

'Indian Pale Ale: an Icon of Empire'

Alan Pryor

University of Essex

November 2009

Copyright © Alan Pryor, 2009

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means without the prior permission in writing of the publisher nor be issued to the public or circulated in any form other than that in which it is published.

Requests for permission to reproduce any part of this Working Paper should be sent to:
The Editor, Commodities of Empire Project, The Ferguson Centre for African and Asian Studies, The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes MK7 6AA



The Open
University



**Commodities of Empire
Working Paper No.13**

ISSN: 1756-0098

Indian Pale Ale: an Icon of Empire

Alan Pryor
(University of Essex)

Indian colonies, once established, had to be supplied with the necessities of life that were 'appropriate'; in other words, European. In the crucible of a tropical climate new products emerged such as mulligatawny soup and curry, which became established in the sub-culture of British India before being introduced to the palate of mainland Britain. In 2008, Elizabeth Buettner spoke of the incorporation of chicken tikka massala into the British culture by the end of the twentieth century, where the original dish, chicken tikka, had been hybridised by the addition of massala sauce to satisfy British tastes.¹ In a time of racial tension in Britain, this was seen as an example of food being seen as a non-threatening sphere of cultural diversity.² In the early nineteenth century a similar invasion took place with the introduction of Indian pale ale to the British drinker. Like the chicken tikka massala, it brought connotations of India but with a different message for a different time, where the exotic element of India had been tamed by its commodification into 'non-threatening' food items, such as curry, mulligatawny soup and Indian pale ale.

The story of the development of Indian pale ale is one of cultural invention. This was a new product that was neither British nor Indian, occupying the space in between those two cultures in British India. In the late eighteenth century, George Hodgson developed a new beer for India in an obscure brewery on the eastern periphery of London. Hodgson's pale ale was a light beer with a refreshing bitter taste, which was to become a signifier of Anglo-Indian identity in numerous accounts of life in India. Eighteenth-century beer was a relatively low-value product, and its export to India was only made possible by the Byzantine economics of the East India Company. The growing demand for pale ale in India brought competition from other brewers, particularly from Burton-on-Trent. This study argues that the difficult trading conditions of India were instrumental in the development of new marketing techniques, were subsequently employed to introduce a new genre of beer into Britain, Indian pale ale.

This paper will examine the interaction between metropolitan manufacture and colonial demand, by investigating the development of a new beer in the eighteenth century, which forms part of a wider study of the London brewing industry. It is argued that there was an unofficial agenda to commodify the British Empire, particularly India, which is epitomised with the development of Indian pale ale. Heroic accounts of colonial adventures were often peppered with references to its restorative qualities. The sub-text was that India was Britain's challenge, particularly the climate, but the superiority of her manufacturing ability was able to produce a beer that was able to meet it. This fitted with an idealised version of empire, where the metropole imported the raw materials for its manufacture, rewarding the colony with manufactured goods, education, governance and progress. By following the marketing and development of this product it becomes possible to gain greater understanding of the

¹ Elizabeth Buettner, 'Going for an Indian: South Asian Restaurants and the Limits of Multiculturalism in Britain', *Journal of Modern History*, 88 (2008), p.865.

² Buettner (2008), p.866.

emerging debate over protectionism and free trade as it affected Britain's relationship with its empire.

The Bow Brewery

The Bow Brewery stood on the banks of the River Lea on the eastern periphery of London at Bow-bridge. This was an ideal location to supply beer to the East India Company's fleet, which lay at their Thames anchorage at Blackwall, two miles down the river Lea. George Hodgson had acquired the Bow Brewery in 1752,³ where he brewed porter for the surrounding district. Porter was a dark bitter beer which was the favourite drink of London labourers in the eighteenth century. In 1787, he produced 16,384 barrels of porter, which was a modest amount compared with 150,280 barrels from Samuel Whitbread, the leading brewer of porter in London. Hodgson was ranked twenty-second of the leading twenty-four porter brewers.⁴ About this time, George Hodgson's son, Mark, decided to brew a specific type of beer for export to India, using a pale malt and plenty of hops. The preservative qualities of pale malt were well known and described by the leading brewing writer of the time, Michael Combrune: "liquors brewed from very pale malts, preserve themselves for a long time".⁵ Combrune had also stated that pale malt-produced beers "are better to allay thirst".⁶ The preservative qualities of hops were equally well known, but Hodgson's innovation was to put additional dry hops in the barrel of finished beer to improve the beer's chances of surviving the long voyage to India.⁷ This was intended to stabilise the beer against the constant rocking motion in the ship's hold. Thus, a combination of pale malt with an exceptionally high proportion of hops produced a distinctive bitter taste, which proved to be a thirst-quenching drink, ideally suited for the Indian tropical climate.

Circumstantial evidence points to the possibility of family influence in the promotion of Hodgson's beer in the East India Company's fleet. Thomas Hodgson had worked his way through the ranks of the East India Company to become the captain of the *Earl Cornwallis* in 1785.⁸ His first three voyages were to China, but on his fourth voyage in 1793, he sailed for Bengal for the first time.⁹ This coincided with the first advertisement for Hodgson's beer to appear in the *Calcutta Gazette* in September 1793 as part of the private trade from the East Indiaman, *Britannia*,¹⁰ and again in November when Captain Browne of the *Hillsborough* advertised "Pale ale and porter in hogsheads from Hodgson".¹¹ Thus, in 1793, the *Britannia*

³ Parliamentary Papers, 1773 (House of Commons 34), p.103.

⁴ *The Times*, 17 November 1787, p.4.

⁵ Michael Combrune, *An Essay on Brewing*, London: R. & J. Dodsley, 1758, p.190.

⁶ Michael Combrune, *The Theory and Practice of Brewing*, London: R. & J. Dodsley, 1762, p.280.

⁷ In 1835, the crew of the *Stirling Castle* was shipwrecked off the north coast of Australia. Cast ashore and without fresh water, they shared one eighteen gallon barrel of Hodgson's pale ale between them until it ran out, when they "shared out the hops and grounds at the bottom of the barrel, which they chewed in order to create moisture" (Charles Eaton, *Shipwreck of the Stirling Castle containing a faithful narrative of the dreadful sufferings of the crew and the cruel murder of Captain Fraser by the savages*, London: George Virtue, 1838, p.30).

⁸ Anthony Farrington, *A Biographical Index of East India Company maritime service officers: 1600-1834*, London: British Library, 1999, p.383.

⁹ Charles Hardy, *A Register of Ships employed in the Service of the Honourable the United East India Company, from the year 1760-1810*, London: Black, Parry & Kingsbury, 1811, pp.143, 159 & 169.

¹⁰ *The Calcutta Gazette*, 22 September 1793.

¹¹ *The Calcutta Gazette*, 14 November 1793.

had sailed in April, the *Hillsborough* in May and the *Earl Cornwallis* in July.¹² It is argued that Captain Hodgson was probably a member of Mark Hodgson's family and that his change in destination from China to Calcutta was the signal for a campaign to persuade his fellow captains to carry Hodgson's beer to Calcutta. Although not alone in the export of beer to India, Hodgson's pale ale was singular in being identified by name. As the fleet of East Indiamen arrived each autumn, similar advertisements continued to appear. Some preferred to sell the beer personally, such as Captain Lambe of the *Melville Castle*, who advertised in the *Calcutta Gazette* in 1801, "just landed and now exposed for sale, for ready money only, beer from Hodgson".¹³ However, it is important to remember that this product was not for consumption by the indigenous population but for British population of colonial India.

