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FALKIRK...



A GLIMPSE OF THE PAST

AITKEN'S

FALKIRK

BEER



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EDITORIAL

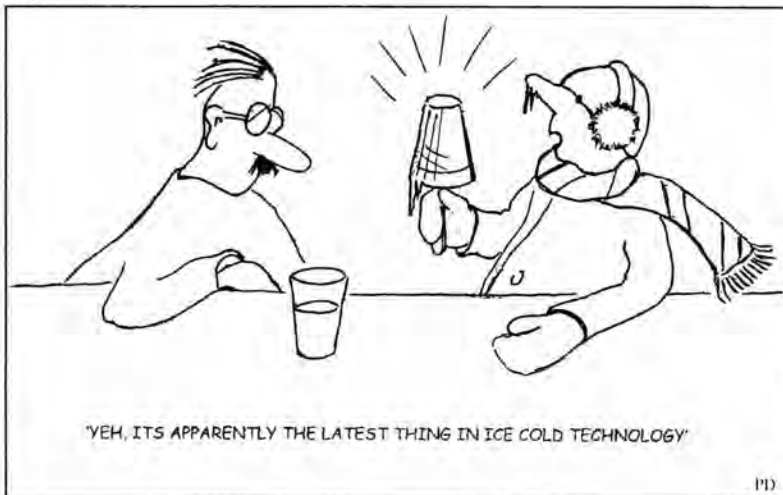
During March this year I spent quite a bit of time talking to people. I had placed a letter in *The Falkirk Herald* to try to find past employees of Aitken's Brewery, and was pleasantly surprised to find there were folk keen to get in touch with me.

Many of these people were quite old – in their 70s and 80s – and I was utterly gobsmacked to find their minds still sharp and undimmed by time. While, in some cases, their bodies were starting to let them down a bit, most could remember every small detail of what they did all those years ago at the brewery. It was incredible. I often struggle to know what I'm doing from one minute to the next, and far too often wander into a room of my house, stand around for a minute or two, and wander back out feeling rather lost as to why I went in in the first place.

I wanted their memories. I was not disappointed. For while the history books are full of essential facts, more often than not they fail to paint the real picture of our past, a past in which real people did real jobs. For it is no good knowing everything about the equipment, the building, and so on, without knowing how the men and women who worked there actually felt from day to day. It is the memories of people that fill out the skeleton of our past, and unless we are quick to ask people questions about what they did all those years ago, we will lose something valuable. This journal is dedicated to the people of Falkirk.



Edward Burns



MEMORIES

What follows are the memories of the people of Falkirk, who worked at, or just remember, Aitken's Brewery.

MY PRINCIPAL memories are from childhood (late 1930s - early 1940s). A group of six very close friends were avid readers and visited the public library regularly. As the brewery buildings ran parallel to the library, it was our habit to take notice of the comings and goings at the brewery when we were in the vicinity.

Initially there was the smell (hops) which pervaded the whole of the west end of the town. This smell wasn't regarded as offensive, only as evidence that the brewery was in good working order. Seeing the dray wagons delivering barrels of beer to local pubs gave us the opportunity to admire and sometimes clap the handsome and hard-working horses. These wagons and horses were spruced up and appeared at various parades, gala days, and shows in the area.

On our visits to the library we always stopped to look in the half-open windows of the Bottling or Bottle Washing Hall at the brewery. These windows were at pavement level and the hall was below street level. The hall was permanently shrouded in steam and it was impossible to distinguish the faces of the girls working there. (The girls incidentally wore clogs.) With the steam and the noise of bottle clanking, and a general air of mystery, I used to imagine that this must be what Hell was like. Our parents would warn us that if we didn't stick in at school we would end up working in the bottling plant (strictly Non-U now) but at the time, prospect enough for us to take heed.

May Livingston

MY GRANDFATHER, Daniel Robertson, was Managing Director and Head Brewer of James Aitken & Co. He retired around 1944. As a small boy I spent time in the brewery when visiting him. I well remember the bottling plant and the cooperage. I also remember the horses that were used for delivering beer to the local hostleries. When the gymkhana used to be held in the grounds of Callendar House, the brewery horses were there, beautifully presented, with their cart magnificently decorated.

I also remember that their advertising slogan was 'Strength Behind Bars,' and depicted a tiger with the word 'Aitkens' shown on the stripes of the tiger.

Although I personally cannot remember too much about the beer known as 'Aitken's 90/-,' it was I believe one of the more famous beers of its time.

Aitken's had their administrative offices in the Lint Riggs. My grandfather lived in the 'brewery house,' which was in Rosehall Terrace. He was succeeded by Duncan Heeps, and it was during his time that the company was taken over.

I have other snippets on the brewery. It was established in 1723 on the site to the east of Hope Street, and originally water was brought from a local well by cart. In 1830 artesian wells were sunk on the site and produced water at a rate of 200 gallons a minute.

