from big breweries of the huge porter vats that had been the fascination of visitors. The journalist Alfred Barnard wrote in 1889 that in the previous five years Mann's brewery in the East End of London had removed scores of vats of up to 500 barrels capacity, made from 22-foot staves of best British oak and once used for age-

ing the drink of the masses, because 'the fickle public has got tired of the vinous-flavoured vatted porter and transferred its affections to the new and luscious "mild ale" ... Our old friend porter, with its sombre hue and foaming head, is no longer the pet of fashion, but a bright and sparkling bitter, the colour of sherry and the condition of champagne, carries off the palm'.

By the 1860s, brewers were offering a range of nine or 10 different beers. Samuel Allsopp and Sons of Burton upon Trent, for example, sold nine different types of beer in 1861, of which four were milds, XX at 48 shillings a barrel, XXX at 54 shillings, F at 60 shillings and A at 66 shillings, their prices suggesting they ranged in strength from 1055 OG to 1090 or so. The Edinburgh brewer William Younger in 1862/3 sold its London customers four types of 'Scotch Mild Ale' from X at 38 shillings a barrel to a thundering XXXX at 68 shillings.

Drinkers in different parts of the country often favoured a particular shade of mild - deep oak-brown in East Anglia and London (where the comparatively chloride-rich well water was said to be good for dark mild ales: the *Encyclopedia Britannica* in 1911 declared that 'for ales of the Burton type a hard water is a necessity. For the brewing of mild ales, again, a water containing a certain proportion of chlorides is required'); pale in Manchester and Staffordshire; dark again in the West Midlands and Wales. An analysis of English beers conducted for

the *Encyclopedia Britannica* found that milds contained less alcohol for a given OG than pale ales, stock ales and porter: one mild with an OG of 1055, for example, contained the same amount of alcohol, 4.2%, as a bitter ale with an OG of 1047. The mild also contained two thirds more solids in the final beer than the bitter - 6.7% against 4% - suggesting a beer with a much fuller mouthfeel, and a sweeter one as well.

There seem to have been few specific regional styles of mild. In Scotland the perceived position of mild as a low-gravity beer was filled by the style known as 'light', in opposition to the stronger 'heavy', 'light' being, paradoxically, usually dark in colour. About the only real example of a regional mild came from the North East of England around Durham and Northumberland. The local miners went for a very sweet, dark mild ale, known specifically as Newcastle Mild or Newcastle sweet ale, with what Victorian observers called a 'sub-acid' flavour, that is, hovering on the edge of tart.

The beer was sweet and dark because that was the sort the local 'indifferent' water supply made best, and in 1890 the journalist Alfred Barnard was told the Durham and Northumberland pit-men held it in high repute and 'prefer it to any other'. Brewers such as John Barras (later a cornerstone of Newcastle Breweries) and Reid & Co pronounced themselves brewers of the 'celebrated' Newcastle Mild Ales. However, although Newcastle Mild was said to be the only

beer brewed in the town in 1863, by 1890 it was disappearing from Newcastle itself and the larger towns of the region, its place taken by more bitter ales from the brewers of Edinburgh and Burton. The North East was ahead of the rest of England: Julian Baker, writing in 1905, declared: 'mild or four-ale [so called for its price of four old pence a quart in Victorian Britain] ... is still the beverage of the working classes'. The popularity of mild with the labouring classes of late Victorian and Edwardian England meant that 'four-ale bar' became a synonym for public bar, a nickname that lasted long after mild ale stopped being four pence a quart.

While mild was to continue as Britain's most popular beer until the start of the 1960s, the middle classes in Victorian Britain preferred the pale beers of Burton on Trent and their equivalents from Edinburgh. There were two main types of pale beer from the east Midlands brewing town, one the India Pale Ale class of bitter beers, and the other, rather sweeter, called simply Burton Ale, although it was also made by other brewers right across the country. Burton Ale is almost forgotten now - almost the only surviving version is Young's Winter Warmer - but it was once very popular, particularly in winter and as a mixed drink. Its other name was Old Ale, and a mixture of Burton and mild was called an Old Six, from its cost, six pence a quart, Burton on its own being eight pence a quart. Burton and bitter together was known as 'mother-in-law' - old and bitter.

