

BEER AND COMPANY'S "ORIGINAL" BREWERY, CANTERBURY

Canterbury has the reputation of being one of the most ancient, if not the very oldest, city in this seagirt isle of Britain. Without tracing its origin back to the mythical days of the son of Ænoas, who is traditionally declared to have rested here, in a city having good accommodation for travellers before he made his way up the valley of the Thames to found that other human hive now known as London, we may, at least, rely on the Roman accounts, which tell us that when Julius Cæsar effected his first landing on our shores, only to be driven back to his galleys by a race of men far fiercer than any he had encountered in his Gallic and Iberian wars, the men of Derwhern, as the Britons called the place, were the most valuable allies of their neighbours on the seashore in making mincemeat of the hitherto invincible cohorts of the Roman commander. When the Romans long afterwards, more by treachery than by force, effected a settlement in England, they changed the name of the place from Derwhern, "the city of the swift river," to Dunvernum; but this insolent description of the place, as though it had been a mere suburb of Dover, was soon got rid of when the Saxons arrived, and a fuller appreciation of its deserts gave to it the appropriate name of Cant-wara-byrig, or the "city of the men of Kent," a name which, with modifications in spelling, it still retains. And be it added that to every man born east of the Medway, Canterbury is still emphatically, as its name proudly implies, the City of the men of Kent. Ptolemy, in his "Geography of Britain," the oldest book extant on the subject, gives a prominent place to Darnenum, its then name, as the principal seat of the Cantri who dwell in the most eastern parts of Britain, while at the beginning of the Saxon Heptarchy it was "the first city of the kingdom of Kent and the king's residence." The venerable Bede calls it "the chief place in all the dominion of King Ethelbert;" Matthew of

Westminster describes it as the "head of the empire;" and in a charter of Kenulph, King of Mercia, dated A.D. 810, and still extant, it is designated "the famous city, which of ancient name called Durovernum."

Thus the antiquity of Canterbury is unquestioned. This, however, would be but slightly alluded to in the present article but for the fact that its earliest history is connected in the most intimate manner with the subject of our present history. Every schoolboy knows that some thirteen hundred and fifty years ago St. Augustine visited England with the intention of introducing Christianity to the people whose beauty, when he had seen them prisoners in Rome, led him to exclaim, "*Angliæ sed Angeli*," and that when he arrived he found that the true faith was here before him; from whom derived he knew not, save that tradition said it had been preached to the people by St. Paul himself. Be this as it may, it is certain that Augustine was well received at Canterbury by King Ethelbert, and that the King bestowed on the missionary not only what then existed of the church which has since grown into the magnificent cathedral of Christchurch, the worthy fane of the Metropolitan and Primate of all England, but also the ground on which was erected by the united exertions of king and bishop the monastery originally dedicated to St. Peter and St. Paul. This monastery was commenced in A.D. 521, and stood just outside the wall at the south-east angle of the city. About four and a half centuries later, when Dunstan, afterwards canonised, was the archbishop, this monastery was considerably enlarged and rededicated by Dunstan to its founder, and ever after it was known as the monastery of St. Augustine. Rapidly then did the establishment grow in wealth and importance. Kings and nobles seemed to vie with each other in adding to its endowments. From King Athelstane it received the

