

DOOMED TO FAILURE? THE HISTORY OF BREWING IN ALDERSHOT

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Aldershot is the dullest of all dull places. It is a prison in the middle of a desert. Officers have scarcely anything to do except drill and yawn; the privates have scarcely anything to do but drill and drink.¹

In 1854 the arrival of the British army changed Aldershot forever. The previously small village boomed on the back of the arrival of the military. Some people made a lot of money; others lost a lot of money. Beer houses, pubs and hotels sprang up in large numbers, many were far from reputable. Despite the local water being good for brewing and hops being grown in the town; the beer these establishments sold was rarely brewed in Aldershot. Thriving breweries based in Alton, Farnham, Guildford, Hartley Wintney and Holybourne were prominent amongst those building licensed premises in the town, perhaps shutting the door on the chances of an Aldershot based brewery succeeding. The early days saw some small scale brewing; large scale brewing would not arrive until nearly 30 years after the army. None of the ventures would thrive.

Commercial brewing in Aldershot began on a small scale. William Sheldrake's 1859 *A guide to Aldershot and its neighbourhood* features an advert for 'The Eagle Brewery and Boulter's Hotel, High Street'. (Boulter's Hotel has just been surrendered to Rushmoor Council by The Source. Rushmoor are briefing that it needs substantial repairs and demolition looks likely. Suggest you put a sentence to that effect where it currently states that the building is used by The Source.) The hotel was founded in 1857 by John Boulter, he bought the land that year from local land owner and farmer, Richard Allden. It appears that John may have started brewing in 1859 as adverts for his business in the *Aldershot Military Gazette* can be found early that year that don't

mention a brewery, later on in the year he lists himself as a brewer. By 1860 the brewery had the contract to supply the Royal Pavilion in Aldershot with beer, allowing his adverts to start stating 'By appointment to Her Majesty'. (The Royal Pavilion was a permanent building on the edge of Aldershot, maintained for the royal family to use as a temporary home.) John promptly changed the brewery name to The Royal Eagle Brewery, the first reference we have found being on 7 July 1860 when that name was used in an *Aldershot Military Gazette* advert. This advert describes John as a brewer, wine, spirit, ale and cyder merchant, listing his beers as Boulter's Mild Bitter Ale, Champagne Ale, Pale Ale, Royal Ale - the brew supplied to the Royal Pavilion, Royal Crimean Ale - his strongest beer, and Approved Porter, listed as 'the same as Reid's of London'. A week before he had two adverts in the paper; the first read

Boulter's Royal Aldershot Ale versus Wine ... a wholesome exhilarating drink, gently stimulating the digestive organs of the dyspeptic, and greatly nourishing the strength of the robust. No sugar is used in its manufacture; and being boiled in wood by means of steam, the wort does not become injured by connection with copper.

The second advert read

The water has been analysed and proved to be exceedingly pure, and strongly impregnated with ferruginous matter. To all, especially invalids, BOULTER'S HOME BREWED is strongly recommended as the good effects of such a chalybeate will prove highly beneficial.

It appears that John, who was also a hotel keeper, auctioneer, publican's broker, land, wine, cider and brewery agent, took a temporary break from brewing

around late 1860. W. Adams started advertising as a brewer in the *Aldershot Military Gazette* in October 1860. On 7 January 1861 his advert was amended to state

W. Adams. The only brewer in Aldershot, respectfully informs the inhabitants of town and camp, they can be supplied with genuine home-brewed Ale at his brewery opposite the Beehive Inn.

Adams' brewery was short lived. His last advert as a brewer appears in the newspaper dated 7 September 1861, a week later his advert stated

To BREWERS and PUBLICANS TO BE SOLD a Two-Quarter BREWERY PLANT suitable to any one having a free house and wishing to brew their own beer; everything nearly new and in excellent order - Apply on the premises, at the Hop Bind; or by letter to W. ADAMS, High Street, Aldershot.

The advert ran for three weeks. There is an error in the advert; the Hop Bind was actually called the Hop Bine. The Hop Bine beer house has long since been demolished. It was situated between St George's Road East and St Michael's Road, fitting the description of opposite The Beehive. It seems possible the brewery kit was moved to Union Street as on 19 April 1862 the *Aldershot Military Gazette* carried an advert from Mr T.D. Carter stating he had re-opened The Argyle 'for the sale of Barclay and Perkins genuine Stout and Porter and home brewed Ales. A trial will prove'. Unfortunately it appears that a trial did not prove. The adverts cease appearing in July 1862 and a Mr E. Govier is running the pub by October 1863, Mr Govier was declared bankrupt a year later. The General Stingo in North Lane is listed as brewing its own beer at the 1860 Licencing Session. Another brew pub is probably revealed by a November 1861 court case which saw Guildford maltster Mr Freakes successfully sue Mr Hill, the owner of the New Inn, High Street, for failing to pay for two quarters of malt delivered on 14 April 1860. During the drop off at the New Inn, Mr Freakes also supplied John Boulter with malt. (The Beehive was subsequently rebuilt and closed as a pub in 2014. The Argyle is now home to Clark's Shoes, it has been substantially re-built. The General Stingo survives to this day as The Star Off Licence and the New Inn has been demolished.)