The key to understanding the economics that allowed the export of relatively low-value products such as beer to India, at an affordable price, lies with the complex financial system of the East India Company. The East India Company's principal trade was the importation of silk, cotton and tea from India and China. Ships' officers were allowed to export 56 tons of goods, free of freight charges. Although this was described as their 'private trade', it played a vital role in the economic system by finding sufficient exports to fill the ship on the outward journey.¹⁴ This trade was known as the officers' 'investment', which usually consisted of various domestic commodities including food and drink. These generous allowances were often not fully used as the capacity of these ships could easily accommodate sufficient supplies for the British communities in India. These provisions had to be culturally 'appropriate' for the colonial population. The East India Company issued a list of suitable goods, which included perfumery, hats, stationery, pickles, port wine, ale, beer and porter in hogsheads or bottles.¹⁵

The private trade of ships' officers was not handled by the East India Company directly, but by its surrogate distribution network of agency houses. There were six main agency houses in Calcutta that managed the imports through the system of private trade. They used the ships' officers' 'investment' of 30 tons on the return voyage to transport profitable cargoes as a method of sending remittances to their owners in London. In the early nineteenth century the predominant return cargo was indigo. This crop was notoriously unreliable and the East India Company delegated the trade to the agency houses who were licensed to manage the indigo production of Bengal.¹⁶ These agency houses in India had 'sister' agencies in London. By the 1820s, there were over twenty approved agencies, which had formed a powerful interest group within the main structure of the East India Company.¹⁷ They had developed in the late eighteenth century and gradually gained influence by the purchase of sufficient shares to sit at the Court of Directors of the East India Company. In 1813, they voted for the ending of its monopoly of trade with India, believing that their profits would be greater if the tight controls of the East India Company's regime were abolished.

¹² Hardy (1811) pp. 153, 157 & 159.

¹³ W. Seton-Carr, *Selections From Calcutta Gazettes*, Calcutta: Office of Superintendent of Government Printing, 1868, p.550.

¹⁴ Sir Evan Cotton, *East Indiamen, the East India Company's Maritime Service*, London: The Batchworth Press, 1949, p.33.

¹⁵ Hardy (1811), Appendix, p.144.

¹⁶ Anthony Webster, *Gentlemen Capitalists: British Imperialism in South East Asia 1770-1890*, London: Tauris Acad. Studies, 1998, p.68.

¹⁷ Hardy (1811) p.137.

This was seen as a free-trade measure that would transform trade with India, which was not conforming to the standard model of colonialism where the manufactures of the metropolis were exchanged for the raw materials of a dependent colony. Exports of British goods to India were disappointingly low, whilst the imports from India were dominated by finished cotton and silk goods rather than primary products for processing, such as sugar from the West Indies. The East India Company was seen to be complacent, relying on the collection of land taxes as its principal source of revenue, instead of promoting British manufactured goods.

Free Trade and Monopoly

The ending of the East India Company's monopoly in India was influential in changing relationships in the commodity chain for the supply of beer to India. Local merchants in Bengal were thereby empowered to break Hodgson's monopoly to supply pale ale, by seeking new sources from brewers in Burton-on-Trent. Samuel Allsopp and Michael Bass led the way in gaining a tenuous foothold in the Indian market, with the development of new methods of marketing and distribution, which proved conclusive in their eventual success.

In the early nineteenth century, the East India Company had come under much criticism from Manchester manufacturers and Liverpool shipping interests for their poor record in exporting British goods. As a result the East India Company had its charter renewed in 1813, but lost the monopoly for Indian trade, which created great changes in the commodity chain. New shipping companies joined the trade and freight charges dropped dramatically, but there were many financial casualties. Where the monopoly had restricted the balance between supply and demand there was now a free-for-all. Initially, there was some success in India. Imports of indigo grew as the agency houses boosted production. However, this created a problem, where there were even more ships bound for India with 'European' goods that were surplus to requirements. Many warehouses became over-stocked with goods such as woollens, which were selling at a 20 percent loss. The Indian economy remained stubbornly resistant to European encroachment. Despite the injection of European capital, the production of indigo was still relatively small by 1861.¹⁸ By the 1820s, the only export from Britain that could be guaranteed to sell was beer, but there were constant complaints of the irregularity of supply, which caused wild fluctuations in the price. Some of these shortages were due to natural causes – brewing is a manufacture that is unavoidably linked to the vagaries of the agricultural cycle – but there was also signs of market manipulation.

Throughout this time, the Bow Brewery had remained the largest exporter of pale ale to India. However, it was now under the new management of Frederick Hodgson, who was thought by the agency houses to be deliberately restricting the supply to achieve high prices. Mark Hodgson had died in 1810 and left the running of the Bow Brewery in the hands of a trust, which did not relinquish control until 1819, when his only surviving son Frederick took control.¹⁹ Having been excluded from the management of the brewery until the age of majority, Frederick had set about developing his own career. He soon demonstrated leanings towards financial and commercial ventures, setting up as a stockbroker in Throgmorton Street, as early as 1817. On taking control at the Bow Brewery in 1819, Hodgson installed

¹⁸ P. Marshall, 'British Society in India under the East India Company', *Modern Asia Studies*, 31 (1997), p.100.

¹⁹ National Archives, *Last Will and Testament of Mark Hodgson*, 14 December 1809, ms. PROB 11/1514.

Thomas Drane, a brewer from Limehouse, as the managing partner of Hodgson & Co., while he pursued his political career as the MP for Barnstaple, Devon.

Frederick Hodgson had a virtual monopoly in the Indian market where his pale ale had no rival. His dominance in the provision of beer to the East India Company can be demonstrated by examining their system of communication with flags from ship to shore for the acquisition of stores. In 1818, the Company adopted the 'improved system of telegraphic communication', which designated codes for ordering stores including beer. There were codes for ordering generic types of beer, small beer, strong beer or ale, but additionally there was a specific code reserved for ordering 'Hodgson's pale ale' by name,²⁰ demonstrating the importance of this product to the East India Company. Other brewers had tried to break into the market, with little success. John Walsby of the Imperial brewery in Battersea, specialised in the supply of beers, which "when brewed for exportation will stand the test of any climate, and are well known in the East and West Indies".²¹ However, Walsby had ceased brewing ale for the Indian market by 1817, reverting to the production of porter for private families.²² A more immediate threat to Hodgson's dominant position emanated from the Imperial brewery of Bromley-by-Bow, less than a mile away from the Bow brewery on the river Lea. The proprietor, William Brown, ran a series of advertisements in *The Times* from 1817 to 1818, offering "liberal terms for Pale Ale to merchants and captains for the East India and West India climate".²³ However, Brown could not compete successfully with Hodgson, and by 1820 he was declared bankrupt.²⁴

Clearly, Hodgson was now in a strong position, and he continued to dominate the trade until 1821.²⁵ By 1820, imports of beer were down to a quarter of those in 1816, and he was accused of operating a monopoly, as the imports of his beer increased in price.²⁶ One of the principal Calcutta agency houses, Tulloch & Co. expressed their frustration as follows:

Beer has been for many years an article of extensive consumption in Bengal; and it is highly probable that an increase would take place, were it not for the very high price to which it frequently rises. The great fluctuation in the price of this article has been caused entirely by the irregularity of supply, and the plans laid down by Hodgson and some of his moneyed neighbours to keep all others out of the market. So entirely was the market dependent on this brewer, that he regulated the price and quantity imported. Others who attempted to introduce the beer into the market were compelled to withdraw; having lost considerably by their speculations; for Hodgson when he knew that other brewers were shipping, sent out large shipments, and thereby reduced prices to frighten his rivals from making

²⁰ Thomas Lynn, *An Improved System of Telegraphic Communication*, London: Black, Kingsbury, Parbury & Allen, 1818, unpaginated.

²¹ 'Bell's Monthly Compendium for Advertisements for May 1807', *La belle Assemblée*, London: John Bell, 1807, p.26.

²² Parliamentary Papers, 1819, 'Minutes taken (in session 1818) before the Committee To whom the Petition of several Inhabitants of London and its vicinity, complaining of the very high price of and inferior quality of BEER, was referred to examine the matter thereof, and report the same, with their Observations to the House', p.45.

²³ *The Times*, 25 August 1817, p.1; 18 November 1817, p.1; 13 May 1818, p.3.

²⁴ *The Times*, 14 February 1820, p.4.

²⁵ Peter Mathias, *The Brewing Industry in England 1700-1830*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959, p.190.