Cowan Macnair

IT WAS mainly women who worked the machines in the bottling hall. In 1940 the women were needed to do more essential work for the war effort. Young boys were taken on to do their jobs in the brewery, and so I found myself employed in the bottling hall in 1940, at the age of 14. I remained inside the hall for two years, and then outside, still working with bottles, until 1948.

The work was hard, but it was enjoyable. The hall was below ground level, and there was quite an echo inside. Occasionally someone might start singing, and the sound would be all over the place. It was wet in places, and both the women and men wore clogs, which the brewery supplied for nothing. Some old women still worked there during the war. There was Mary Young, who was the sister of the bottling hall gaffer, and Jean Hendry, who was in her 60s. Jean used to give me a list and I would go down to the Co-op at lunchtime to get her messages.

The bottles used were either new or returned empties. If empties, you had to take a note of the number of bottles so that customers could be credited. We were so busy that Willie Hunter was taken on to work with me. He noted the number of empties and I unloaded the lorries bringing them in. Sometimes we had to wait after five o'clock for lorries coming in, and sometimes we worked on Sundays, for double time. We always worked until 12pm on Saturdays. When Falkirk were playing football at home, three boxes of Export were sent down to the ground, probably for entertainment after the game. I always went down to the ground with the beer and received a complimentary ticket for the game that day.

I was very fond of football, either playing it or watching it. During the war British soldiers came to the old Town Hall in Upper Newmarket Street, and I managed to speak with a captain to arrange a game between the army and the brewery. We actually played a number of games with them at Bleachfield Park. Sometimes we won, and sometimes they won, but we won the first game.



*Aitken's bottling hall in 1940
(By courtesy of Falkirk Council Museum Services)*

We got new glass bottles from both the Alloa Glassworks and a place in Guildford. Slim half-pint green glass bottles came from Alloa, and heavier, dumper brown glass bottles came from Guildford. All our pint bottles were made from brown glass, and these came from Guildford.

When bottles came in they were unloaded from the lorries and placed on a roller to be sent down to two lassies who took them out of the boxes and put them, eight at a time, in the washing machine. They were then sent round on a roller to the bottling machine, where they were filled with beer. The machines could be adjusted to take into account the different size of bottles. From there they were sent on to the topping machine, where they were either fitted with an internal screw-top or a metal crimp-top. The bottles were then stacked on trays and sent through the pasteuriser, before being sent off to the labelling machine. There was very little manual work

involved other than the moving of bottles on or off rollers, as the machines did everything themselves, whether washing, filling or labelling.

Beer was supplied to the bottling hall from two cellars. In each there were rows of hoggets [hogsheads] on gantries. One cellar was for 90/- and Export, and the other was for a light ale that was bottled in pint screw-tops and dumpy crimp-tops. The latter was called 'Fourpenny' by the workers, and was generally known as Yellow Label. The beer was piped from all the hoggets into cylinders, then it was passed through a filter before arriving at the bottling machine. Jock Brown was in charge of four cylinders.

During the war all Aitken's draught beer was light. The 90/- and Export was bottled.

The Manager and Head Brewer was Danny Robertson. He was a very strict man, and used to rule with an iron rod. Once each day he would come down to the brewery from his office in the Lint Riggs. Word would go round that he was due, and everyone would be on their best behaviour. He also had an office at the brewery. When he died, Duncan Heeps got his job. Mr Heeps was a very nice man, a right gentleman. Always said 'Good morning' or 'Good afternoon,' and would pass the time of day with you.

When I started at the brewery my wage was 16 shillings a week. I got a few rises, but the biggest was when Mr Heeps came up to me in the yard one day and told me he was raising my wage to £3-5s. This was a very good wage. My dad was labouring at the tar works and only getting a basic of £2-10s. Of course the wages dropped when the war finished.

We used to get free beer. You were allowed to go to what we called the Murly when you started work at 7-30am, at lunch, and when you finished at 5pm. The amount of free beer that you got was dependant on the size of the container that you took along, although obviously there were limits. And even with all this for nothing, there was still the occasional person caught trying to smuggle more out of the brewery. One day there was a terrible crash in the yard. A woman had slipped on the metal weighbridge and dropped all of the bottles of beer she'd had hidden up her skirt. It was quite funny at the time, but in the end she got her books.

I remember quite a few of the folk who worked there. There was old Peter Stewart, a carter who worked there until he retired. Jimmy Shaw was the overall boss of all the bottling operations. Norman Hutton was in charge of the joiners' shop. A lot of bottle boxes were repaired there. David Scott was the painters' gaffer. Davy McLean was a mechanic in charge of the garage. There were two squads of women in the bottling hall. Lizzie Taylor was in charge of one of them – she was a cheery big soul. Lizzie Fallin was in charge of the other – she was more strict.