Whilst John Boulter does appear to have re-started brewing, his brewery was also short lived. By 12 July 1862 his adverts refer to him as a wine, spirit and cyder merchant and agent for Allsopp's Ales. There is no mention of his brewery. On 29 July 1863 John auctioned off The Royal Eagle Brewery, comprising

the whole of the brewing plant, comprising a steam boiler, 2 barrel copper, and top, malt crusher (by Pontifex), a London built six barrel dray, new working stillions, saccharometer, squares, rounds and backs, a useful mare, 50 barrels of sound ale, a quantity of casks and other effects.²

John himself acted as auctioneer. The auction also included two, un-named, public houses to be sold or let however they went as a separate lot and may not have been tied to the brewery. If sold, the brewery went as a job lot as the *Aldershot Military Gazette* featured an advert for the brewery on 8 August 1863 announcing that through harvest time they would sell 'sound and strong ale ... at six pence per gallon'. However in September 1863 John is recorded as converting the brewery into a wine and spirits store. This saw him add a door and window. This suggests the brewery did not sell and the harvest offer was John's way of selling off the 50 barrels of beer. The wine and spirits store conversion led to problems, Richard Allden thought that John had no right to access the property from Albert Road and blocked the new door up. In September 1864 the two went to court, John won. The same month John unsuccessfully objected to The Cannon Inn being granted a spirits licence, when he bought the land for Boulter's Hotel from Richard Allden it was agreed that no other ground in the road would be sold for similar purposes. John stated that since the building of permanent barracks trade in the town had fallen off considerably. The court description of John was a wine, spirits and cider merchant. In July 1864 he expanded his range and became an ale merchant again, advertising in the *Aldershot Military Gazette* that he had been appointed an agent for the sale of Ashby's ales, they subsequently also supplied the hotel. A letter in the *Aldershot Military Gazette* dated 27 October 1866, entitled 'The two great moral evils' concerning alcohol and prostitution confirms that there was no brewery, or brewer, resident in Aldershot at that time.

John Boulter, a native of Worcestershire, arrived in Aldershot shortly after the army. He was to spend

twelve years in his adopted home town. John quickly became prominent locally; an advert for Greenwood's butchers in the *Aldershot Military Gazette* of 29 November 1859 noted they were located four doors from Boulter's Hotel. Having got an alcohol licence, in 1867 John attended the Aldershot licensing session and objected to the issuing of any new licences, arguing there were too many in Aldershot. John died whilst running the Cambridge Hotel, Cambridge Town on 5 October 1870, in his 57th year. (Anna Maria, his wife, pre-deceased him, dying on 2 March 1862. Cambridge Town was re-named Camberley in 1877 due to problems caused by the old name for the General Post Office.) John took over the Cambridge Hotel around April 1867, after a period of ill health in winter 1866. The previous occupant, Robert Wallace, had gone bankrupt owing £950, of which £290 was owed to John. John also had debts. On 17 November 1866 the *Aldershot Military Gazette* carried an advert from him offering a £5 reward to anyone who could identify the person claiming he had compounded his debts to his creditors and £10 to anyone who could prove that he had done so. Initially John owned both Boulter's and Cambridge Hotels however he had disposed of Boulter's Hotel by March 1868. On 4 April the *Aldershot Military Gazette* reported that Aldershot Victoria Cricket Club had hosted their AGM at 'Mr. Bowles's Boulter's Hotel'.

Albert Road has subsequently been re-named Boulter's Road in recognition of John's good works locally; he sat on the Local Board of Health and the Board of Guardians, acting as Overseer for a spell. John resigned from the Guardians in March 1865 after submitting a tender to supply the authority with wine and spirits. His term was just a few weeks short of ending when he resigned. However John subsequently returned to the role and he found himself embroiled in the fall out following the death of 46 year old tailor and Aldershot resident John Tizzard on 4 April 1866. John was a pauper, the doctor had refused to attend as no-one would guarantee payment. The Inquest jury was asked to consider whether failings by the Aldershot Poor Law Board had contributed towards the death. Strangely John appears to have been a juror, to have publicly criticised the failure to provide assistance and can be found signing letters to the Poor Law Board in London as Overseer. This was a sensitive case as in November 1865 a London woman, Sarah Trusty, had died after being refused admission to her local workhouse, which

caused a scandal. On 9 November John wrote to the *Aldershot Military Gazette* stating

The case of Tizzard, like that of Sarah Trusty's, by their publication, do a vast deal of good, as it leads reflecting persons to consider whether the large amount of money they so generously pay in discharge of the poor rates is to be applied solely to defray the salaries of officials, for doing nothing, and to supply legs of mutton, sirloins of beef, lamb and other luxuries for the master who refuses the sick and needy the crumbs which fall from his sumptuous table.