²⁶ William Tizard, *The Theory and Practice of Brewing Illustrated*, London: Sold by the Author, 1846, pp.522-3; W. Molyneux, *Burton-on-Trent: its history, its waters, and its breweries*, London: Trubner & Co., 1869, pp.230-1.

second shipments. Having effected this, the following years he had the market to himself and prices rose occasionally under short supply to 180 rupees and even 200 rupees a hogshead. He therefore made up for the sacrifice of the previous year and deterred other from prosecuting their speculations in the market.²⁷

Hodgson would have been well versed in the art of price fixing. It was such a regular feature of the London brewing trade that it led to a parliamentary enquiry in 1818 where the leading brewer, Charles Barclay, admitted that the porter brewers were in the habit of “meeting and fixing the price of beer”.²⁸ In 1821, Hodgson responded to calls from the Calcutta agency houses for increased supplies of beer. He enlarged the brewery and imports rose by 50 percent. However, this was little more than a third of the production of 1816 and still not enough to satisfy the agency houses, who decided to seek additional supplies of beer.²⁹

An apocryphal account of subsequent transactions, written thirty years later, has all the attributes of a morality play where Hodgson is cast as the villain. The story tells of a meeting between the director of the East India Company, Campbell Marjoribanks, and Samuel Allsopp, a prominent brewer from Burton-on-Trent. Marjoribanks wanted to know if Hodgson’s pale ale could be duplicated. On tasting it, Allsopp is reputed to have said that he could go further and improve on it.³⁰ He was then said to have returned to his brewery with a sample of Hodgson’s beer, where his head brewer successfully reproduced it in a teapot.³¹

The history of brewing is littered with such heroic accounts of invention and discoveries of new beers, but the implausibility of this one is suggested when exactly the same story was attributed to Allsopp’s arch-rival Michael Bass, another Burton brewer.³² The whole event was put into perspective by Charles Dickens in his publication, *Household Words*, where he describes the same story, except that the East Indian director meets neither Allsopp nor Bass, but that well-known personification of the brewing trade, Sir John Barleycorn.³³ Dickens was reminding the public of the Victorian tendency towards exaggeration, known as ‘puffing’, and Allsopp and Bass were evidently masters of that art.

However, there are elements of the story that were true. Burton brewers had been exploiting a similar niche in the market as Hodgson, by exporting their beer from Hull to Russia as a return cargo for goods from the Baltic. When the Tsar banned that trade, they were forced to look for alternative markets.³⁴ Allsopp led the field in attempts to copy Hodgson’s pale ale and the first shipments were sent in 1822. Hodgson responded by increasing supplies to lower the price and drive out this new competition. He doubled his exports in 1822 to 6,181 hogsheads and again in 1823 to 11,481 hogsheads, which flooded the market.³⁵ He also took advantage of reduced freight charges to charter ships for the direct

²⁷ J. Bushnan, *Burton and its Bitter Beer*, London: W. Orr & Co., 1853, p.103.

²⁸ Parliamentary Papers, 1819, ‘Minutes taken (in session 1818) before the Committee To whom the Petition of several Inhabitants of *London* and its vicinity, complaining of the very high price of and inferior quality of BEER, was referred to examine the matter thereof, and report the same, with their Observations to the House’, p.97.

²⁹ Horace Wilson, *A Review of the External Commerce of Bengal from 1813-14 to 1827-28, Tables*, Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1830, pp.14-15.

³⁰ Bushnan (1853) p.100.

³¹ Bushnan (1853) p.102.

³² James Burnley & James Hogg, *Fortunes Made in Business: a series of Original Sketches, Biographical and Anecdotic, from the Recent History of Industry and Commerce*, London: Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, 1884, p.420.

³³ Charles Dickens, ‘Sir John Barleycorn at Home’, *Household Words*, 174 (1853), p.490.

³⁴ Mathias (1959), pp.191-2.

³⁵ Wilson (1830), pp.14-15.

transport of beer and withdrew the customary credit of eighteen months for the East Indian private trade.

The Burton brewers faced a difficult task to reproduce the taste of Hodgson's pale ale and progress was slow, but from the beginning they entered into a dialogue with agency houses. Allsopp's first consignment in 1822 had disappointing results. The agency house of Mathew Gisborne wrote in July 1823 asking for permission to bottle the beer on its arrival, to improve its appearance.³⁶ In 1824 another Calcutta merchant, J. Bailton, advised that the beer should be bitterer, saying "it wanted hop and required less malt".³⁷ The use of additional hops had been the basis of the success of Hodgson's pale ale since the 1780s and with careful empirical changes Allsopp was reproducing the taste in his own beer. By 1826, Allsopp's beer was quoted in the *Calcutta Weekly* at the same price as that of Hodgson's.³⁸ Other brewers now entered the market including Bass & Ratcliff of Burton, Ind & Smith of Romford and Charringtons of Mile End.³⁹

The interaction between the Burton brewers and their agents in Calcutta are early indications of a change in brewers' attitudes towards marketing. Hitherto, brewers in Britain restrained competition within their locality by the process of 'tying' a public house to the brewery. This could mean outright ownership of the public house, but more often it entailed holding the lease as security against loans or bad debts. It was only in large towns, especially London, where a mass market allowed breweries to develop to a sufficient size to allow competition. However, in practice the brewers acted as a monopoly by fixing prices and restricting competition within the localities of individual breweries.⁴⁰

In India the situation was different, where a growing market offered opportunities to new entrants to the export trade, but they had to overcome prejudice against newcomers because the name of Hodgson's beer had a forty-year start. The solution was in careful attention to detail in the brewing process, but equally important was the need to publicise their product at every opportunity.

Competition and Free-trade

Free-trade measures in the 1820s caused the East India Company's financial system to deteriorate. The ending of the East India Company's monopoly had allowed Liverpool to establish trading links with India, where the Brocklebank brothers, founders of the Cunard shipping line, were among the first to take Allsopp's pale ale to India.⁴¹ Other exporters included important Liverpool merchants such as Gladstone & Co. and Cropper & Benson, who established their own agencies in Calcutta to compete with the established agency houses. Initially, this was welcomed by the East India Company who stated that, "the commerce of Bengal is now divided between junior establishments from Liverpool that promise to be of great benefit to Bengal and Great Britain".⁴² However, this additional

³⁶ Bushnan (1853) p.104.

³⁷ Bushnan (1853) p.105.

³⁸ Bushnan (1853) p.108.

³⁹ Tizard (1846) p.524.

⁴⁰ Brian Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians the Temperance question in England 1815-1872* London: Faber & Faber, 1971, p.65.

⁴¹ Bushnan (1853) p.107.

⁴² Robert Martin, 'British Relations with the Chinese Empire: a Comparative Statement of the English and American Trade with India and Canton', *Knowsley Pamphlet Collection* (1832), p.87.

competition diluted the market, so that when the price of indigo slumped in 1827, it was only loans of millions of rupees from the East India Company that saved them. In 1829, a major Calcutta agency House, Palmer & Co., became bankrupt. This precipitated a crisis in which all the major agency houses failed and the economic order in India collapsed.⁴³

The financial chaos in India was instrumental in the creation of new marketing methods by the Burton brewers. Hodgson's reputation ensured that he could sell his production, whereas the Burton brewers' survival depended on finding new agents for their beer. Samuel Allsopp reacted first by sending his son Henry to India.⁴⁴ He had previously worked at Gladstone & Co. in Liverpool, and was able to use his contacts to create new agencies for their beer. The other brewers followed suit in organising agencies in the new economic climate of India. The export of pale ale for the Indian market was becoming increasingly divorced from the East India Company and its surrogate agencies, and Liverpool became the port of choice for the Burton brewers. Hodgson & Co., despite their proximity to the London Docks, established an agency in 1825 to export bottled beer from Liverpool.⁴⁵

The Burton brewers' gradual erosion of Hodgson's lead gave them the incentive to seek constant improvement in brewing techniques. By 1832 the annual export of pale ale to Bengal was estimated to be 12,000 barrels, with Bass producing 5,200, Hodgson 3,600 and Allsopp 1,400.⁴⁶ The Burton brewers had found that their water supply contained natural sulphates and calcium, which was far better for brewing pale ale than the soft water available to Hodgson. This gave a sharper bitter taste and displayed a sparkling clarity in the bottle. However, the development of more active strains of yeast in the Burton 'union' system of fermentation were equally important in producing a fully attenuated strong beer with little residual sugar, giving a dryness of taste that was compatible with a bitter beer.⁴⁷

Marketing in India

The Burton brewers now had a beer that was as good as Hodgson's, if not better. Their greater challenge was to overcome the selling power of Hodgson's name, which after fifty years of production, had virtually become the world's first branded beer. The Calcutta agency house, Tulloch & Co., claimed that they could not sell other beers even if good quality, because of the "high repute of Hodgson's name for beer".⁴⁸

At this time, the market for alcoholic drinks was almost entirely European, as most Indians did not drink alcohol. The principal market for pale ale was for the officer corps of the army stationed in India, not for the private soldiers, who preferred porter and spirits. The British army consisted of 20,000 men, which was augmented by the East India Company, who recruited their own European army of 15,000 men. The daily allowance for British soldiers was three quarts of porter, a third of which could be taken as spirits if they chose.⁴⁹ They could also buy a limited amount of extra drink from the regimental canteen if they could

⁴³ John Riddick, *The History of British India*, Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2006, pp.135-6.