privilege of minting, and coins struck in St. Augustine's are still extant. This valuable right was taken from the monastery by King Stephen, and never afterwards restored; but in the following reign, that of Henry II., the lands were declared by survey to comprise 11,682 acres, and for nearly 400 years it has continued to increase in wealth. In the time of Richard II. it is recorded that the refectory was famous for the excellence of its ales, nor is this to be wondered at, as the monastery stood in the midst of what was then the finest barley land in England, and even when they were less fortunately placed by the monks were in always contrived to brew good ale. Evil, that is, for monks and monastery, though anything but evil for England. Henry VIII., prompted by policy or by necessity, decreed in 1539 the suppression of the monasteries, and St. Augustine's at Canterbury was one of the wealthiest victims of the change. So rich indeed were the pickings of this famous monastery that neither to Russell nor to any other of his numerous emissaries could Henry consent to part with the spoil, and therefore he converted the splendid fabric into a palace for himself. Much of it was then pulled down, but it is interesting to learn that in the reign of Edward VI., when it was surveyed, and workmen were employed in preparing it, although the "demolished buildings then lay strewn over the ground in a heap of ruins which were disposed of by the load to the neighbouring parts," those existing comprised "the king's housing (called almonry), the king's great hall, the great chamber, and the staircase to it, the great cellar, the dresser kitchen next the hall, the *brewhouse*," and many other buildings. It is, perhaps, not a great stretch of imagination to suppose that in the great cellar were stored the products of the brewhouse. Queen Mary intended to restore the monastery, but her sister Elizabeth retained it as a royal palace, and kept court there for several days; and here also Charles I. consummated his marriage with the Princess Henrietta of France. Of course the civil war had its effect on this as well as other palaces, but after the Restoration it was bestowed by royal grant on the eldest son of Sir Henry Wotton, the famous diplomatist of the times of Elizabeth and James I. In the possession of this family it remained for several generations, and the green in front of it became known Lady Wotton's Green. But at length the entire property passed into the hands of Sir Edward Hales, of Hales-place, who had married one of the daughters and co-heiresses of Lady Wotton. The old monastery continued to be the property of this family until a very recent date, when it was

sold by auction and purchased by Mr. H. Beresford Hope, who restored it to a great extent, and established within the walls a college for the education of missionaries. But our concern with St. Augustine's really ceases with the advent of Mr. Hope, and belongs only to the later period of the Hales' tenancy. We have seen that in the days of the monks the monastery was famous for its ales, and that in the time of Edward VI. the brewhouse was a prominent feature of the buildings, and probably the old reputation was never entirely lost. Certain it is that when the old prejudice against the use of hops in the manufacture of beer had disappeared, and many thousands of acres in the neighbourhood of Canterbury came to be devoted to the cultivation of this now favourite bitter, there were not wanting those who remembered the excellent quality for brewing purposes of the water in St. Augustine's well. So it happened that some time during reign of George II. the then baronet, Sir Edward Hales, let the grant of the monastery to a brewer, and St. Augustine's famous abbey, after a chequered career of twelve hundred years, became first Hill's and subsequently Beer and Co's "original" Canterbury brewery.

In early times the trade of Canterbury would seem to have been of a most limited character, with the exception of the enormous manufacture of relics for the benefit of the hundred thousand pilgrims who annually found their way to the shrines of St. Augustine and St. Thomas à Becket. The only other commercial interest that flourished in the city was that of grinding corn, for which purpose numerous mills existed, several of which are still at work. The Reformation, of course, put an end to the trade in relics; but shortly afterwards a colony of Walloons, driven from their own country on account of their faith, arrived in this country and settled in Canterbury, where they were encouraged by Queen Elizabeth, who granted to them some valuable privileges in order to foster their beautiful silk manufactures. These for a time formed the staple manufactures of Canterbury, but they have now entirely disappeared, and it may now fairly be said that the sole manufactures of the great "city of the men of Kent" are hop-pockets and beer.

For this latter the original establishment was, as we have already seen, Messrs. Beer and Co.'s Original Brewery in St. Augustine's Monastery. The portion of the old palace used for the purpose of this brewery was the beautiful gateway, and, although it must be admitted