John's anger may have been stoked by his knowledge of what was occurring at Farnham workhouse, which served Aldershot. On 19 October 1867 *The Lancet* revealed appalling conditions there, creating a national scandal. John was called as a witness in the subsequent inquiry; he confirmed that conditions in the workhouse had been disgraceful. To his credit John had previously been involved in trying to expose the Farnham Union conditions; in 1859 he had made a public allegation of neglect against the medical officers of Farnham Union. He also held other local roles; in September 1863 he was Hon. Sec of the Aldershot Provisional Committee concerning the Farnham, Aldershot and Woking railway. John also helped call a meeting at Boulter's Hotel on the 24 April 1865 to debate where best to build Aldershot's railway station. He was also one of the driving forces behind the foundation of Aldershot Gas Company, in an attempt to secure a consistent supply of gas for the town, after publicly appealing for such a move.

John's business was impacted by the arrival of the railway; this may help explain why he took on the Cambridge Hotel. At the 1865 meeting concerning the best location for the station, John stated that the coming of the railway would cut his property in two. On 8 October 1866 John auctioned off the content of his wine and spirits store at 94, High Street as the premises was needed for the coming of the railway. This shows that at least part of what had been his land was impacted by demolition to allow the railway's building. It seems likely that his old brewery now lies underneath the railway track, as do two old beer houses.

What is clear is that few pubs in the expanding town of Aldershot sold beer brewed in the town. On 17 September 1864 an *Aldershot Military Gazette* article

stated that a big concern about the number of pubs in Aldershot was that, with the exception of about half a dozen pubs, the money went into the hands of big brewers, based many miles away who were not seen in and invested little money in the town. The presence of the army meant that there were numerous other newspaper adverts for breweries in local newspapers however they were either agents or brewery stores. For example Alton Brewery Company, owned by Henry Hall, had a stores / agents on High Street in the 1860's. This is sometimes reported as a brewery however in researching this article we have found nothing to suggest brewing ever occurred there.

In the 1880s large scale brewing finally arrived in Aldershot. The Aldershot Brewery Co. Ltd. was incorporated on 4 February 1879, with a capital of £10,000 in £5 shares, though the brewery itself didn't appear until 1881, developed by Ipswich brewer Thomas Shelldrake. On 30 December 1880 the *Commercial Gazette* reported that the Aldershot Brewery Company had voluntarily agreed to be wound up. Aldershot Brewery Company (Limited) appears to have been re-incorporated on 11 December 1882 with a capital of £60,000 via 12,000 shares at £5 each. (That would be just over half a million pounds in modern money.)

Planning permission was granted on 7 January 1881. The building, a substantial tower brewery, was designed by local architect John St. Clair Mulley. The design proved to be slightly flawed and on 5 February 1884 a Martin, Wells & Co. plan to demolish one shed, replacing it with a shed with a cellar underneath and a coopers shop was granted planning permission. Two stables followed on 4 July 1888; the planning permission documentation suggests they were three and six stall stables however subsequent sales inventories describe them as three and four stall stables.

The biggest brewery ever to be built in Aldershot occupied the site now housing Phoenix Court flats, bounded by Birchett, Cavendish and Elms Roads. Like John Boulter's brewery this was also built on land once owned by Richard Allden, though it had passed through other hands before the brewery was built. On 14 August 1880 James Cholmeley Russell of Lincoln's Inn, London, sold five parcels of land to Messrs. Martin, Wells & Co., Aldershot based builders, for £4500. On 5 August 1881 Ipswich based brewer Thomas Shelldrake

took out a 60 year lease at £33 10s p.a. on four of the parcels. The deal included a two year fixed price buy out option at £670, Thomas utilised this buying the site on 6 April 1882, though one small area of land remained leased from Martin, Wells. Twelve days later he mortgaged the site for £3,900 with John Berry of Sutton and Anthony Berry of the Bank of England. On 21 April 1882 he took out a second mortgage, for £100 with H.D. Poole, though this was soon transferred to the Berry's. More mortgages followed, £1,000 from James Yelverton on 12 June 1882 and another mortgage from Mr Poole for £1,000 on 15 May 1883. This may be explained by the fact the company appeared in the High Court on 18 May 1883 due to an overdue debt of £525 owed to James Blake. The Court put a charge for that amount, plus £5 a year to be re-paid when the company was sold. Seven days later Thomas borrowed £200 from John Knight and Owen Ward at 7% interest. There was also £500 from Martin, Wells & Co.

Perhaps unsurprisingly in view of the constant re-mortgaging, Thomas Shelldrake did not stay as owner for long. On 5 March 1883 *The Pall Mall Gazette* carried an advert offering investors the opportunity to purchase some of the 12,000 shares to aid a consortium takeover of the company. Applications closed a week later with letters of allocation being posted on 7 April. 2874 shares had already been purchased when the advert appeared, 1000 were reserved for Thomas Shelldrake as part payment for the brewery. (The advert also appeared in the *Hampshire Advertiser*, *London Evening News*, *London Standard* and *Morning Post* that week in slightly amended form.) The sale was formally completed on November 19 1883 for £13,025. This total consisted of £3,000 cash, the new owners taking on £8,025 in mortgages, £500 to Thomas Shelldrake in paid up shares within 14 days, £500 cash to Thomas Shelldrake after six months if he had cleared the debts to John Knight and James Ward - he did in February 1884 - and £1,000 in first debentures to Thomas Shelldrake. The deal included a North Camp beer house called 'The Aldershot Brewery Tap.' This was on a 14 year lease at £25 p.a. with the option to buy at £550. £1,200 in debentures were to be issued at 5%.