Burton Ale had its roots in the strong beers Burton had exported to Russia and the Baltic lands until high tariffs in the 1820s destroyed the trade. They turned instead to selling the beer in Britain, where a less sweet and more bitter version of the Russian original won a wide following. Burton Ale was generally extremely strong, even by pre-First World War standards. An analysis from 1843 by Jonathan Pereira gave 'Burton ale, first sort' an OG of 1111 to 1120, 'Burton ale, second sort' an OG of 1097 to 1111 and 'third sort' an OG of 1077 to 1092. For comparison, Pereira found porter had an OG of 1050 and 'good table beer' 1033 to 1039, while IPA was generally around 1065.

Bass, which used a red diamond trademark for its Burton ales, to distinguished them from the famous red triangle used on Bass India Pale Ale (the diamond mark was used for Burton ale from 1857, two years after the firm first put the red triangle on its pale ale labels), brewed four different strengths of Burton ale for the on-trade in the second half of the 19th century. They ranged from the powerful No 1, at over 1110 OG down through Nos 2 and 3 to No 4 at around 1070 OG. There were also two more grades for the private family trade, Nos 5 and 6, at around 1060 and 1055 OG. Worthington had a completely illogical lettering system which saw its best strong Burton ale called G, its second-best F and its third-best C or CK.

By the early 1890s brewers far outside

Staffordshire were producing a beer called Burton: Alfred Barnard, the Victorian author, found Burton ales being brewed at the Tyne Brewery in Newcastle; by John Smith's in Tadcaster; and by Eldridge Pope in Dorchester.

The Burton brewers did not forget how to brew the really strong beers they once made for Russia: Allsopp's, for one, still occasionally made its special Arctic ale. Alfred Barnard, on his trip to Samuel Allsopp & Sons in Burton in 1889, wrote that 'the celebrated "arctic ale" of which we have heard so much in days gone by' was specially brewed at the request of the government for the five-ship arctic expedition in 1852-54 under Sir Edward Belcher [which was looking for Sir John Franklin's famously lost expedition of 1845]. Belcher reported that the ale was 'a valuable antiscorbutic' [more enjoyable than vitamin C tablets, I bet!] and 'a great blessing to us, particularly for our sick, as long as it lasted', and that it refused to freeze until the temperature dropped to 12° Fahrenheit, or -11° Celsius.

Barnard tried the 1875 version and 'found it of a nice brown colour, and of a vinous, and at the same time, nutty flavour, and as sound as on the day it was brewed'. He wrote that it 'did not show a very high alcoholic content', though the OG was all of 1130, and an analysis in 1881 found it had an ABV (alcohol by volume) of 11.25% and 'owing to the large amount of unfermented extract still remaining in it, it must be considered as an extremely valuable and nourishing food'.

At more or less the same time as the Burton brewers were developing Burton ale they were also beginning to make the highly hopped pale beer that, because it had famously been exported to Bombay, Madras and Calcutta, became known as East India Pale Ale, India Pale Ale, or IPA. This had developed from the strong, pale October stock pale ales of the 18th century, which were normally kept to mature for up to two years. Even in 1898 Waltham Brothers' brewery in Stockwell, South London could say of its own India Pale Ale: 'This Ale is heavily hopped with the very best Kent hops, and nearly resembles the fine Farmhouse Stock-Beer of olden times'. A century earlier, meanwhile, when officers of the East Indiamen ships began shipping October ale out with them to sell to the civil and military employees of the East India Company, they found the four-month sea voyage round the Cape of Good Hope, crossing the Equator twice, magically matured the beer by the time it reached India.