that there seems something like desecration in thus turning the grand old building to account for the purposes of trade, it is to be presumed the men of Kent were not particularly annoyed, for the popularity of Messrs. Beer and Co.'s also was constantly increasing. The founder of this brewery was a gentleman of the name of Hill, who was a man of substance and importance in the city of Canterbury a century ago. From his successors the business passed into the hands of the late Mr. William Beer, who increased it considerably and raised it to a foremost rank among the manufacturing establishments of East Kent. In the year 1844 the old monastic estate was sold by auction on the failure of a direct male heir in the Hales family, and Mr. Beresford Hope becoming the purchaser, with the view of establishing his missionary college on the site, a removal of the brewery was a necessity. The new site chosen was on an extensive piece of ground in Broad-street, and it is worthy of remark that although the entire plant had to be removed, this was done so expeditiously and skilfully, that only twenty-seven days elapsed between the last brewing in St. Augustine's, and the first in Broad-street. Mr. William Beer remained at the head of the firm for a period extending considerably beyond the average duration of a business lifetime, and throughout the whole of this time he enjoyed the respect and esteem of his fellow citizens in a degree rarely equalled. To those of our readers who are curious in the history and origin of our great national game of cricket, it will be interesting to record that Mr. William Beer was for many years the president of the Beverley Trap Club, respecting which society a few words will not be out of place. The game of trap, bat and ball, as a scientific amusement seems to belong almost exclusively to the county of Kent, but of the numerous trap clubs of which records have been preserved, the earliest is certainly the Beverley. This club still flourishes in its original home, the Beverley Arms, St. Stephen's, one of the most interesting spots in the neighbourhood of Canterbury. This quaint old-fashioned hostelry is kept by Mr. E. Austen, the parish clerk of St. Stephen's, and it is a fact worth remembering in illustration of the liberal-mindedness of some of our ancestors that the tenure of this tavern is a recognised portion of the parish clerk's *honorarium*. Mr. Austen has held the double position of parish clerk and host of the Beverley Arms since 1819, and during the whole of that period he informed us himself he has never drawn one pint of any malt liquor but Beer and Co.'s. It may well be imagined that so ancient a functionary has numerous

tales to tell of the events and persons he remembers from his youth up, but these we must here pass over in silence while we look through the inn. On the first floor is a large club room, which is opened on club evenings, and also for dinners, suppers, and other entertainments. The principal adornment of this chamber is a large and very effectively painted portrait of the late Mr. William Beer, executed for the members of the Club, of which he was so long the president, and presented by them to Mr. Beer as a token of personal esteem. At the other end of the room is a painting on wood representing what may be called the coat of arms of the club, and consisting of a shield with the insignia of the game of cricket, and for its supporters two evident portraits of gentlemen in very tall hats, and very high coat-collars, of the fashion worn by grandfathers. On a scroll above is the proud motto, "*Nulli Secundus*," which is said to have been thoroughly well-deserved. But whatever fame the Beverley may have attained as a trap-club, it is far more widely known from the fact that at a meeting of its members, in the first-floor room of this inn, was taken the first step towards the foundation of the Kent County Cricket Club. Of the high reputation subsequently gained by this club, of the inestimable services it rendered to cricket, and of the hopes at this moment existing of its once more taking the foremost place among the county cricket clubs of England, it is unnecessary to speak in this place, for the simple reason that all who know anything of cricket, must be familiar with the story. Equally unnecessary is it to refer to the valuable services rendered to cricket and cricketers by Mr. W. de Chair Baker, of St. Stephen's, who has for a long series of years been the organising hon. secretary of the Canterbury cricket week. Let us rather note one or two more of the features of the Beverley Arms and of St. Stephen's generally, for both are characteristic of the neighbourhood in which they are found, and have a sufficiently close connection with the special subject of this article to justify, or at least to excuse, the digression. Descending from the clubroom to the ordinary public-room of this hostel, as the shades of night are gathering round, it is forced on our minds, for the first time, that the Beverley Arms is innocent of gas, and is so steadily conservative in its adherence to ancient ways, that it knows nothing of colza or paraffin, and even prefers to ignore composite candles, using instead, genuine old-fashioned dips with an elaborate pair of snuffers on an even more elaborate tray placed on each table between a pair of candlesticks. But before it grows dark enough