The incoming board of directors had a military feel with the directors being Lieutenant General George FitzGeorge, Major General Fulton, Colonel John William Garlick, Captain R.R. Luscombe, Captain F.H.

Newton and Captain Conway Seymour. The Company Secretary was Captain James John Mallandaine, the company offices were 49, Pall Mall in London. This address appeared on a design registered with the Patent Office in 1883, it featured 15 cannon balls - taken from Aldershot Urban Council's coat of arms - and a shield on a Union flag background. The application was withdrawn before being completed. (All of the board had London residences or clubs other than Colonel Garlick who lived at Ryde, Isle of Wight.) The advert stated that share revenue was for 'the purpose of purchasing the freehold brewery and premises ... the Plant, Machinery, Casks, Horses, Drays, Utensils in Trade and all fixtures thereof and therein'. The brewery is described as

a lofty brick built and slated structure fitted with all the latest modern improvements for Brewing Ale, Stout and Porter on a large scale, the whole forming a handsome block containing Beer, Hop and Malt Stores and all the usual requirements for an extensive trade. The machinery employed is of the most modern construction and is furnished with all the latest improvements; it was supplied by the following eminent firms:- The Plant by Messrs. Lellewin and James of Bristol and Messrs. Pontifex and Co of London; the Engines and Boilers are by Messrs. Coneybeare of Greenwich; whilst the refrigerators are from Messrs. Morton's manufactory at Burton-Upon-Trent.

The advert noted there was no other brewery in the town, a civilian population of about 12,000 and estimated the consumption of beer and porter in 16 regimental canteens at about £72,000 p.a. and 36 messes at about £8,000 'at a time of peace'. The advert noted that the water was good for brewing with and that output from the brewery was highly regarded. They were to employ a local agent who had a proven track record in profitable dealings with the army and expected to make £1,000 p.a. by acting as agents for Burton Ales as well as acting as agents for wine growers and distillers and manufacturing aerated waters. The advert stated that they saw the army as the prime customer. The new owners calculated the brewery could brew 600 barrels per week and hoped to sell at 30s a barrel, citing a profit margin of 15 - 17.5%. The agreement saw them retain the services of Thomas Sheldrake as manager for two years and until a dividend of 10% had been paid by the company. They anticipated that £10,000 would be needed to buy the freehold, plant and provide the working capital to ensure a dividend of 10% p.a. (Colonel

Garlick's involvement was short term as he died at Ryde on 6 October 1885 in his 47th year, his death notice lists him as a Lieutenant Colonel and ex 106th Bombay Light Infantry. Thomas Sheldrake appears to have left before the two years was up. In the London Standard dated 19 October 1892 a report appears on his bankruptcy hearing. Thomas owed £39,188 and had assets of £3,150. He told the court he had been a brewer in Aldershot until 1882 or 1883 but had then become a financial and commission agent. In 1888 he returned to brewing at the White Hart brewery in Whitechapel where he was later joined by a partner named William Wrentmore. The two subsequently moved the re-named Sheldrake and Wrentmore brewery to Rothsay Street, Rotherhithe in 1890 however the brewery never made money after the relocation, leading to the bankruptcy. William Wrentmore also went bankrupt in December 1892. His bankruptcy hearing was told that William was just 21 when he joined the business on the back of a £10,000 investment by his father.)

The 1882 company quickly hit bad publicity. On 31 July 1883 *The London Evening News* reported that a court hearing following the bankruptcy on 19 June of actuary Samuel John Shrubbs, he had unsecured debts of £27,011 8s 4d and assets of £7,772 2s 2d, was held over for a few days after the creditors Counsel expressed interest in discovering exactly what links Samuel had with Aldershot Brewery Company Ltd and another company. This appears to be the same Samuel John Shrubbs who had a leading role in the demise of Hercules Insurance Company in 1869. If so, Samuel started out as a grocer in Birmingham but went bankrupt. In 1863 he was involved in setting up Hercules. Prior to that Samuel worked for Liverpool and London Insurance Company. Hercules was appallingly run. In two years the directors squandered all £10,000 of the share capital and all income. In 1866 a new company was set up with a share capital of up to £50,000, with a premium of £10,000 being used to buy out the existing shareholders, presumably including the management. The new company expanded from fire and life insurance into marine insurance. In 1868 they did a deal with International Life Assurance in an attempt to secure more funds however International also turned out to be in an appalling state. The same year Hercules started to do business with the Prudential, who then took them over. In January 1869 Hercules were liquidated with a judgement they should pay £329,685