The maker of the beer taken out to India was Hodgson's brewery in Bow, just up the river Lea from the East Indiamen's docks at Blackwall. However, early in the 1820s Hodgson's upset the East India shippers by trying to monopolise the supply of beer to India, and they invited the Burton brewers to see if they could match Hodgson's brew. They quickly proved they could surpass it, in large part because the gypsum-impregnated well waters of Burton are much better for brewing bitter pale ales than London water is.

An idea of what early IPAs tasted like comes from a book written in 1843 by Jonathan Pereira, who said that 'the Pale Ale prepared for the India market, and, therefore, commonly known as the Indian Pale Ale, is ... carefully fermented, so as to be devoid of all sweetness, or, in other words, to be dry; and it contains double the usual quantity of hops; it forms, therefore, a most valuable restorative beverage for invalids and convalescents'.

There is some evidence that while pale ales for export were, massively hopped, at six pounds per barrel or more, 'domestic' IPAs were hopped at getting on for half that rate. The strengths, at least, of early Burton IPAs seem to be much the same as later 19th century versions, at around 1065-1075 OG. Pale ale production in Burton leapt dramatically from 1839, the year the railway first arrived in Burton, when it rose nearly 50% in 12 months, to just under 17,000 barrels. By 1849 Bass's pale ale production has risen more than three-fold, to 56,000 barrels a year, of which only around 10 or 12% was exported to India.

The railway allowed Burton's brewers to meet what was obviously a growing demand for pale bitter beers from the 1830s. India Pale Ale was the king of bitter beers, but it was expensive; Burton pale ale sold in Britain for 8d a quart retail, twice as much as either porter or lesser pale beers. By the middle of the 1840s, at least, other brewers were starting to brew a cheaper 'East India Pale Ale' or 'India Pale Ale' to compete with

the Burton brewers' product. Most brewers outside Burton sold their IPA or EIPA at 1s 6d a gallon wholesale, or 7d a pot retail, implying an OG of around 1065 to 1075.

Attempts to imitate Burton pale ale were hampered by the need to brew with similar hard sulphate-impregnated water, which could be found in only a few places. From the 1850s several London brewers had set up branch breweries in Burton to try to brew the pale ales they could not make properly with London water. Eventually, a chemist called CW Vincent discovered how to reproduce Burton water everywhere. His analysis of the town's water in 1878 identified the minerals particularly gypsum, or calcium sulphate, that gave pale ales brewed in the town a drier, more bitter flavour and a brighter appearance than ales from areas without Burton's mineral advantages. From this, brewers in soft water areas now knew what to do to emulate North Staffordshire's finest: no need to move to Burton, just add gypsum to your mashing water.

A perennial problem facing brewers was what to do with the excess yeast the brewing process generated. If the yeast was left in the beer it would make for a cloudy pint, with the danger that the yeast would 'autolyse', or dissolve through its own enzymes, giving a yeast-bitten flavour to the beer.

In 1838 a Liverpool brewer called Peter Walker, originally from Ayr in Scotland

invented a system of banks of casks arranged in double rows, called unions. Each had a swan-neck pipe in the top of the cask through which the excess yeast foamed, dropping into a trough above the twin rows of casks. The yeast and beer separated out in the troughs, and the beer flowed back down into the casks.

Walker's patent system was taken up by brewers around the country, from Edinburgh to London. However, it was the brewers of Burton upon Trent who took most eagerly to this method of brewing, which became known as a result as the Burton union system. When the journalist Alfred Barnard visited Burton around 1890 he found all the brewers he saw using the union system to finish off their pale ales. Each brewer had hundreds, sometimes thousands of union casks, joined in sets of up to 30.