Old Willie Boyd was on the gate. He was responsible for booking hired lorries, and after 5pm he fed and watered the two brewery horses. On many a Saturday a bloke came in to dress them up for a gala or some other event. Davy Park was brewery driver. He would take a lorry along to galas where the brewery would have a beer-tent set up. Aitken's had two horses and



ONE OF AITKEN'S FLEET OF MOTOR LORRIES.

One of Aitken's lorries in 1935 (By courtesy of Paul Dean)

carts, and five lorries, but we were so busy that we also had lots of hire lorries. Willie would order these.

When the war was over the boys in the forces were entitled to their old jobs back, and I ended up getting kicked from pillar to post, before leaving in 1948.

The years I spent with Aitken's were the happiest of my life. I met my wife there in 1947. It was a great place to work, and everyone got on.

Jimmy Manson

I STARTED in the bottling hall when I was 18 years old. I don't remember exactly how long I was there, but I'm 83 now, so it must have been around 1937. My job was to watch the filling machine, although sometimes in the afternoon we sorted through bottles in the yard when there was a delivery of empties. The only beer I remember was a strong ale in wee bottles, and a pale ale. We started at 6am and finished at 5pm, and during the war we sometimes sat up in the office at night to do fire watching.

I met my husband, Peter Fallon, at the brewery. He was the brewery

painter. He was also in the brewery fire brigade. His brother, John, delivered beer on one of the horse and carts. My uncle, Alex Young, was foreman in the bottling hall.

I remember seeing Miss Aitken once. She was a tall woman, and never married. I think she was down at the brewery for something special, maybe an event.

It was a happy crowd there.

Lily Fallon

I STARTED in the office when I was 14 years old in the bottled beer section, around 1944. I remained a clerk until 1953, when I left.

One day, not long after starting, I was returning to the office in Lint Riggs and saw one of our draymen with his Clydesdale and cart and a full load of beer to deliver in town. He was about to enter the office and asked me to look after his horse, etc. And, of course, when he was upstairs something startled the horse and I was too small to control it. Traffic in town was light in those days, but we still managed to hit a car before the drayman returned.

CASK DEPARTMENT – A card index system was kept to trace the outward and inward movement of all casks at all times.

Every morning two boys went down to our private railway siding to check the serial numbers of all casks – from firkins to hogsheads – being returned, to enable the cask department to update their records.

TIED PUBS, ETC – Each Monday morning managers of Aitken's own pubs and tied pubs reported to the manager on the week's business.

During my time at the brewery the following people were in charge of various departments:

Head Brewer -	Mr D. G. Heeps
Chemist -	Mr Fraser
Foreman (Draught Beer Cellars) -	Tom Davie
Foreman (Bottling Hall) -	Alex Young
Foreman (Bottling Hall) -	Jimmy Rae
Cooperage Department -	Dick Aitken

John Reid

MY FATHER, John Cowan, served his time as a fitter in the Engineering Department at Carron Iron Company. Like many others he was made unemployed during the Depression. He started working in the Brewery in 1932 and although I cannot be definite on the point, I think this was related to the fact that his father worked as a chauffeur for the Aitken family at the time. I do not know if he was initially involved on the bottling side, or whether he took up his role as the bottling engineer when the new bottling hall was opened in 1938. Certainly, from that point onwards he was the bottling engineer until closure.

A consequence of being the sole bottling engineer, was that he was excused military service during the Second World War because Aitken's had his job classified as a reserved occupation. Beer was brewed not only for the civilian population, but for the armed forces as well. I can remember him quoting an army saying, 'no beer, no fight.' For this reason, the Brewery was very busy during the War and there was a lot of overtime working. He was often called out at night when there was a breakdown and he was sent for because he lived two minutes walk from the Brewery. The same nightshift worker was sent and my mother used to say 'here's that man again', a catchphrase used in the Jimmy Handley radio programme at that time. Breakdowns were frequent during the War and in the latter half of the 1940's because spare parts were difficult or impossible to obtain and much of the machinery was repaired on a 'make do and mend' basis with improvised parts. One other thing I can remember him mentioning about the War years was that very strong stout was brewed and exported in casks to Canada where it was cut with water before consumption.

The following people worked in the Brewery in the forties and fifties and some of them were there until closure. Alex Thomson was in overall charge of engineering matters. As well as the bottling hall, there was machinery in the main part of the Brewery, including a magnificent beam engine. Willie O'Donnell was the Head Cooper and as well as making and repairing casks for the Brewery, casks were also cleaned and repaired for the nearby Rosebank Distillery.