compensation to Prudential. Little of this money was ever paid. It appears that Samuel also owned the Tettenhall Brewery in Staffordshire for a short period in 1869. The brief nature of his ownership may be explained by the fact that the police took an interest in events at Hercules and declared him a wanted man, offering a 50/- reward for his apprehension. This surely explains why he moved to Paris around that time, having lived in St. Albans at the point of purchase. However, the only court cases we can find concerning the collapse of Hercules were dropped without going to full trial. As if that wasn't enough drama for one life, Samuel also survived his first class train carriage being derailed at Dalston Junction in 1866 and appears to be the same man who was sued for breaching a promise to marry. In May 1877 a young barmaid, aged about 25, named Annie Cecilia Taylor sued a Samuel John Shrubbs, an auditor and actuary working in London with links to St. Albans, for breaching a promise to marry her. Annie had started working as a barmaid to support her mother and six siblings when her father died. During the course of her work she met Samuel, who was married but claimed to be a widower. An engagement ring was procured and a marriage date decided upon before Samuel asked her to run away and live with him. Shortly afterwards she heard rumours he was married. By then Samuel had persuaded her to give up her £15 p.a. job and given her either £15 or £45, newspaper reports vary, with a promise of £10 a month. The court ruled in Annie's favour and Samuel was ordered to pay £500 in compensation.

More bad publicity followed in the form of an attack on the composition of the board. On 24 March 1883 what looks like a syndicated article appeared in both the *Wrexham Advertiser* and *Tamworth Herald* stating

the composition of the 'Boards' of the Aldershot Brewery Company is certainly suggestive of unfair interference with trade on the part of those whose position makes such interference particularly invidious. The beer brewed by Aldershot Brewery Company may be very good, for anything we know, but there is something very infra dig in Officers acting as brewery managers and making an income out of selling beer to their men.

The author need not have worried about the board making money, brewing in Aldershot had a chequered history financially. The company was listed in *The*

London Gazette on 3 September 1886 with a note that it would be wound up and dissolved in three months unless due cause not to was presented, though this appears have been a shell company as it was listed as founded in 1879 not the 1882 company. This suggests that the 1880 reports the company was to be voluntarily wound up were printed before a change of mind

The 1882 company did not fare much better. On 25 May 1884 most of the mortgages were transferred to Joseph Jarrett though in August the company paid up the mortgage held by James Yelverton. There was a petition to wind the company up heard on 26 February 1886 and they were back in court for another winding up order on 17 November 1888. This may explain a £1,000 mortgage taken from George FitzGeorge on 28 June 1888. In between the two winding up orders James Blake rescinded his charge over the brewery worth £525 plus interest in return for £600 in debentures, in doing so he plaintively noted he hadn't actually received any interest from the company. On 18 October 1888 the company renewed the lease on the part of the property that was still owned by Martin, Wells & Co, taking out a seven year lease at £62 p.a. with an option to purchase price set at £1,240.

On 29 April 1890 the company informed debenture holders they had entered into negotiations to sell the business as a going concern and that, in the meantime, no provision had been made for the interest they were due. The November 1889 debenture interest payment had also failed to appear. The 1890 letter ended with an appeal to the debenture holders not to present the relevant coupons to their bank for payment or to take any other actions that might 'harass the Company at this moment'.³ Clearly takeover negotiations failed as on 2 June 1890 George FitzGeorge asked the High Court to wind Aldershot Brewery Company up, acting as a creditor on behalf of his fellow debenture holders. The same day Messrs. Edwin Fox and Bousfield of London tried to auction off four 6% debentures in the Brewery. A letter survives, in the Isle of Wight Records Office, from the National Provincial Bank dated 16 June 1890 concerning a meeting of debenture holders in The Aldershot Brewery Company Limited. The letter confirms the debenture holders decided to auction the company, which had been losing £25 a week for a while, at the first possible opportunity, preferably within a month. In reality it took longer. (£25 would be about £2,250 a week in modern money.) The process drifted on until 4

September 1891 when local receiver J. Alfred Eggar attempted to auction off the brewery site and equipment as a going concern at The Royal Hotel, Aldershot. An advert for the auction confirms that this was the only brewery in Aldershot.⁴ The 10 quarter plant was included and valued at £1,154. The brewery had produced 'upwards of 5,200 barrels during 1889',⁵ a long way short of the consortiums plans for 600 barrels a week. The 1890 collapse clearly had ramifications for some. On 12 July 1891 *The Bucks Herald* reported that brewery employee Mr B. Taplin sued Company Secretary, Captain Roxley, as he had failed to secure another position. Captain Roxley was reported to have a home in Ireland and to move 'in the highest circles'.⁶ The Captain had paid £8 and offered £1 a month; the judge issued an Order of Commitment for 14 days, suspended subject to the Captain paying £1 a month. Despite all this, in May 1891 a Mr J. Strong from the brewery had applied for a patent on a sparging appliance.