IPA was, like Burton Ale, one of the more expensive beers, and brewers developed cheaper, weaker versions of pale ale, which became known as bitter ale, or bitter beer, bitter for short. It sold at six pence a quart, and was thus also known as 'six-ale'. There does not appear to have been a beer called 'bitter' much before the time that Victoria came to the throne. What seems to have happened is that the name 'bitter' came about because drinkers wanted to differentiate the well-hopped, matured pale ales, which were gaining a place in brewers' portfolios by the start of the 1840s, from the sweeter, less-aged and generally less hopped mild ales that, until then, had

been almost the only alternative to porter and stout. Brewers called, and continued to call, the new drink 'pale ale'. Young's, for example, still sends its 'ordinary' bitter out in casks labelled PA for Pale Ale, exactly the same as when it was first brewed in 1864, while casks of its Special bitter are marked 'SPA'.

However, there were no pump-clips on the handles of the beer engines in Victorian pubs (pump-clips did not come into wide use until the 1950s), and while brewers could dictate the nomenclature of the new drink on labels of the bottled versions (which is why we have bottled pale ale, not bottled bitter), drinkers themselves could decide what they were going to call the draught version when they ordered it. They kept the name 'ale' for the old, mild style of drink and called the new one by a name that defined and contrasted it - bitter. By 1855 *Punch* magazine was making jokes about the 'fast young gents' who drank 'Bitter Beer' living an 'embittered existence'.

Although pale bitter ales were increasingly popular from the 1850s, particularly among the middle classes, they were still a minority taste, in part because they were more expensive. Bitter was six pence a 'pot', or quart, in the pub and thus sometimes known as 'six-ale', while mild, 'four-ale', was a third cheaper at four pence a pot. In the 1890s at Steward and Patteson, the big Norwich brewer, pale and light bitter ales made up only five per cent of production.

There was a style of hopped pale ale that existed independently of the IPA tradition, which went by the name KK or AK. Although the K style of bitter pale ale was probably an old one, evidence is lacking: one of the first mentions in print is in 1855 in an advertisement for the Stafford Brewery, which was selling 'Pale India Ale' at 18 pence a gallon, and AK Ale, 'a delicate bitter ale', at 14 pence a gallon.

Brewers seem to have maintained a deliberate difference between the two types of bitter beer: lower-gravity, lighter-coloured, less-hopped AK light bitters; and slightly darker, hoppier, stronger 'Pale Ales', often designated PA. The brewing books of Garne & Sons of Burford, Oxfordshire in 1912 show AK being brewed at an OG of 1040 and with a colour of 14, a reddish-brown hue, while PA was brewed to an OG of 1056 and with a colour of 18, a darker medium brown. The difference is confirmed by contemporary comments on the two beers. Alfred Barnard sampled an AK brewed by Rogers of Bristol in 1889, which he described as 'a bright sparkling beverage of a rich golden colour and ... a nice delicate hop flavour'. Of Whitbread's Pale Ale, on the other hand, a more standard bitter, he wrote that it tasted 'well of the hop', though it too looked 'both bright and sparkling'. Crowley's brewery in Croydon High Street in 1900 described its AK in one of its advertisements as 'a Bitter Ale of sound quality with a delicate Hop flavour', and the frequent description of AK in Victorian advertisements as 'for family use' suggests a not-too-bitter beer.

The description of AK as 'for family use' is a reminder that beer was still a highly popular mealtime drink at home, despite Gladstone's attempts in his 1861 budget to popularise wine drinking by reducing tariffs. Even in the second half of the 19th century the cask of ale at home, delivered by the brewery roundsman, was still common, and many small concerns advertised themselves specifically as 'family brewers'. Young's of Hertford, for example, ran ads in the local paper in the 1870s promoting its 'superior pale bitter ales, brewed expressly for the supply of Private Families and delivered in 9 or 18 gallon casks ... AK for family use, 10d per gallon'.

Ten (old) pence or one shilling a gallon were the normal prices for beers sold as 'family ale', 'table ale' or 'dinner ale', implying OGs of around 1035 to 1045. They were the weakest Victorian beers, apart from the harvest ales sold to ease the thirsts of farm workers in hot August fields.

But by the 1880s, while a pint of beer with dinner or supper was still popular, there was less demand for a whole 4 1/2 gallon cask of dinner ale to be delivered to the family home. Overall beer consumption was falling, and the chances of the beer turning sour before it was used were too great.