Because Aitken's had a chain of pubs and hotels throughout Scotland and N E England, they had their own tradesmen for maintenance and refurbishment. Norman Hutton was the foreman joiner, a remarkable man who worked well past retiring age. In the fifties, I can remember seeing him working on the roof of a store that was being extended. At the time, I think he was into his seventies. The foreman painter was Davie Scott who was succeeded by Gordon Downie. Other names that I can remember, but not their occupations, were Jock Brown, Jimmy Shaw, Alex Young, Joe Riley (my father's labourer in the Bottling Hall), and Davie Maclean.

With regard to the Bottling Hall, I was a regular visitor as a schoolboy. When my father was working late unexpectedly, I was sent to the Brewery with his 'piece'. I remember it as a place that was very noisy when the bottling line was running – nobody wore ear defenders in those days. The floor was always wet – leather-soled shoes didn't last long in the bottling hall. When I first went to the Bottling Hall as a child, I was surprised to find so many women there. Of course much of the work was done by women, such as minding the machines and lines, checking the bottles as they passed a large glass magnifier and filling the crates.

Towards the end of the nineteen fifties a canning line was installed. My father was sent on a two week training course at the Worcester works of the Metal Box Company so that he would be able to maintain the new machinery.

The period from mid-November to the New Year was always busy and sometimes I wouldn't see my father for most of the week because the Bottling Hall would be running six and a half days and four nights per week. At Hogmanay, the employees could buy bottled beer packed in brown carrier bags with string handles and the famous red 'A' on the sides.

Another big event for the maintenance staff was the 'blowdown' when all brewing and bottling stopped for two weeks in the autumn. The name derives from the fact that steam generation stopped allowing the chimney to be cleaned. During this period, an intensive programme of maintenance was undertaken throughout the brewery and this involved a considerable amount of overtime working. Outside contractors were also called in at this time. For example the inside of the pasteuriser was cleaned and sprayed with zinc.

For a long number of years, a local contractor, Alex Mayes, carried out electrical work in the Brewery. As the electrical control systems for canning, bottling and kegging became more complicated, one of their electricians, Jack Wilkie, became a permanent employee at the Brewery. He subsequently transferred to Tennent's in Glasgow.

On the white collar side, the Company was run by William Finlay (Managing Director) who was chauffeur-driven every day from Glasgow in a Bentley driven by, I think, Donald Anderson. He also owned at least one, and possibly two, pubs in Glasgow. His son, Bill Findlay learnt the business at Aitken's and subsequently went on to work for Tennent Caledonian. In the 1980's he had a small chain of public houses in the Glasgow area. Willie Murray was responsible for the provision of stock, such as wines and spirits for the pubs and hotels. His son, Max Murray, played at centre forward for Rangers in the mid fifties. Others in the office in Newmarket Street were Alex Christie and John Binnie. Apart from the normal administration of the Company, records of every cask were kept at Newmarket Street. The Head

Brewer in the fifties and sixties was Duncan Heeps and he was also involved in much of the day to day running of the Brewery. The lab chemist was David (?) Fraser.

One fond memory of the Brewery in the fifties was the company calendar that normally comprised a photograph of a big sporting event like the Scotland v England international or the Grand National. The highlight was the 1958 calendar with a colour photograph of Falkirk's winning goal in the 1957 Scottish Cup Final. Also, I remember that my father used to get fresh vegetables from the farmer who collected the draft to feed his animals. At this time, Aitken's still had at least one cart drawn by a Clydesdale for local deliveries.



*Delivering Aitken's beer in Falkirk in the first half of the 20th century
(By courtesy of Falkirk Council Museum Services)*

In the fifties, Aitken's was a long established Falkirk institution that everyone thought would always be there. The Brewery chimney along with the Steeple, were two of the most recognisable features of the Falkirk skyline. Things changed, however, in the early sixties when the company was taken over by Edward Taylor of Carling and became part of United Caledonian Breweries. From then on there was uncertainty about the future, especially as so many local and regional brewers throughout the UK were being taken over. My understanding is that the last of the Aitken line were

women and they were not particularly interested in maintaining the Company's independence.

The same beers were brewed after the takeover, but some group products were brewed, such as Piper Export. It was no match for Aitken's Export needless to say. Duncan Heeps, did win a company award, however, for brewing the best Piper Export in the group. At the same time, Carling Black Label lager began to appear in Aitken's pubs.

One sad consequence of being involved with a larger group was that my father was sent to salvage machinery from other breweries in the group that were closed down. As far as I can remember, he helped dismantle machinery at Aitchison's and Fowlers in Edinburgh. When George Younger's of Alloa was closed down, some of the staff transferred to Falkirk. Once Tennent's became part of the Group, their lager was tanked to Falkirk and kegged in the bottling hall at Falkirk. At this time, the Glasgow management of Tennent's took a more active involvement in the running of the Brewery.