The presence of George FitzGeorge, sometimes Fitz-George, should probably have rung alarm bells. George was the oldest son of H.R.H The Duke of Cambridge. The Duke had married for love, marrying actress Sarah Louise Fairbrother, however he didn't seek the monarch's approval thus breaching the 1772 Royal Marriages Act. This meant that his children were not entitled to titles or the description H.R.H. (As such the title Duke of Cambridge became extinct on George's father's death in 1904. It was recently revived as a wedding present for the then Prince William.) George, the oldest son, was born prior to the marriage. Sarah was never really accepted by the Royal Family and was not granted a title. She became known as Mrs FitzGeorge, hence George's surname. Outside of the army George's main role seems to have been blowing his father's money. He led the Executive Committee for the failed 1889 Earls Court Spanish Exhibition and made a series of disastrous investments in the likes of the brewery, the Empire Theatre and Empire Printing. His debts are estimated to have cost his father around £150,000 to clear however the Duke eventually allowed George to go bankrupt in January 1903, the bankruptcy was discharged in June the same year. George's debts were £33,806. (In modern money that £150,000 would be about £13.5m.)

In 1892 the Crown Brewery Company, Aldershot Limited was registered with a view to taking over

Aldershot brewery but was dissolved in September the same year. This resulted in a June 1893 court case. Birmingham solicitor Philip Butlin sued Peter Atkins, an army contractor, wine and spirit merchants of St. Mary Axe, London for £60 12s professional fees. The two, together with others had tried to float a company in early 1892 to establish a brewery at Eltham. This failed however in the meantime Peter had agreed in March 1892 to buy Aldershot brewery for £4,100, seemingly planning to merge it with the Eltham brewery. However, with the Eltham plan failing, Peter didn't have the money to finish the deal. He then persuaded many of those behind the planned Eltham brewery to invest in The Crown Brewery Company, which planned to issue 25,000 £1 shares. Philip did work on the new company but at the last minute he was replaced as solicitor and as the allotment of shares didn't happen, he wasn't paid. During the court case it emerged that Peter had been planning on taking £6,000 cash out of the company as well as owning 15,000 shares thus gaining a rather large chunk of the £25,000 capital. The jury found for Philip. Despite all this Peter Atkins did take over Aldershot Brewery Company. £3,528 10s 2d went to the mortgage holders and £571 9s 10d to J. Alfred Eggar's company. The provisional deal was sealed on 12 March 1892 with Eggar notifying the court five days later to obtain their approval. The dates involved suggest the company may have failed to sell at auction. On 13 September 1892 Peter Atkins mortgaged the land for £5,000 with J. & W. Nicholson and received formal notification of release of charge over the brewery from Joseph Jarrett, George FitzGeorge and J. Alfred Eggar. However it appears to have been another failed attempt to make brewing pay in Aldershot as on 2 November 1893 Peter sold up to Charles Ormerod of Chichester. Charles subsequently moved to Ash, a village neighbouring Aldershot. (Ash is the final resting place of John Boulter.)

This time the purchase price was just £2,000, though Charles also wrote off a loan worth £350. On 25 April 1894 Charles paid off the Nicholson's £5,000 mortgage. At the September 1894 Licencing Sessions Charles requested an off sales licence however it was refused. During the case his solicitor stated that the brewery had possessed an off sales licence prior to its last financial failure. Money troubles seem to loom again as on 7 December 1894 Charles, and his wife Ellen, take out a £3,500 mortgage with Mary Dawkins of Eastwood, near Bournemouth, at 5%. This appears to have been extend-

ed to £5,000 and on 10 April 1895 Rev. Lionel Freeman of Lower Wittington, Chelford provided a £2,000 mortgage. On 5 June 1895 the lease on the part of the brewery that was still leasehold was extended for 7 years, again at £62 p.a. with a buy out price of £1,240.

The next name to appear in the story of Aldershot brewing was The Army & Navy Co-Operative Breweries Ltd. Their share prospectus appeared in The Aldershot News on 6 July 1895 and was repeated up to, and including, the 3 August edition. The new company had a share capital of £100,100 in 100,000 ordinary shares at £1 and 100 deferred shares at £1. Not all the shares were offered for immediate public sale. This was a slightly unusual company, as the name suggests it was a co-operative aimed at the military and shares were held back for those engaged on service abroad to buy when they returned home. The prospectus stated

The Society has been incorporated for the purpose of carrying on, for the special benefit and profit of all ranks in Her Majesty's Naval, Military and Reserve Force, the business of Brewers, Manufacturers of Ice, Aerated Waters and other non-alcoholic drinks; Wine, Spirit, and Tobacco Merchants, and other businesses as may from time to time be deemed advisable.