⁴⁴ Bushnan (1853) p.109.

⁴⁵ *The Liverpool Mercury*, 4 March 1825, p.1.

⁴⁶ Mathias (1959) p.192.

⁴⁷ Roger Protz, *The Ale Trail*, Orpington: Eric Dobby Publishing, 1995, p.66, Brian Spiller, *Victorian Public Houses* Newton Abbott: David & Charles, 1972, p.25.

⁴⁸ Bushnan (1853) pp.102-3.

⁴⁹ Charles Dickens, 'Something to be Done in India', *All The Year Round*, 231 (1863), p.106.

afford it. However, if they were prepared to disobey orders, they could buy unlimited supplies of spirits, such as rum or arrack from primitive stills in the Indian villages.⁵⁰

For many soldiers, drink was the escape route from a life of unbearable tedium. Life in the barracks was often one of boredom punctuated with periods of heavy drinking, where the monthly pay-day was described as “a scene of riot and confusion, where the drinking continued as long as the money lasted”.⁵¹ Such accounts of drunkenness and immorality did not usually reach the general public unless they had a subtext of moral reform, such as that of the prodigious novelist G. P. R. James in *The Commissioner* in 1843, where the hero was seen to renounce a vacuous existence by saying: “for three years I had nothing but dancing girls, curry and Hodson’s pale ale, I got sick of it sir. I sent home for some Hobbes, Voltaire and Descartes”.⁵²

Soldiers of the East India Company were required to serve twenty-one years to obtain a pension. Thus, many of them spent much of their life there, and adopted some aspects of Indian culture. Many took Indian mistresses and a few took Indian wives, there were many Anglo-Indian children. Thus, the cultures of India and Britain intermingled and developed as a hybrid sub-culture. Officer cadets were advised of this Anglo-Indian culture in popular magazines like the *Metropolitan*. It warned of a period of initiation before being accepted. They would have to learn the language, customs and manners of the country before being entitled to associate with the “the old hands, subalterns of fifteen years standing, profound in the merits of a curry or a batch of Hodson’s pale ale”.⁵³

Cadets as young as sixteen were inculcated in the culture of drinking as soon as they arrived in India.⁵⁴ Some older officers tried to warn them saying:

I tell you what it is, young fellows. You shoot all day, play cricket at noon, you swill Hodgson’s pale ale, claret and sangaree, till you drive yourselves into the liver complaint, of which you die; and we have the trouble of writing home to your friends that the climate did not agree with you.⁵⁵

However at that age, few worried about their health, but the mortality rate amongst young men was high, particularly from liver disease which was said to be “closely connected with Hodgson’s pale ale and claret”.⁵⁶

The preference of the ‘rankers’ in the army of India was for cheaper drinks, which should have ensured the prevalence of porter over pale ale, but the figures were distorted. The ratio of officers to men was boosted by the vast increase in the sepoy regiments, which were under the command of Europeans. The officer corps was therefore expanded to meet that need, particularly that of the East India Company.⁵⁷ They were relatively well paid and their duties were far from onerous. A typical day in the mess was described by the Victorian travel writer John D’Ewes in *Sporting in Two Hemispheres*, which would begin with breakfast

⁵⁰ Mrs. Postans, *Western India in 1838*, London: Saunders and Otley, 1839, p.167.

⁵¹ Marshal (1997), pp.93-4.

⁵² George P. R. James, *The Commissioner, or, De Lunatico Inquirendo*, Dublin: William Curry & Company, 1843, p.79.

⁵³ Captain Bellew, ‘Memoirs of a Griffin: or, a Cadet’s first Year in India’, *The Metropolitan*, (January 1843), p.80.

⁵⁴ Captain Jesse, *Notes of a Half-Pay in search of Good Health*, London: James Madden and Co., 1841, p.2.

⁵⁵ ‘Griffins in India’, *Waldie’s Select Circulating Library*, (19 November 1833), p.501.

⁵⁶ Cyril Parkinson, *Trade in the Eastern Seas, 1793-1813*, London: Cambridge University Press, 1937, p.74.

⁵⁷ Marshal (1997), p.96.

followed by billiards until the mid-day meal of ‘tiffin’. In the afternoon, if there was to be no parade, which was often the case, rackets or more billiards was followed by horse riding before dinner, when they had curries, stews or grills when it was said that they “distinguished themselves to the immortal Hodgson”.⁵⁸

In these vernacular accounts of Indian life, Hodgson’s pale ale was often shortened to ‘Hodsons’. To pronounce the ‘g’ would be a social gaffe and clear indication of recent arrival to the colonies. The name itself became associated with Anglo-Indian life, which was one of respectability, punctuated with danger, incorporated into stories for the young adventurer. A favourite theme was that of narrow escapes from death while hunting man-eating tigers. In these stories, the reader was initiated into the Anglo-Indian vocabulary as in *Rambles along the Styx*, by Lieutenant-Colonel Leach, who described his lifestyle in India as:

living in *bungalows* ventilated by *punkahs*, drinking therein, sundry bottles of Hodson’s pale ale; riding on elephants, shooting from their *howdahs* at everything from tigers, boa-constrictors to buffalo.⁵⁹

However, some wrote in more serious tones to describe the front-line conditions of drought on the northern frontier of India, where it was said that “every heart was sickened when the usual supply of Hodgsons had not been received”.⁶⁰

Although India was the main destination for the Hodgson’s beer, the name began to materialise along the shipping routes of the growing British Empire. In 1820, it appeared in St. Helena when the exiled Napoleon complained of undrinkable beer. The Governor of the island directed that some casks be obtained of “what is called Hodson’s pale ale”.⁶¹ In 1824, advertisements in the *South African Commercial Advertiser* described “a shipment of fifty hogsheads of pale ale received direct from Messrs. Hodgson & Co. which will be sold by single cask”.⁶²

As the overland route to India was developed in the 1830s, Hodgson’s pale ale began to appear in countries outside of the British Empire. The renowned magazine *Punch* reported that pale ale was to be found universally throughout Turkey, Syria, Greece and Egypt where “a foaming bottle of the exhilarating Hodgson could be enjoyed”.⁶³ William Thackeray, on his epic journey from Cornhill to Cairo, reported his joy at the arrival in Jerusalem of “a camel-load of Hodson’s pale ale from Beyroot [sic]”.⁶⁴

Thus, the name Hodgson became associated with travel to distant lands. This was exemplified in a popular genre of books which featured imperialistic accounts of British adventurers in the Middle East. The authors often referred to Hodgson’s pale ale without comment, safe in the assumption that every reader knew that it was to be found anywhere in the region. Captain Rochford-Scott, in *Rambles in Egypt and Candia*, describes how a party of British antiquarians, while exploring the Temple of Luxor, arrived at the small Red Sea port of Kheneh. There, they became the guests of a local Sheik Hassan, who offered them

⁵⁸ J. D’Ewes, *Sporting in Both Hemispheres*, London: Routledge, Warne and Routledge, 1861, p.28.