When I arrived at the Brewery on its last official working day, I found my father reasonable quickly, but not in the bottling hall. If I remember correctly, he was in the shed where the casks were stored. He asked me if I wanted a drink and took me into a corner where a firkin was set up with what I think was Aitken's Heavy. It quickly became clear to me that everybody had been drinking for most of the day. The other thing that struck me was that there did not seem to be any of the white collar staff around, perhaps that was intentional. After a few pints we went to the Brewer's Room in the main part of the Brewery where some of the employees had gathered and had a few more drinks. There were no speeches, although there may have been earlier. It was simply a case of workmates saying goodbye to each other. The atmosphere was reminiscent of the fag end of a long Hogmanay. The only other thing that sticks in my mind is that my father and I got a lift home in a rather tatty Aston Martin that one of the former Younger's of Alloa employees owned.

My father was offered the option of redundancy or travelling to Tennent's in Glasgow. As he was over sixty at the time, he opted for the former and eventually went back to Carron Company as a maintenance fitter in the stainless steel department.

Max Cowan

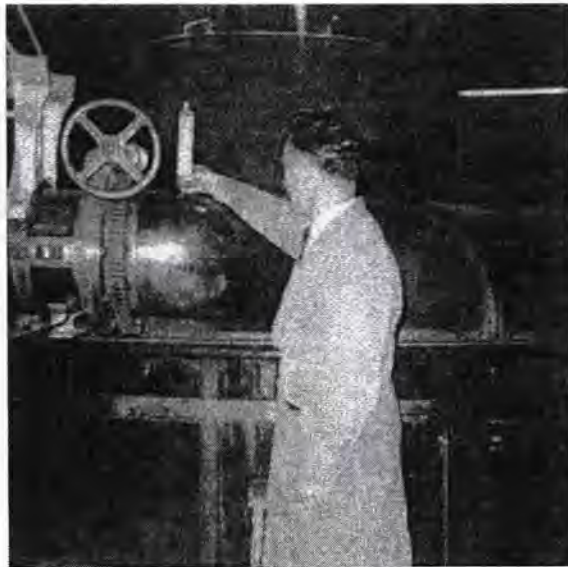
I WAS Production Supervisor, on shift work, between 1957 and 1967, when the brewery closed. I remember the whole brewing process.

Grain for brewing beer came from Linlithgow maltings. This grain was prepared for brewing beer by being spread on stone floors and rotated round these stone floors containing heat. The grain was then put in sacks and sent to the brewery, where it was stored in large bins.

The production and number of brews was decided every Friday. The materials and times for a production of a complete brew of beer from start to finish was then entered in the Custom and Excise book in the Customs Office at the brewery.

For each brew a grist line was made out for how many quarters of malt grain, flaked maize and rice. The grain was then weighed, put through a rolling mill – the rollers set so that the grain seed was cracked open (not crushed). This was then put into a mash tun hopper ready for mashing at beginning of a brew. A sample of this grist was taken when grain had been through mill and checked in the lab.

Aitken's brewery had two mash tuns, one large, and one about quarter size of the large one. Large mash tun was for most beer brewed; small mash tun for making stout.



Arthur Cramb, Production Supervisor, working on the mash of the last beer ever brewed at Aitken's in 1967

These mash tuns had close fitting brass plates fitted on the bottom with fine slits to let raw worts run through. To start a mash grist in hopper was controlled by feeding into a long funnel with a screw worm inside, this was mixed with hot water to a porridge-like paste. This mixture had to be kept at

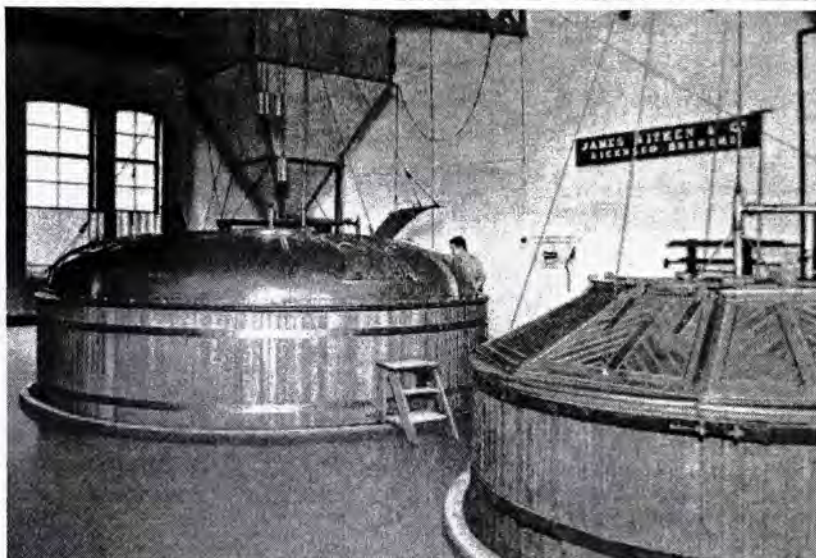
a specific temperature which was registered on a chart. From start to finish a mash was half-an-hour. The grist was then lifted up about four inches by pushing hot water through pipes in bottom of mash tun. This would have the mash sitting on top or supporting the mash.