It stated they had set the share price at £1 so as to be within reach of the ordinary soldier and sailor, though the board was Lieutenant Colonel A.B. Cook ex 4th Oxfordshire Light Infantry, Lieutenant Colonel George Charles Dainty, ex 15th Foot, Colonel the Earl of Euston 1st Volunteer Battalion Northamptonshire Regiment, Major Hamilton Geary, ex Royal Artillery and the Hon. Ashley Ponsonby ex Grenadier Guards, with plans to appoint representatives from the Navy and a Cavalry Officer. (The Earl of Euston was named in the 1889 Cleveland Street scandal but successfully sued for libel over claims he had attended a homosexual brothel. It should be remembered that homosexuality was then illegal.) None of the directors were to take any remuneration in the first year. Aimed mainly at winning armed forces business, after paying a 7% dividend on paid up Ordinary Share Capital 50% of profits were to be returned to military canteens according to the proportion of business they had provided. 10% was to go to the Directors with the remainder split between the owners of the ordinary and deferred shares. The company had a declared preference for employing veterans and

reservists, had secured the services of two experienced brewers, the prospectus also declared an intent to extend their market to 'India and the Colonies; in fact some of the beer brewed in Aldershot has already stood with very satisfactory results the test of a sojourn in India'. The prospectus stated that the purchase price was £17,000 with a £5,000 mortgage on top to buy the leasehold Gun Brewery in Folkestone, plus seven tied public houses, and the freehold Aldershot Brewery. In reality, the latter was bought on 19 November 1895 for £11,500 which broke down as £5,000 for Mary Dawkins, £2,000 for Rev. Freeman and £4,500 for Charles Ormerod. The very next day the new owners took out a £6,000 mortgage with Mary Dawkins. (In their prospectus the Directors hinted the brewery may be able to get good trade with the military at less expense than other brewers. In March 1897 it was reported that, after discoveries made when reading a memorandum book dropped by a brewers traveller in Aldershot camp, all future army tenders would go to the lowest bidder and it would no longer be necessary to present a piano or billiards table to the mess in order to secure their business. This may explain what the prospectus reference referred to.) Whilst the deal was being concluded the old Aldershot Brewery Company seems to have been ticking over, on 3 August 1895 in the Aldershot News they advertise themselves as 'Importers of foreign wines & spirits'. It is noticeable there was no reference to either brewing or selling beer.

Despite the 1894 refusal of an off sales licence, the new owners requested the right to run off sales at the 1896 Brewster Session. Manager Hugh Seymour Hutchings stated that the brewery had been purchased at the wish of the military authorities who wanted them to supply military canteens. The brewery wanted to be able to sell in smaller quantities, no less than a gallon or six bottles, enabling locals to buy fresh beer at trade prices. Hutchings stated 'We brew a good article and might be able to brew a better'.⁷ The Rev. Ellis Hewitt, a local temperance campaigner, stood up to speak however the Bench told him he need not bother, they had decided to refuse the licence. The brewery also had problems with one of their pubs. In 1897 The Princess had requested permission to expand into the next door building; this was refused by the Aldershot District Brewster Sessions. The next year questions were raised about whether its licence should be renewed after the landlord was convicted in August 1897 for permitting drunken-

ness. His replacement, an ex -Barracks Sergeant, had a good enough background to convince the Committee to renew the licence.

The Co-Operative was not a success. In May 1896 the company appeared in court accused of breaches of The Companies Act of 1862, they lost and can be traced appealing. In July 1898 they sold the heavily loss making Gun Brewery to brewers Alfred Leney & Co. of Dover at a considerable loss. The management remained confident, July also saw them gain planning permission to put bigger windows in the brewery offices at Aldershot whilst in December the brewery held an AGM at Cannon Street Hotel, London. Chairman Major Spencer F. Chichester reported that the Aldershot brewery was making a small loss but that they were optimistic this would be turned around. The meeting saw losses to date written off against the share capital, reducing it from £100,100 to £86,488 10s in a mixture of £1 and 10s shares. In December 1898 the brewery leased an off licence at 36, Grosvenor Road from Joseph Lazareck, a prominent local trader, for twenty one years at £60 p.a. At the 1899 Farnham Brewster session the brewery appealed against the ordered closure of The British Grenadier in Farnborough Road, Heath End. This was described in some newspapers as the smallest pub in Britain, being a wooden shack. Its owner had given up on collecting his 3s 4d/week rent. The brewery had taken the pub on and boosted sales to two barrels a week. The brewery won their appeal on condition that the pub was rebuilt. Clearly the optimism was misplaced as on 1st February 1900 the Army and Navy Co-Operative Breweries Ltd. was put up for auction by John Marks of Orgill Marks and Lawrence however he was unable to find a purchaser and the lot was withdrawn at £7,500. The London Standard carried an advert on 13 January which stated that the lot included The Newmarket Tavern, The Princess and the next door property, 26 Union Street, an off licence at 36, Grosvenor Road, the British Grenadier and an agency stores at Bracknell. The identity of a fourth pub is not known but may be the Aldershot Brewery Tap. The plant is listed as being of ten quarter capacity.