⁵⁹ J. Leach, *Rambles along the Styx*, London: T. and W. Boone, 1847, p.22.

⁶⁰ ‘Affairs to the Northward’, *Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register*, 21 (1826), p.89.

⁶¹ William Forsyth, *History of the Captivity of Napoleon at St. Helena; from the Letters and Journals of Sir Hudson Lowe*, London: John Murray, 1853, p.237.

⁶² *The South African Commercial Advertiser*, 30 March 1824.

⁶³ ‘Punch in the East’, *Punch, or the London Charivari*, 8 (1845), p.31.

⁶⁴ Francis Espinasse, *Literary Recollections and Sketches*, London: Kessinger Publishing Co., 1893, 2004, p.151.

Hodgson's pale ale, which he called "Bengal Wine".⁶⁵ Another military writer, Captain Mignan, in his book *A Winter Journey through Russia, the Caucasian Alps, and Georgia*, relates how the intrepid explorers arrived in the town of Benaub in Persia. Although the area produced fine wines for the king of Persia, they were told "that it was well known that the Shah's harem consumed more Hodgson's pale ale than a regimental mess in India".⁶⁶

Further afield, a more prosaic description from Canada spoke of, "pigeon pie washed down with Hodgson's pale ale".⁶⁷ Similar accounts from Siam, Burma, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa were a constant reminder to the British public of this product. A correspondent from Argentina spoke of "his one luxury being a consignment of Hodgson's pale ale",⁶⁸ whilst in Batavia "Sherry and Madeira were rejected for copious draughts of Hodgson's pale ale during dinner".⁶⁹

The principal market for Hodgson's pale ale continued to be for Europeans in India. The few Indians that drank alcohol were said to prefer porter, when it was said:

It is only at the tiffins of the Europeans that Hodgson's beer is most run upon, and that the dusky natives do more affect the generous liquor that comes nearer to their own complexion.⁷⁰

However, this was contradicted by other accounts of Indian consumers, where Hodgson was reputed to have refused a private contract for £1,000 worth of ale because "his hands were full quenching the thirst of sundried Indians".⁷¹ Perhaps it was just a matter of price as porter was certainly cheaper than Hodgson's beer. In the cross currents of colonial migration, Indian contract labourers bound for South Africa were advised in *The Madras Journal of Literature and Science* that "Cape beers are pleasant enough and much cheaper than Hodgsons, but Hindoos often sigh for the old malt".⁷²

Reports of religious constraints were also ambiguous. An early account in *The Oriental Magazine* refuted widespread claims in 1818 that "rich Hindus devour great quantities of Hodgson's pale ale", saying that the market was confined to Europeans.⁷³ Another account of travels in western India told how a local Muslim leader, Syud Abdoola, having been offered a bottle of Hodgson's pale ale, sought reassurance that it contained no alcohol. However, on drinking it he realised the fallacy and expressed his displeasure. This was contradicted later by the arrival of an Arab horseman in the British camp with "Abdoola's salaam, the ale had proved so extremely serviceable to his health, he should feel grateful for any we could spare".⁷⁴

⁶⁵ Charles Rochford-Scott, *Rambles in Egypt and Candia*, London: Henry Colbourn, 1837, p.33.

⁶⁶ Captain R. Mignan, *A Winter Journey through Russia, the Caucasian Alps, and Georgia*, London: Richard Bentley, 1839, p.197.

⁶⁷ Frederic Tolfrey, *The Sportsman in Canada*, London: T. C. Newby, 1845, p.76.

⁶⁸ R. Fennel, 'Letters from Argentina', *The London Magazine*, (1840), p.138.

⁶⁹ William Ruschenburger, *Narrative of A Voyage round the World*, London: Richard Bentley, 1838, p.360.

⁷⁰ Charles Knight, *London*, IV, London: Henry G. Bohn, 1851, p.15.

⁷¹ 'Indian Adventure- Treasure Hunting', *Dublin University Magazine: a Literary and Political Journal*, 61, (1863), p.565.

⁷² 'Hints Regarding the Cape of Good Hope', *The Madras Journal of Literature and Science*, 3 (1836), p.132.

⁷³ 'Phipps' Commerce of Bengal', *The Oriental magazine*, (Dec. 1823), pp. 533-9, p. 538.

⁷⁴ 'Mrs. Postan's Western India', *The Literary Gazette and Journal of Belles Lettres, Arts, Sciences* (30 November 1839), p.758.

This steady stream of anecdotal publicity promoted the reputation of Hodgson's beer. He seems to have relied on this rather than the adoption of an active marketing policy, as it followed the trade routes to become a cultural icon of the growing British Empire. Conversely, the Burton brewers had an uphill task to compete with Hodgson in India, but they decided that they could challenge his reputation in the untried British market for a pale ale.

Marketing and Distribution in Britain

Any attempt to find a market for pale ale in Britain would have to begin in London, the only centre with a significant population of Anglo-Indians. The Oriental Club of Hanover Square had been set up in 1824 as an exclusive haven for returning servants of the East India Company.⁷⁵ The editor of *The Court Journal*, described it as the "Mulligatawney Club", with a membership of 600, restricted to those who had resided in India or the Cape of Good Hope. He went on to question:

If to the generality of idle men, the Club is a refuge, how much more must it be to the returned Indian, who has been wearing out the best years of his life in the east, often in solitude, if a civilian...where he could order mulligatawney soup and Pillau for dinner washed down with Hodgson's pale ale and a bottle of claret.⁷⁶

William Thackeray also described the indolent lifestyle of some officers who had returned from India to London society:

where the young gentleman is home on sick leave from India, breakfasts at 3 o'clock in the afternoon with devilled kidneys and pale ale at the Union Jack club, where beardless young heroes of his own sort congregate and make merry.⁷⁷

Thus, a small but influential Anglo-Indian elite became established in London society bringing acquired tastes from the east. Some complained about the authenticity of attempts to reproduce a curry in England as, "a hash flavoured with turmeric and cayenne".⁷⁸ This was probably true. Sales of turmeric, the main ingredient in English curries, had increased threefold between 1820 and 1840.⁷⁹ They also drew unfavourable comparisons with the drinks that were manufactured for the Indian market, criticising pale ale in particular, saying "great are the lamentations over Hodson's pale ale, with which the home-brewed may not compare".⁸⁰

This adverse comment was reflecting the fact that Hodgson had begun to produce pale ale for the home market that was probably inferior to the export brand. Beer in India was not taxed, so there was a need to reduce costs to keep the price down in Britain by reducing the hop content. His first advertisement appeared in *The Morning Chronicle* in July 1833:

Hodgson and Co.'s Bottled Pale Ale the nobility and gentry and others (especially families from India) are respectfully informed that they may be supplied with Hodgson & Co.'s bottled pale ale in quantities of two dozen quarts.⁸¹

⁷⁵ 'Home Intelligence', *The Asiatic Journal* (May 1824), p.573.

⁷⁶ 'The clubs of London and their influence upon society', *The Court Journal*, (11 July 1835), p.434.

⁷⁷ William Thackeray, *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse*, London: Bradbury and Evans, 1855, p.201.

⁷⁸ 'Reminiscences of a Returning Indian', *The Asiatic Journal*, (Sep.-Dec. 1835), p.18.

⁷⁹ Lizzie Collingham, *Curry A Tale of Cooks & Conquerors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 141.

⁸⁰ 'Reminiscences of a Returning Indian' (1835).

⁸¹ *The Morning Chronicle*, 24 July 1833, p.1.