for this, the visitor should request the kindly services of the parish-clerk and Boniface, and examine for himself the extraordinary tomb and monument of Sir Roger Manwood, Knt” and Lord Chief Baron of the Exchequer, who, dying in 1592, one year after he had presented a font to the church, left an endowment for alms-houses for six aged persons, and also the house which is now the Beverley Arms to the parish clerk for ever. Sir Roger’s tomb, besides effigies of himself, his two wives, and four daughters, is ornamented with a skeleton, to remind us, it is to be presumed, that to “this complexion we must come at last.” Somewhat more amusing, though equally quaint, are two marble tablets inside the church-door, relating how on such a day the “Beverley Bell Ringers” rang a grandsire peal of so many thousand changes without a blunder on the bells of St. Stephen’s, which are, it seems, a famous peal. The Rev. John White, M.A., the incumbent of this church, is reputed to be the richest commoner in Kent, and it is pleasant to be able to add his charity is as boundless as his wealth. In this parish is situated Hales Place, which was built in 1768 by Sir Edward Hales, the first landlord of the “Original Brewery” in St. Augustine’s. The present lady of the manor is Miss Mary Hales. But to enter thus into detail respecting all the associations of St. Stephen’s would demand more space than we can spare, we will therefore take leave of the Beverley Trap Club with the remark that in spite of its age, and of its being the oldest club of the kind in England it still flourishes, and, under the able and energetic presidency of Mr. Alfred J. Beer, who has been elected during the present season to the office formerly held by his father. It is by no means likely to exhibit any signs of decay or exhausted vitality.

Indeed, it may be said that the most distinguishing characteristic of Mr. Alfred James Beer, the present head of the firm of Beer and Co., is a thoroughness and determination to do his best and utmost with whatever subject occupies his attention. Mr. Beer is now just fifty years of age, having been born on the 17th of May, 1825. Consequently this year his birthday fell on Whit Monday, when all the *employés* of the brewery, to the number of thirty-five or forty, were sumptuously regaled at the well-known old hostelry the King’s Arms, while that their wives should share in the general satisfaction, they each of them received a present of a pound of tea. On the same day Mr. Beer himself was called upon to face the Mayor as vice-chairman of the annual

dinner of the Foresters’ Friendly Society, at the George and Dragon, another of the well-known Canterbury inns. He received his education in the famous King’s School of his native city, founded by King Henry VII., on the books of which his name still figures in the list of old King’s scholars, and it was then his desire to follow the profession of a civil and mechanical engineer, but in deference to his father’s wishes he abandoned his own and entered the brewery while it was yet carried on in St. Augustine’s monastery. But Mr. Beer was never false to his first pursuit, and has devoted very much of his time to engineering and mechanics. So much so, indeed, that in his workshop in the brewery at this moment there is a twelve or fourteen horse power steam engine of his own make, while a great portion of the machinery on the establishment is of his designing and manufacture. As an especial instance of this, may be quoted the improved mash-rakes, which have a compound action preferable to anything of the kind we remember to have seen. A more striking testimony to Mr. Beer’s merits as an engineer, however, is to be found in the fact that an articulated pupil of his, Mr. George Pierce, is now the chief engineer at the magnificent waterworks the Corporation of Canterbury have only recently erected for the use of the city. Mr. Beer has also patented a most ingenious apparatus for pigeon shooting, which a vast improvement on the old-fashioned clumsy affair. This trap is now most extensively used throughout the country, and as only recently Mr. Beer was called upon to supply his apparatus at Eastwell for the use of His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh, who was pleased to express his high approbation thereof, it may be taken for granted that ere long Mr. Beer’s improvements will be generally adopted not only at Hurlingham and Brompton, but wherever guns are matched against birds.