In April the business collapsed though the company appeared in the June 1900 court case *Coats v Army & Navy Co-Operative Breweries*, the case was still ongoing in November. Given the brewery was primarily aimed at the military trade, there must be a suspicion



that the departure of many troops from Aldershot to fight in the 2nd Boer War may have been taken into consideration in deciding the brewery could not be turned around. Unsurprisingly The Grenadier seemingly wasn't rebuilt and closed in 1900. The collapse also led to further problems for The Princess as the landlord was subsequently convicted of selling brandy stronger than advertised and whiskey 3% weaker than advertised. The September 1900 Aldershot District Brewster Licencing session was told that the relevant order had been sent to the already bankrupt brewery where it had been handled by a 16 year old 'who seemed to be in charge'.⁸ The Magistrates were sympathetic, the pub kept its licence. The Army & Navy Co-Operative Breweries was eventually wound up in January 1902. (The Princess seems to have been taken on by the Friary Brewery though by 1903 Alton based Crowley & Co held it. The Princess still stands in 2015, as The Halifax in Union Street however Crowley & Co knocked the old building down in 1907 and re-built it so this isn't the building once controlled by The Army & Navy Co-Operative Breweries. Crowley also took on the Newmarket Tavern. This building is now Thomson travel agents but has been substantially amended. The off licence in Grosvenor

Road was leased by Farnham United Breweries. 36 Grosvenor Road is now 56, Grosvenor Road and remains an off licence, trading as Booze Booze Booze.) On 31 January 1901 Mary Dawkins sold her rights to the mortgage on the site to G. Rooper and others of 17, Lincolns Inn. The purchase price was £6,323 5s 3d for the mortgage and outstanding interest, the brewery had ceased paying her interest in November 1899. The new mortgagees sold the site on to George Heath on 30 October 1903 for £3250. Prior to that they had made pocket money; letting out the stables to George Hallett at 12/6 a week. There is no evidence that brewing continued on the site beyond the failure of The Army & Navy Co-Operative Breweries. George Heath was a coachbuilder from Farnham and on October 27 1903 Aldershot Urban Council passed a planning application for 'proposed alterations and re-building of Aldershot Brewery to form carriage showrooms and caretakers residence for Mr G. Heath'.⁹ This involved converting the office block into a showroom whilst demolishing the bottled beer store and wine and spirits store, replacing them with a caretaker's house. The plans suggest the washing shed and No. 1 store shed had already gone. The development appears to have happened, Farnham Museum holds a letterhead from Heath's company and the image of their Aldershot location is very similar to the architects drawings appended to the planning application. However on 28 November 1905 The Aldershot Brewery Company was listed in *The London Gazette* as pending liquidation. Whilst George's changes did not impact the brewing area there is no evidence of brewing occurring and it seems more likely this was the winding up of the old, non-functioning company. Further evidence for the demise of brewing comes from a mortgage taken out by George Heath with Aldershot based forage contractor, Richard Bateman. In one of the documents a reference to the 'premises known as Aldershot Brewery' someone wrote in the word 'formerly' in above the brewery name.¹⁰ Other sources suggest that in 1906 Guildford based brewery Lascelles, Tickner bought the site, we cannot find anything to substantiate this. They had stores in Aldershot pre 1906 and it seems more likely that they sub-let or bought the old brewery storage space as their stores address did move to the site. The 1907 *Kelly's Directory* proves that. However in October 1913 Heath and Wiltshire Ltd. signed a ten year lease, probably a renewal after an initial ten year lease expired, on the site with George Heath showing he still held at least part of it. This was a £60 p.a. lease for

twelve and a half years. With times changing George's business was now listed as a coach and motor builders. Lascelles, Tickener were still present in the 1911 *Kelly's Directory*. By the 1915 directory Heath and Wiltshire are present, Lascelles, Tickner were not listed.

Whilst much of the brewery was to survive until the latter days of the twentieth century - though the tower went much earlier - the site is now occupied by Phoenix Court flats. There does appear to be one trace remaining. At the back of the site on Cavendish Road there stands an old wall which may have been part of the end wall of the old brewery. In a 1903 plan this was the far wall for the bottled beer stores and may have been retained for use in the caretaker's house in the 1903 re-development as it was built into an adjoining house.

Looking back it seems strange that the home of the British army, a hop growing town, didn't see a successful brewery get off the ground. Whilst the Aldershot brewers often stated they were the only brewery in town they failed to mention quite how close the likes of Alton, Farnham, Guildford, Hartley Wintney and Holybourne were. All were home to successful, established breweries holding tied estates that included many premises within Aldershot. With the benefit of hindsight Aldershot was perhaps a closed market, however what seems clear is that the people involved in the story of brewing in Aldershot were all too often not people who had any realistic chance of making it work. Whilst the neighbouring village of Tongham currently boasts a brewery, and recently re-established hop fields, it currently seems unlikely that large scale brewing will ever return to Aldershot. The name of one of Aldershot's hop fields survives through use of the name Tice's Meadow for the housing estate that now covers it however there is currently nothing to recognise or locate any of the brewery sites in Aldershot. The story of brewing seems destined to remain a small footnote in the history of the Aldershot.

Note

The *Aldershot Military Gazette*, often referred to as *Sheldrake's*, had minor changes of name during the era of brewing in Aldershot. For simplicity the article refers to it as the *Aldershot Military Gazette* in all instances.

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