Formal advertisements in newspapers or magazines for alcoholic products was virtually unknown at this time. The few that did appear tended to be event-orientated, whereby the public were informed that a shipment of port, madeira or brandy had arrived and was available for sale. Hence Hodgson was a pioneer in such marketing, and he ran similar advertisements for Portsmouth and Southampton aimed at the “officers of the Navy, Army and Gentlemen, for exportation or home consumption”.⁸² In 1835, he advertised in Liverpool, introducing a new format:

Hodgson & Co.’s East India Pale Ale...being brewed from the finest East Kent hop, it contains a particularly fine tonic quality, and is consequently much recommended by the faculty even to invalids.⁸³

This was a pivotal moment in the development of pale ale, which now had the name ‘India pale ale’ with a new message that this beer was no longer solely for the Indian market. Its reputation was to be built on its medicinal properties based on its ability to combat the exhaustion generated by the Indian climate, where it was said to be “impossible to contemplate lunch without prefacing it with bitter beer”.⁸⁴

In the early 1830s, the Burton brewers had also begun to produce a distinctive form of their pale ale for British consumption, which was marketed through a network of agencies.⁸⁵ The Burton brewers faced new challenges in brewing for the home market in Britain, where there was widespread concern about the adulteration of beer. In 1830, the influential Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge published a treatise on brewing, which claimed that the Burton brewers were using illegal ingredients in their beer. The Burton brewers acted collectively and decisively. They took the publishers to court where they invited an independent analysis of their beer under the direction of the court. They were cleared and the Society issued a complete retraction.⁸⁶ Samuel Allsopp never missed a chance to exploit a situation to generate publicity. He was the only brewer to apply to the court to lodge affidavits from an independent chemist, and from his brewery workers about the ingredients used in his beer. When the judge agreed to this, he remarked with some irony, that it was “a good advertisement for the Burton ale brewers”.⁸⁷

The Burton brewers did not threaten Hodgson’s dominance of the London market at this time. Bass had opened his London store at Great Tower Street in 1830 and Allsopp had a similar facility at Upper Thames Street.⁸⁸ Both were near the waterfront, which reflected their continuing need for water transport via the Grand Union canal, which was slow and insecure.⁸⁹ When the Burton brewers acted collectively in 1839 to petition Parliament for the Manchester and Birmingham Extension Railway Bill to be passed, they stated:

⁸² *The Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle*, 24 February 1834, p.1.

⁸³ *The Liverpool Mercury*, 27 February 1835, p.1.

⁸⁴ Edward Smith, *Consumption and its Early Remedial Stages*, London: Walton and Maberly, 1862, p.260.

⁸⁵ Terence Gourvish & Richard Wilson, *The Dynamics of the International Brewing Industry since 1800*, London: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p.97.

⁸⁶ *The Times*, 2 February 1830, p.4; 11 May 1830, p.3.

⁸⁷ Bushnan (1853), p.118.

⁸⁸ Gourvish & Wilson (1998), p.152.

⁸⁹ Bushnan, (1853), p.124.

that the petitioners have a large and growing trade with London, Manchester and Liverpool, in an article which is exposed to incessant plunder and adulteration by canal conveyance.⁹⁰

It was said that every lock keeper between Burton and London felt entitled to tap into the barrel for his beer and replace it with water. The bill was passed, Burton-on-Trent was connected to the rail network and the situation was transformed.

Within two years Allsopp and Bass had expanded their agency network and began an advertising 'war' with Hodgson in the classified advertisement pages of the British and Indian press. The Burton brewers went further than Hodgson to address the public concern over adulteration of beer by seeking medical endorsement of their products. Allsopp began his advertising campaign with explicit new medical claims that several eminent doctors were strongly recommending his East India Pale Ale to their patients.⁹¹ Bass followed suit with a similar advertisement in the *Indian Mail*, where he claimed that "Dr. Prout, in his work on diseases of the stomach, especially recommends India Pale Ale for weakly persons".⁹² Other innovations included placing advertisements in new media such as *The Medical Times* and *The Lancet*. At a time of widespread concern about food adulteration this was a creative way of reassuring the public about their product.

Both Bass and Allsopp had now adopted Hodgson's terminology of 'India pale ale', which now became the generic term for all brewers' beers that had originated for the Indian market. A new marketing strategy was to appeal to drinkers in Britain by demonstrating the success of their product in India, as in the following advertisement:

The high esteem in which the pale ale of Bass & Co. is held in India will be seen in the comparative quantity shipped to Calcutta in 1839:- Shipped by Bass 4,936 hogsheads: by Hodgson 1,483 hogsheads.⁹³

Allsopp responded with alternative figures for the quantities of beer exported to India in 1841 to 1842 given as "Allsopp 9,499, Bass 4,796, Hodgson 2,001".⁹⁴

Their campaign in India became unrestrained, shouting at each other from banner headlines of half-page advertisements in journals such as the *Indian Mail*, where Allsopp accused Bass of misrepresenting the figures of exports stating in a letter of 29 March 1844:

Messrs Bass and Co. were the first to adopt a system of advertising to assume a position in India in the consumption of beer, to which they have no claim, and however repugnant to their own feelings, Messrs. Allsopp consider it due to themselves and the public to expose their misrepresentations...⁹⁵

Bass immediately replied in a similar letter of 10 April, where he gave a long and detailed refutation of Allsopp's figures before adding:

⁹⁰ *The Times*, 22 April 1839, p.3.

⁹¹ *The Times*, 8 May 1841, p.4.

⁹² *The Indian Mail*, 5 (1843), p.159.

⁹³ *The Times*, 23 April 1841, p.8.

⁹⁴ *The Medical Times*, IX, 230 (1844), p.360.

⁹⁵ *The Indian Mail*, 4, 12 (1844), p.381.

Messrs. Bass and Co. are content to leave the facts stated to bear their own comment; and in retiring from this unseemly altercation, it will be apparent to all, that they have been forced to intrude on the public attention...⁹⁶

Two points emerge from this exchange. First, is the importance that they placed on their performance in the Indian market as part of their marketing strategy in Britain. Second, that Hodgson was no longer a threat and apparently not deemed worthy of mention.

One of Hodgson's major distribution problems arose from unscrupulous retailers who refilled returned bottles with an inferior product. He first attempted to prevent this in 1836, by changing the advertisements for Hodgson's Pale Ale in *The Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle* to state that this beer was only available through a sole agency and that "all others professing to sell the same are deceiving the public. As a caution the casks are branded and bottles sealed".⁹⁷

The branding of alcoholic drinks was in its infancy when he changed the advertisements yet again, where it was said that "none are genuine unless labelled Hodgson East India Pale Ale and the corks branded".⁹⁸ The Burton brewers, who also labelled their beer, protected against the practice of refilling bottles by maintaining strict controls over the agents who retailed their beer. Bass said that his agents "were his eyes and ears who kept him informed of complaints in quality, competition from other brewers".⁹⁹ Bass and Allsopp had a network of agents in every major city with at least forty in London alone.¹⁰⁰

This study argues that Hodgson's advertising strategy in Britain was too understated in a new age of competition. The appeal to the 'nobility and gentry' was to give the implicit message that it was a drink that was appreciated by the upper classes who had connections with India, therefore its consumption was an indication of the sign of the sophisticated palate of a gentleman who could appreciate the subtle astringency of a bitter beer. He made no explicit claim for the attributes of his beer and did not capitalise on his success in India to promote his product in Britain in the same way that the Burton brewers did. He did not seem to fully appreciate the value of his name, which by that time, had the potential of a brand. He would have been wise to have emulated the marketing techniques of another contemporary, Arthur Guinness, who led the way in promoting his name as a brand.

The Burton brewers aggressively targeted the London market with a relatively expensive product like Indian Pale Ale, because they were aiming at the aspirations of the emerging lower middle class of shopkeepers and clerks.¹⁰¹ It would have been folly to compete with the London porter brewers whose profits relied on the mass production of a low-value, unbranded product to a captive market. Their success lay in the development of the trade in bottled beer that claimed protection from the adulterations that were widely practiced in nineteenth-century public houses. The two arch-rivals, Allsopp and Bass, had ignored the 'tied-house' system of the London brewers and set up a network of agents, initially in India

⁹⁶ *The Indian Mail*, 4, 13 (1844), p.415.

⁹⁷ *The Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle*, 18 April 1836, p.1.

⁹⁸ *The Times*, 9 July 1839, p.2.

⁹⁹ Richard Wilson, 'Selling Beer in Victorian Britain', in Geoffrey Jones and Nicholas Morgan (eds), *Adding Value: Brands and Marketing in Food and Drink*, London: Routledge, 1994, p.117.