We have already alluded to Mr. William Beer, who was the first of the name connected with the “Original Brewery,” and it will be convenient here to conclude the few words we have to write concerning the personnel of the firm. The family of Beer or Bere has been settled in Kent from the earliest times, the name being pure Saxon, and at the time of the Norman conquest a member of the family was possessed of considerable lands some three miles north-east of Canterbury, at what is still called the village of Westbere, a parish situate but a short distance from the hop grounds of Mr. Alfred Beer. Under the Norman kings the parish of Westbere seems to have been granted to St. Augustine’s monastery, so

Mr. Beer's invasion of that building with his mash-tubs and fermenting squares, may be considered but another instance of the strange revenges brought by the whirligig of time. In every subsequent period there are constant evidences of persons bearing his name in the history of the county, some of them being of very considerable importance. There was a John Bere knighted by Henry V. after the battle of Agincourt - another who was a canon of Canterbury in the time of Charles II. But it is needless to multiply instances, as the name is sufficiently familiar throughout East Kent, and especially in Canterbury and its vicinity, the corporation of which city has seldom passed a dozen years without including among its members of the family allusion must be made to Mr. Charles Beer, the famous aeronaut who in 1828 made an ascent from the brewery yard inside St. Augustine's, and narrowly escaped a terrible disaster, as being carried rapidly towards the sea-coast he was only just enabled to descend to terra firma on the sands at Reculver. Mr. William Beer may fairly be considered the founder of two breweries, as Mr. Alfred Beer has the original brewery, his brother George Beer has the Star Brewery, a portion of which almost joins the other in Broad-Street. Mr. Alfred Beer, who was in partnership with his father, and on his death succeeded him to the business, has largely developed the trade and connection of the brewery. Through Canterbury and its neighbourhood, including the whole of the Isle of Thanet, there are few inscriptions more familiar to young and old than "Beer and Co.'s celebrated ales"; and we believe that Mr. Alfred Beer prides himself on the fact that, without exerting any pressure or resorting to any large extent to "tied houses," he has never yet lost a customer. The popularity justly enjoyed by Beer and Co.'s ales in Canterbury has not unnaturally extended to the brewer and Mr. Alfred Beer evidently stands high in the estimation of his fellow citizens, as is proven by the fact that he has been a town councillor since 1863, and is now one of the oldest members of the corporation. Further, in 1869-70, he was selected to fill the more important office of sheriff. It only remains to add that the accompanying portrait is from a very excellent and recent photograph taken by well-known Canterbury artist.

Broad-street, to which the brewery was removed from St. Augustine's, is a wide thoroughfare skirting the entire eastern side of the City, and conveniently enough for Messrs. Beer, their premises on one side abut on the old City walls, while the ancient moat has lent its aid to

the formation of their cellars. On entering the premises on the eastern side of Broad-street, the visitor first finds himself in the offices, which are large enough for all required purposes. Thence he is led at once to the great central point of interest in every brewery, the mash-tun, whence it need hardly be said must be derived both the fame and the profit of all who devote themselves to the manufacture of our national beverage. The system of brewing employed by Messrs. Beer and Co. is that known as "second square," about which there are many advantages. Many of our readers probably understand by this system there are duplicate fermenting squares on two floors, and that the wort being run, after fermentation has taken place, from the upper into the lower, the process of cleansing is perfected more thoroughly, and with much less trouble, than by any other method. It is, by the way, curious to observe the varying opinions of different brewers on points such as these. We were glad to observe that for cooling the wort Messrs. Beer and Co. use Lawrence's patent Capillary Refrigerator,¹ of which we have more than once expressed the highest opinion, and which is rapidly finding its way into all the principal breweries in the kingdom.

It may be stated that at present a fourteen-quarter plant is in operation, but that extensive alterations now in progress, made necessary by the steady growth of the business of the brewery, will more than double its productive power. As it is, the establishment is one essentially self-contained, as it has its own malting-houses as well as the brewery, while at Sturry Messrs. Beer possesses an extensive hop plantation, on which they grow a large proportion of the hops required in the business. The quality of these hops is well known for excellence, Messrs. Beer's grounds at Sturry adjoining those of Messrs. Bass and Co., of Burton-on-Trent.