Even a gallon was too much for many families, however: fortunately the hour had brought forward its hero: Henry Barrett. Bottled beers had been available

for centuries, and Whitbread had started a considerable bottling operation in 1870. But these were corked bottles, which meant brewers needed an army of workers to knock home the corks (Whitbread employed more than a hundred corks, each man working a 12-hour day, in 1886). They were also inconvenient for the drinker: a corkscrew was always required, and bottles could not be easily resealed. In 1879 Barrett invented the screwtop beer bottle, a cheap, convenient, reusable container that meant little or no waste for the man desiring his lunchtime or supertime pint.

The screw top caught on rapidly (Whitbread started using them in 1886) and brought in 30 years when almost every brewery had to have a bottled dinner ale or its equivalent. Even a tiny concern such as the Richmond Brewery, in Friars Lane, just off Richmond Green, Surrey, which brewed an AK Dinner Ale, offered its customers screw-topped imperial pint bottles at 2s 6d a dozen in 1887.

Most dinner ales were light ales, though Ward's of Foxearth, Essex had 'Special Dark Family Ale'; the Friary Brewery Company in Guildford bottled something called 'Anglo Lager Dinner Ale' and Young's of Wandsworth brewed 'Family Stout'.

But all these early bottled beers were naturally conditioned, which meant a yeast deposit, and the chance of cloudy beer if the customer did not take care. In 1897 the brewing scientist Horace Brown was

reporting to the Institute of Brewing that in the United States they had solved the problems involved in chilling and filtering beers so that they would remain 'bright' in the bottle. It did not take long for the technology to cross the Atlantic. By 1899 the Notting Hill Brewery Company in West London was advertising its 'Sparkling Dinner Ale' as 'a revolution in English bottled beers, produced entirely on a new system ... no deposit, no sediment, brilliant to the last drop, no waste whatever'.

The other newly popular beer at the end of the 19th century was stout, the dark beer originally known as 'stout porter', meaning 'strong porter', which was increasingly drunk for its supposed restorative qualities. When the Russian market was closed to strong English ales in the 1820s, porters and stouts were exempt, and the London brewers soon produced very strong versions of stout aimed at the Russian court and known for that reason as 'imperial' stout. But weaker versions of stout were gaining popularity at home. Even in 1861, Mrs Beeton, in her *Book of Household Management*, was recommending it for nursing mothers: 'As the best tonic, and the most efficacious indirect stimulant that a mother can take at such times, there is no potation equal to porter and stout, or, what is better still, an equal part of porter and stout'.

The health-giving nature of stout was an image Victorian and Edwardian brewers played to. In 1887, for example, Waltham Brothers' brewery in Stockwell, South West London was calling its SN stout an

'alimentary tonic', 'particularly suited for invalids, ladies nursing or anyone requiring a good sound strengthening beverage', while warning that its Double Stout was 'Highly nutritious, but too strong for some invalids'.

Oatmeal stout, a variant that appeared around the end of the 19th century, was pushed as even better than ordinary stout for the enfeebled: the Rochdale and Manor Brewery in Lancashire in 1909, for example, advertised its Oatmeal Nourishing Stout as 'Refreshing and strengthening'.

The idea of a 'milk beer', made with an addition of unfermentable lactose sugar, derived from milk, to give a sweeter brew had first been suggested in 1875. In 1910 the Kentish brewer Mackeson of Hythe had acquired the patents to a method of brewing with lactose, which was put into the wort at a rate of nine pounds to the barrel, half an ounce per pint. The new beer was called 'milk stout': 'stout' was now on its way to having the meaning 'black beer' rather than strong beer. Mackeson soon licensed the production of milk stout to other brewers: Massey's Burnley Brewery was advertising its 'new Milk Stout' by January 1911, for example, and 13 other brewers were also making milk stout by 1912.

Two years later came the First World War, which, apart from the appalling loss of life, was to have a devastating impact on Britain's brewing traditions. But that is another story.