¹⁰⁰ Arthur Hassall, 'The Bitter Beer, Pale Ale, or India Pale Ale of Messrs. Allsopp and Sons, and Messrs. Bass and Co., of Burton-on-Trent', in *Food and its Adulterations*, London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1855, pp.456-8.

¹⁰¹ Raymond Anderson, 'History of Industrial Brewing', in Fergus Priest & Graham Stewart (eds), *Handbook of Brewing*, New York: CRC Press, 2006, p.8.

and subsequently in Britain. Michael Bass, when accused in Parliament of being a monopolist, stated with pride “that he sent 100,000 barrels of beer annually to London and did not own a single public-house”.¹⁰²

Advertising had been an important step forward for Hodgson, but he did not have the Burton Brewers’ flair for turning publicity to good advantage. He also failed to establish a network of agencies, having only four agents in the whole country, in Liverpool, Hull, Southampton and London. A fellow brewer said that “it was well known that the orders Mr. Hodgson received were fully as many as he could execute”,¹⁰³ indicating that the brewery was working to capacity and probably needed investment. Hodgson’s response seems to have lacked vigour, but perhaps by this time, in his late 40s and with no son to hand over to, he had lost interest in the business. In 1843, he sold out to another brewer, Edwin Abbott, who described himself as the “sole surviving partner of this long celebrated establishment”.¹⁰⁴ Hodgson’s name was kept for the beer, the value of the brand being apparent. Abbott began a new advertising campaign in India and in 1845 it was reported in the ‘Commercial Intelligence from Bombay’ of *The Times* that although Allsopp and Bass still dominated the market, “Hodgson appears determined to recover his position”.¹⁰⁵ However, this seems to have had little success and production of Hodgson’s pale ale continued to decline through the 1850s, until in 1859 a single line advertisement read “Abbott’s Bow Brewery: expressly for private families”.¹⁰⁶ In 1862, Abbot was declared bankrupt and the Bow Brewery closed.¹⁰⁷ Bass and Allsopp continued to increase production, trebling their output every decade. By 1870, Allsopp was second only to Bass, whose brewery was the largest in the world, producing 48 million gallons of beer annually.¹⁰⁸

Conclusion

Hodgson’s pale ale, which had been a fixture of the British Empire, had lost its dominance of the Indian market to Bass and Allsopp, and then failed in the British market. The Burton brewers seemed to have more appetite for the competition. The arrival of the railway connection undoubtedly helped the Burton brewers, but that did not remove the inherent advantage that Bow brewery enjoyed in its proximity to the docks. Both Allsopp and Bass had the expense of maintaining large London storage depots, complete with rail access. The Burton brewers had one advantage, which was the breweries’ water supply, but it was their careful scientific approach to improvements in brewing techniques which capitalised on that fact. Their beer had a dry bitter taste and contrasted with the sweet taste of mild ale and the thick, dark texture of porter, usually drawn from the barrel into a pewter tankard. Thus, they were able to deliver a bottle of clean-tasting beer that looked good in a clear glass and which was attractive to the aspirant middle classes. It was a beer for its time.

The constant stream of East India Company servants returning to nineteenth-century Britain brought back tastes for exotic foods, including mulligatawny soup, curry and pale ale. Both Hodgson and the Burton brewers sought to exploit this potential market in Britain by

¹⁰² *Hansard*, H.C. Debate 13 December 1852.

¹⁰³ William Roberts, *The Scottish Ale-Brewer and Practical Maltster*, Edinburgh: A. & C. Black, 1847, p.155.

¹⁰⁴ *The Indian Mail*, 4 (1843), p.127.

¹⁰⁵ *The Times*, 7 May 1845, p.5.

¹⁰⁶ *The Times*, 3 June 1859, p.15.

¹⁰⁷ *The Times*, 25 January 1862, p.7.

¹⁰⁸ Jack Blocker, David Fahey & Ian Tyrrell, *Alcohol and Temperance in Modern History*, Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2003, p.95.

advertising their beer as 'Indian pale ale'. The Burton brewers were more successful, using the methods developed in India. They coupled a vigorous marketing campaign with a national distribution network of agencies for the supply of bottled beer. This revolutionised the brewing trade by circumventing the traditional system of public houses, creating Britain's first 'brewing town'.

The role of the Indian community in these developments, whilst elusive, can be found in their rejection of western cultural values. Their reluctance to buy British manufactured goods resulted in the loss of the Indian monopoly by East India Company, which was then reduced to governing the country as a surrogate arm of the state. The well-paid army officers and civil servants stationed in India were the principal customers for Indian pale ale. This massive bureaucracy, which was funded by taxes from Indian peasants, was superimposed on the country and never part of Indian culture. Instead, it was the British who adapted to the Indian way of life, creating an Anglo-Indian sub-culture where India pale ale developed into an iconic feature that spread throughout the British Empire. The final irony came when this product, designed for the Anglo-Indian market, was reintroduced to its birthplace in London, from where it proceeded to transform the British brewing industry.

Thus, Indian pale ale followed the trade routes of the growing British Empire, a reassuring symbol of the mother country in remote areas of foreign lands, gaining a brand identity that would be envied even today. The use of the Anglo-Saxon 'ale' united the ancient tradition of Britain with the unfamiliarity of India, encapsulating the concept of metropole and colony in a single phrase. The development of brand names allowed devotees of a particular product to attach iconic status to their particular preference, whether it be from Hodgson, Allsopp or Bass. In Britain, the idea of empire could now be 'packaged' into products where the strange and exotic had been tamed, where India could be experienced with the consumption of a curry, pilau rice and a bottle of IPA. This is a small, but important example of the industrial, commercial and cultural enrichment of Britain through the interaction with its empire.

References

- Anderson, Raymond, 'History of Industrial Brewing', in Fergus Priest and Graham Stewart (eds), *Handbook of Brewing*, New York: CRC Press, 2006
- Bellew, Captain, 'Memoirs of a GGGriffin: or a Cadet's first Year in India, *The Metropolitan* (January 1843), pp. 79-80.
- 'Bell's Monthly Compendium for Advertisements for May 1807', *La belle Assemblée*, London: John Bell, 1807
- Blocker, Jack, Fahey, David and Tyrrell, Ian, *Alcohol and Temperance in Modern History*, Santa Barbara: ABC- CLIO, 2003
- Buettner, Elizabeth, 'Going for an Indian: South Asian Restaurants and the Limits of Multiculturalism in Britain', *Journal of Modern History*, 88 (2008), pp.865-901
- Burnley, James and Hogg, James, *Fortunes Made in Business: a series of Original Sketches, Biographical and Anecdotic, from the Recent History of Industry and Commerce*, London: Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, 1884
- Bushnan, J., *Burton and its Bitter Beer*, London: W. Orr & Co., 1853
- Collingham, Lizzie, *Curry: A Tale of Cooks & Conquerors*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006
- Buettner, Elizabeth, 'Going for an Indian: South Asian Restaurants and the Limits of Multiculturalism in Britain', *Journal of Modern History*, 88 (2008), pp.865-901
- Combrune, Michael , *An Essay on Brewing*, London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1758
- Combrune, Michael , *The Theory and Practice of Brewing*, London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1762
- Cotton, Sir Evan, *East Indiamen, the East India Company's Maritime Service*, London: The Batchworth Press, 1949
- D'Ewes, J., *Sporting in Both Hemispheres*, London: Routledge, Warne and Routledge, 1861
- Dickens, Charles, 'Sir John Barleycorn at Home', *Household Words*, 174 (1853), pp.486-92.
- Dickens, Charles, 'Something to be Done in India', *All the Year Round*, 231 (1863), pp.103-8.
- Eaton, Charles, *Shipwreck of the Stirling Castle containing a faithful narrative of the dreadful sufferings of the crew and the cruel murder of Captain Fraser by the savages*, London: George Virtue, 1838
- Espinasse, Francis, *Literary Recollections and Sketches*, London: Kessinger Publishing Co., 2004 [1893]
- Farrington, Anthony, *A Biographical Index of East India Company maritime service officers: 1600-1834*, London: British Library, 1999
- Fennel, R., 'Letters from Argentina', *The London Magazine* (1840), pp.138-9
- Forsyth, William, *History of the Captivity of Napoleon at St. Helena; from the Letters and Journals of Sir Hudson Lowe*, London: John Murray, 1853
- Gourvish, Terence and Wilson, Richard, *The Dynamics of the International Brewing Industry since 1800*, London: Cambridge University Press, 1998