After two hours we started running raw worts from the bottom of the mash tun. This was done by opening eight taps. This was then run into two coppers with steam coils in bottom. To keep the mash tun level hot water run at controlled temperature was sparged on top of grist to let it filter through grist into mash tun. When these two coppers were being filled and boiled up hops which had been selected and weighed, tins of malt extract, eight one-hundred-weight blocks of sugar (like tablet) were all added to the coppers then boiled for two hours and sampled. Gravity checked. These were then run into square hop back containers which had brass plates with fine slits. The raw worts was then pumped to another holding tank. This then ran through two parraflows; hot worts to one side of plates, cold water other side, and worts then came out at a reduced temperature. This was then pumped to selected fermenting vessels (tuns).



Arthur Cramb's photo of the last mash at Aitken's in 1967, showing (L to R) Mr Pinnell (Customs & Excise), David Brown, Danny Gordon

The worts were then divided into five vessels and brought to a certain gravity by adding cutting liquor (hot water) then cooled down as process for worts. Yeast was added to each fermenting vessel while worts was being added. Each fermenting vessel had coils to control temperature during



*Inside the brewery in 1940
(By courtesy of Falkirk Council Museum Services)*

holding time (several days). Once certain gravity was reached in vessels, beer was then either put into casks or transferred to holding containers in the bottling hall to be bottled or placed in kegs/canisters when ready.

One complete brew from start to being declared, vessels dipped and gravity checked and put into the excise book, took approximately 11 hours. On the night shift, one foreman brewer, 6 operators, and a fireman on the boilers, could make around 400 barrels of beer of different gravity. More fireman worked day shift as steam was needed for washing bottles and casks, as well as daytime brewing.

Empty wooden beer casks were prepared for filling at the washing area next to the coopers department. They were thoroughly washed then steamed, before being brought to the filling area beneath the fermenting vessels. The casks were prepared for filling; corks were put into the end and they were marked with the type of beer they contained. A discharge line was fitted between the fermenting vessel and the filling machine. Four heads from the filling machine were fitted into four casks. When full, the filling head was withdrawn and a bung with a partially-bored half-inch hole was fitted to seal the cask. These casks were all set up and handled by two women workers. The casks were mostly filled by Mr Tandy Aitken.

The full casks were then transferred to large holding cellars holding approximately 800 casks. Over a period the bungs on these casks were

punched in the middle and an inch-long cane spile (or plug) was placed in the bung. (This let beer in cask work off.) Beer froth worked its way through the spile. Liquid colouring, candy, and finings were added to the casks.

One of the heaviest jobs in the cellar was when 'hardening' was done. This entailed upending casks full of beer – usually weighing 7 to 8 hundredweight – so the coppers could hammer down every metal band. The cask had to be turned to allow the other side to be done.

Samples of every brew put into casks were taken and kept in a cask in the sample room in the cellar in case of complaints from customers. The samples were always held there until all the same brew was finished.

Of the beers brewed, Export and Pale Ale were both bottled and placed in kegs or barrels for draught. Strong Ale, called wee heavies, was bottled, as was stout. Piper Export was made and first sold for the English market. It was sent to Newcastle by rail (the brewery had its own railway sidings running down to Grahamston Station), and later also sold in Scotland. After Younger's of Alloa closed, some workers came to work at Aitken's. Younger's made Belgium Ale. Aitken's had a trial run making this very strong beer, but after one brew never made it again.

One unique feature in the brewery was a metal spiral staircase going from the lowest point of the brewery to the highest point, some five floors. This was more than the height of Scott's Monument in Edinburgh.

I recall other things. The brewery had three large tanks for boiling water. Treatment was added to these boilers for brewing.

Also, there were the two brewery horses and carts. They delivered beer to pubs and hotels in the town, and Peter Stewart used to enter them for shows at Ingleston.

They had about 16 drivers and lorries delivering all over Scotland. There was one story about a driver and his mate stopped by the police and asked where they were going. They were going to Perth, and when asked their names the policeman was somewhat sceptical to find the driver was Mr Callander and his mate Mr Stirling.

Aitken's employed its own coopers, joiners, painters, engineers, and had two chemists. I remember some of the names of the staff. On the brewing side there were Duncan Heeps, Roger Duncan, Mr Paxton (only there a short time before the brewery closed), Maurice Niven, John Grandison(?); the foremen were John Tripney, William Anderson, John Easton, David brown, Danny Gordon, and myself; the chemists were Mr Fraser and a Mr Woods(?). When the brewery closed it was a part of the Charrington United Breweries Group.