Having thus shortly alluded to the system of brewing by Messrs. Beer and Co., we may pass from the maltings and the mash-tub to the stores, which are certainly most perfect in their arrangement. Mr. Alfred Beer boasts that his cellars are the finest in Canterbury. We may add to this that they will compare for convenience, for ventilation, and for equable temperature, with those of any we have ever inspected belonging to the greatest houses in the trade. As we have already remarked, these cellars are formed partly from the old City moat, the ancient wall giving a support for the girders and vaulted roof. In



ALFRED JAMES BEER, ESQ.,
(OF THE "ORIGINAL BREWERY," CANTERBURY.)

these cellars there is a large and excellent stock of ales, a careful examination of which will convince any impartial and unprejudiced judge that the three first prizes taken by Messrs. Beer and Co. at the three international exhibitions at Woolwich, at Hagenau, and at the Albert Hall, South Kensington, have been gained not by samples carefully prepared for the purposes of exhibition, but by the everyday product of the brewery. Certainly if Messrs. Beer and Co. have been exceptionally, we may say unprecedentedly, successful in every exhibition, it must be remembered they have special advantages which tell greatly in their favour, and to which we hardly gave sufficient weight when our attention was first attracted to the "Original" Brewery at Canterbury by the repeated awards of the judges in their favour. It is surely not to be wondered at that Kent, which is the natural home of hop-beer, should be able to produce excellent samples; and of course, when the brewer is also a grower, with his hops almost at his feet, he at the same time saves a whole series of intermediary profits, and reduces the heavy item of carriage to a minimum. Do not let it be supposed that in dwelling on these favourable points we wish to detract in any manner from Messrs. Beer and Co.'s success; we would merely point out that it is, after all, not so much to be wondered at as at first sight might appear. The fact is there is no royal road to brewing, and in tracing the secret of the three times certified excellence of Messrs. Beer and Co.'s ales, we discover the usual intimate relationship between cause and effect. In every part of the process of brewing the apparatus employed at the "Original Brewery" is that which a long and practical experience has convinced Messrs. Beer is the best for their purpose; they grow their own hops, the malt their own barley, the masonry of twelve hundred years ago is at their disposal to render their stores absolutely perfect, and their water supply is not only practically unlimited in quantity but of the best possible quality for brewing, very elaborate analysis made for Messrs. Beer by Professor Herapath² showing that while the water is exceptionally free from any trace of organic matter, it is very rich in those constituents which give all their distinctive value to the wells of Burton-on-Trent.

Quitting the stores and resuming our journey round the premises, our attention is directed to the stables, which are in admirable order and well supplied. Then in the yard we note every convenience for the effectual cleansing of returned casks, and for the repair of those which have suffered in active service, while drays returning empty or departing loaded tell of a brisk demand. Then we visit the malt bins which, as should be the case at this time of the year, are well filled, though the season's malting is not yet quite concluded. Having now completed our survey of the establishment, we are glad to express our satisfaction with what we have seen, and still more forcibly our pleasure that the result of the Exhibition of Beer at the Albert Hall should have awakened within us a desire to see the brewery which thus again proved its capacity to bear away the palm of victory from all competitors. Before concluding we may refer once again to the additions being made to the plant, which includes eighty barrel fermenting squares, a larger mash-tun than that in use, and a more powerful steam-engine, which is already in the engineers' workshop, completed, and only requires putting together. When these alterations and enlargements are finally arranged there can be no doubt that the "Original Brewery" at Canterbury will be one of the most compact and most convenient, as it is already one of the best in what should be the great beer-producing county of England, as assuredly Kent has natural advantages with which no other district can ever hope to vie. Finally, let us remind our readers that Messrs. Beer and Co. have for some time past established an agency in London, their offices in the Hop Exchange, Southwark-street, being under the charge of Mr. J. Fielding, a gentleman who will, we are sure, always be delighted to furnish any information to a member of the trade.

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Notes

1. Lawrence and Co. were based in Leadenhall, London.
2. Probably the analytical chemist, William Herapath (1796-1868).