- Hardy, Charles, *A Register of Ships Employed in the Service of the Honourable, the United East India Company from the year 1760 –1810*, London: Black, Parry and Kingsbury, 1811
- Harrison, Brian, *Drink and the Victorians the Temperance question in England 1815-1872*, London: Faber & Faber, 1971
- Hassall, Arthur, ‘The Bitter Beer, Pale Ale, or India Pale Ale of Messrs. Allsopp and Sons, and Messrs. Bass and Co., of Burton-on-Trent’, in *Food and its Adulterations*, London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1855
- James, George P. R., *The Commissioner, or, De Lunatico Inquirendo*, Dublin: William Curry and Company, 1843
- Jesse, Captain, *Notes of a Half-Pay in search of Good Health*, London: James Madden and Co., 1841
- Knight, Charles, *London*, IV, London: Henry G. Bohn, 1851
- Leach, J., *Rambles along the Styx*, London: T. and W. Boone, 1847
- Lynn, Thomas, *An Improved System of Telegraphic Communication*, London: Black, Kingsbury, Parbury and Allen, 1818
- Marshal, P., ‘British Society in India under the East India Company’, *Modern Asia Studies*, 31 (1997), pp.89-108
- Mathias, Peter, *The Brewing Industry in England 1700-1830*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959
- Mignan, Captain R., *A Winter Journey through Russia, the Caucasian Alps, and Georgia*, London: Richard Bentley, 1839
- Molyneux, W., *Burton-on-Trent: its history, its waters, and its breweries*, London: Trubner and Co., 1869
- Parkinson, Cyril, *Trade in the Eastern Seas, 1793-1813*, London: Cambridge University Press, 1937
- Postans, Mrs., *Western India in 1838*, London: Saunders and Otley, 1839
- Protz, Roger, *The Ale Trail*, Orpington: Eric Dobby Publishing, 1995
- Riddick, John, *The History of British India*, Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2006
- Roberts, William, *The Scottish Ale-Brewer and Practical Maltster*, Edinburgh: A. and C. Black, 1847
- Rochford-Scott, Charles, *Rambles in Egypt and Candia*, London: Henry Colbourn, 1837
- Ruschenburger, William, *Narrative of A Voyage round the World*, London: Richard Bentley, 1838
- Seton-Carr, W., *Selections From Calcutta Gazettes*, Calcutta: Office of Superintendent of Government Printing, 1868
- Smith, Edward, *Consumption and its Early Remedial Stages*, London: Walton and Maberly, 1862
- Spiller, Brian, *Victorian Public Houses* Newton Abbott: David and Charles, 1972
- Thackeray, William, *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse*, London: Bradbury and Evans, 1855

- Tizard, William, *The Theory and Practice of Brewing Illustrated*, London: Sold by the Author, 1846
- Tolfrey, Frederic, *The Sportsman in Canada*, London: T. C. Newby, 1845
- Webster, Anthony, *Gentlemen Capitalists: British Imperialism in South East Asia 1770-1890*, London: Tauris Academic Studies, 1998
- Wilson, Horace, *A Review of the External Commerce of Bengal from 1813-14 to 1827-28, Tables*, Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1830
- Wilson, Richard, 'Selling Beer in Victorian Britain', in Geoffrey Jones and Nicholas Morgan (eds), *Adding Value: Brands and Marketing in Food and Drink*, London: Routledge, 1994

Other Commodities of Empire Working Papers

- WP01: Sandip Hazareesingh, “Chasing commodities over the surface of the globe”: shipping, port development and the making of networks between Glasgow and Bombay, c.1850-1880’ (October 2007)
- WP02: Jonathan Curry-Machado, ‘Sub-imperial globalisation and the phoenix of empire: sugar, engineering and commerce in nineteenth century Cuba’ (October 2007)
- WP03: Jean Stubbs, ‘Reinventing mecca: tobacco in the Dominican Republic, 1763-2007’ (October 2007)
- WP04: Miguel Suárez Bosa, ‘The role of the Canary Islands in the Atlantic coal route from the end of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century: corporate strategies’ (January 2008)
- WP05: Ayodeji Olukoju, ‘The United Kingdom and the political economy of the global oil-producing nuts and seeds during the 1930s’ (January 2008)
- WP06: Roberto Davini, ‘A global commodity within a rising empire: the history of Bengali raw silk as connective interplay between the Company *Bahadur*, the Bengali local economy and society, and the universal Italian model, c.1750-c.1830’ (February 2008)
- WP07: Deana Heath, ‘Obscenity, empire and global networks’ (April 2008)
- WP08: David Hyde, ‘Global coffee and decolonisation in Kenya: overproduction, quotas and rural restructuring’ (July 2008)
- WP09: Vibha Arora, ‘Routing the commodities of empire through Sikkim (1817-1906)’ (July 2008)
- WP10: Kaori O’Connor, ‘Beyond ‘exotic groceries’: tapioca-cassava, a hidden commodity of empire’ (January 2009)
- WP11: Jonathan Robins, “‘The Black Man’s Crop’: cotton, imperialism and public-private development in Britain’s African colonies, 1900-1918’ (September 2009)
- WP12: Jelmer Vos, ‘Of stocks and barter: John Holt and the Kongo rubber trade, 1906-1910’ (September 2009)

All Commodities of Empire Working Papers can be downloaded from the Commodities of Empire website, at <http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/ferguson-centre/commodities-of-empire/working-papers/index.htm>.

Commodities of Empire is a joint research collaboration between the Open University's **Ferguson Centre for African and Asian Studies** and London Metropolitan University's **Caribbean Studies Centre**. These two institutions form the nucleus of a growing international network of researchers and research centres.

The mutually reinforcing relationship between 'commodities' and 'empires' has long been recognised. Over the last six centuries the quest for profits has driven imperial expansion, with the global trade in commodities fuelling the ongoing industrial revolution. These 'commodities of empire', which became transnationally mobilised in ever larger quantities, included foodstuffs (wheat, rice, bananas); industrial crops (cotton, rubber, linseed and palm oils); stimulants (sugar, tea, coffee, cocoa, tobacco and opium); and ores (tin, copper, gold, diamonds). Their expanded production and global movements brought vast spatial, social, economic and cultural changes to both metropolises and colonies.

In the Commodities of Empire project we explore the networks through which such commodities circulated within, and in the spaces between, empires. We are particularly attentive to local processes – originating in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Latin America – which significantly influenced the outcome of the encounter between the world economy and regional societies, doing so through a comparative approach that explores the experiences of peoples subjected to different imperial hegemonies.

The following key research questions inform the work of project:

- 1) The networks through which commodities were produced and circulated within, between and beyond empires;
- 2) The interlinking 'systems' (political-military, agricultural labour, commercial, maritime, industrial production, social communication, technological knowledge) that were themselves evolving during the colonial period, and through which these commodity networks functioned;
- 3) The impact of agents in the periphery on the establishment and development of commodity networks: as instigators and promoters; through their social, cultural and technological resistance; or through the production of anti-commodities;
- 4) The impact of commodity circulation both on the periphery, and on the economic, social and cultural life of the metropolises;
- 5) The interrogation of the concept of 'globalisation' through the study of the historical movement and impact of commodities.

www.open.ac.uk/Arts/ferguson-centre/commodities-of-empire/index

Series Editor: Dr Jonathan Curry-Machado (LMU)

Project Directors: Dr Sandip Hazareesingh (OU) and Prof. Jean Stubbs (LMU)



The Open
University

**The Ferguson Centre for
African and Asian Studies,
The Open University,
Walton Hall,
Milton Keynes MK7 6AA**

**Caribbean Studies Centre,
London Metropolitan University,
North Campus,
166-220 Holloway Road,
London N7 8DB**