Nothing was wasted at the brewery. Spent hops were taken away and used as garden fertiliser. Eight tons of spent grains left after each brew was

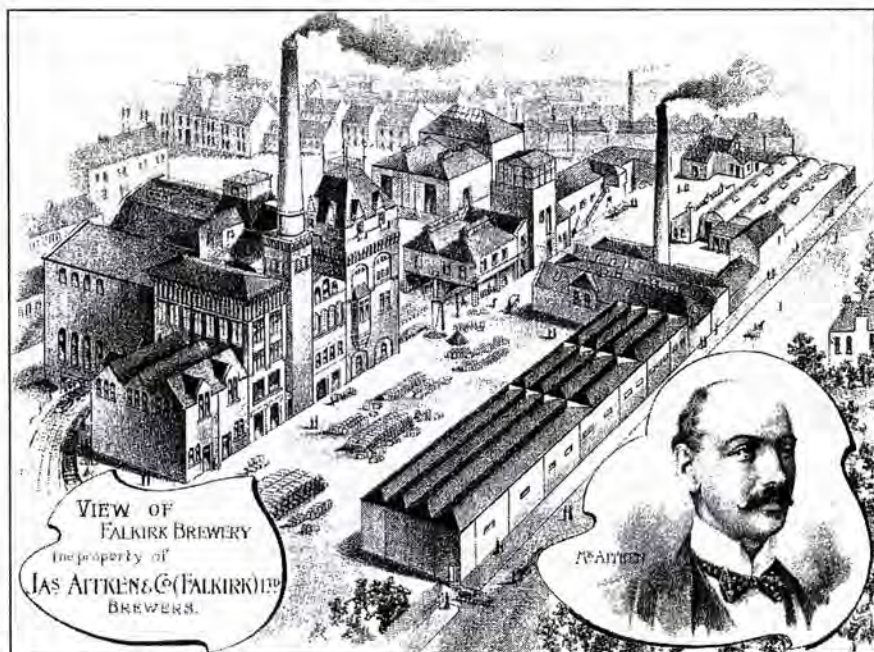
sold to farmers for use as winter cattle feed.

The yeast skimmed from vessels was blown through yeast presses and dried. Some was used for their own beer, but the remainder was put in casks and sent to DCL Distillers.

Brewery workers were allowed to have a drink before and after work. They went to a room set aside for this. Staff were allowed two dozen beer each month, which was delivered to your house.

The workers and staff at Aitken's were some of the kindest people I have ever known, and I have many happy memories that I will always cherish.

Arthur Cramb



Aitken's brewery in 1900 (The National Guardian)

THE BOTTLING HALL

In 1938 James Aitken & Company put a new bottling hall in their Falkirk brewery. This is how it was reported in The Falkirk Herald on 21st May 1938.

A new bottling hall, equipped with plant of the most intricate and completely modern description, and costing approximately £20,000, was inaugurated yesterday at the Falkirk brewery of James Aitken & Co. (Falkirk) Ltd. The interesting ceremony of declaring the hall open and setting the machinery in motion was performed by Miss E. M. Aitken, sister of the late James H. Aitken and a descendant of the Aitken family by whom the brewery was founded in 1746, almost two hundred years ago. The proceedings were presided over by Mr R. Beveridge Smith, J. P., chairman of the company, and others present included Mrs Smith, Mr W. E. Finlay, managing director, and Mrs Finlay; Mr Roy R. Finlay, assistant managing director, and Mrs Finlay; Mr Dan Robertson, director and head brewer, and Mrs Robertson; Mr James H. Finlay, C. A., Glasgow, son of the managing director, and Mrs Finlay; other directors, and invited guests.

INAUGURATION CEREMONY

Mr Beveridge Smith, addressing the representative company assembled, said they had gathered at the brewery that day for the purpose of assisting in the inauguration of what he considered to be the most interesting thing that had happened in the brewery since it was completed a long number of years ago. That was the starting-up of what he believed was the most up-to-date bottling plant in any brewery north of the Tweed. (Applause.) They were fortunate in having with them Miss Elizabeth Aitken, who would pull the lever which would set the machinery in motion. Before this was done, however, Miss Aitken was to be made the recipient of a presentation, and he called upon Mr J. G. Callander, architect for the building, to perform that duty.

Mr Callander, asking Miss Aitken's acceptance of a beautiful silver bowl, said this was in the nature of a gift from himself and from the contractors as a memento of her performance of the opening ceremony of the new bottling department. He expressed the hope that it would always remind her of her long association with the brewery. (Applause.)

Miss Aitken briefly expressed her thanks and then pulled the switch which set the new bottling plant in operation. Having done so, she was presented with a beautiful bouquet by Miss Lizzie Fallon, the girl employee with the longest service with the firm.

NEW PLANT DESCRIBED

Those present were then conducted on a tour of inspection of the new bottling plant, and all were impressed with its remarkable efficiency and speed in

operation. The plant installed is of the very latest design and is capable of turning out from 4000 to 5000 bottles of beer per hour. The whole operation is automatic, and the product is not touched by hand during the whole process. The beer is chilled by means of a 3-cylinder high-speed ammonia compressor working on a patent chiller. In this the beer is also conditioned previous to passing through a filter where all sediment is removed. From the filter the beer passes to the filling machine. This is 24-head rotary filler capable of the output previously mentioned. The process through which the dirty bottles pass before being filled with beer is a most interesting one. The bottles, in two-dozen cases, are placed on a conveyor which carries them to a large "Thoro" brush-washer. This washer is automatic, and when the bottles are inserted by the operator, they pass through a strong solution of caustic soda, continuously being sprayed both inside and out, after which they pass through the hot-water tank, where they are again sprayed, and also brushed internally and externally. After this operation they are given a final rinse thoroughly with clean water. The washed bottle is delivered automatically from the washer on to a conveyor, passing an operator who "sights" each individual bottle as it passes a powerful electric light. If a bottle is not perfectly clean it is taken from the conveyor and is returned to the washing plant.

UNTOUCHED BY HAND

The bottles, travelling along the conveyor, reach the filling machine, where they are filled. After being filled they pass along to the crowner, where the bottle is sealed. The bottle of beer is then conveyed to the pasteuriser. This process takes about 1½ hours, but as the pasteurisation is continuous, and synchronised with the washer, filler and crowner, no delay is caused by the process. From this, the bottle travels on a conveyor to the labelling machine, which labels four bottles at the one time. This machine puts two labels on each bottle. From this point they have to be handled by an operator, who places the labelled bottles in cases, the latter having been delivered to this particular point by means of a conveyor and elevator. The cases of beer are then placed on a run-way which takes them to a box elevator which takes them to the room immediately above the bottling hall. Here the bottled beer is stored, and from here is loaded to the lorries. The plant has been installed by the Farringdon Works and H. Pontifex & Sons, Ltd., London, the well-known brewery engineers. An outstanding feature of the whole bottling plant is the scrupulous care that is taken to ensure that at every stage of the process the beer or bottle is not touched by hand, thus giving a clean and absolutely sterile product. In addition to the beer store on top floor, rooms have been arranged for the manager, reception room, and offices for despatch clerks.

ABREAST OF THE TIMES

The tour of inspection over, the company adjourned to the reception room, where

they were hospitably entertained. Mr Beveridge Smith, chairman of the company, again presided, and in the course of a brief speech he referred to the interesting ceremony that had just been performed. The plant which they had installed was something of which they could be proud. The firm which sought to progress had to keep itself abreast of the times and with every modern development, and that was what Messrs Aitken were seeking to do. The new plant would be of great service, particularly to Mr Dan. Robertson, their head brewer, and one of the most popular men not only in this district, but also in the country generally. It would enable him to double the output, and it would then be for Mr Finlay, the managing director, to see that the sales were doubled. (Laughter and applause.) Even yet the brewery was not being utilised to its full capacity, but he hoped that it would be in the very near future. He asked them to drink to the success of the new bottling plant.

SALUTING THE ADVENTURERS

Colonel McNish, of Messrs R. McNish & Sons, distillers, Glasgow, said they were there for the purpose of saluting the adventurers. Most of them got their thrills nowadays by reading from books of the Mount Everest expedition, by seeing on the cinema screen the creation of land-speed records, or by hearing by wireless of a Sydney to Croydon flight. That day, however, they were present in person to salute the adventurers in reality. He sincerely trusted that the new adventure of Messrs James Aitken & Co., would be an enormous success. They had observed lately that Messrs Aitken had gone into the advertising world more than they had done for many years. That to his mind was a step in the right direction, because when they advertised they had to have faith in their product. The public would find out very quickly if the product was not all that was claimed for it. Advertising had another good effect. It made the manufacturer alive to a very much higher ideal. He endorsed the hope expressed by Mr Smith that the brewery would continue to increase, and that great success would attend it and all its employees. He asked them to drink to the success of James Aitken & Company, coupling the toast with the name of Mr W. E. Finlay.

COMPANY'S TRADITIONS

Mr Finlay, responding to the toast, said he felt very proud to be present at the inauguration of the new bottling hall and plant, and he felt its success was assured. When he took over the reins of office some four years ago he did so with fear and trembling lest he might not be able to maintain the splendid traditions of the company. However, with the help of the head brewer, Mr Robertson, and his co-directors, than whom it would be difficult to find more capable men from the point of view of business ability and sound judgement, the staff and the workers, everything had gone on smoothly. He did not think it was generally known that

the firm had inaugurated a scheme whereby the staff and workers participated in bonuses at the end of the year. Mr Finlay referred to the development and progress of the brewery in past years, and said he considered the copestone had now been put on by the installation of the new bottling plant. The product of the brewery would be found in all the bars in the Tower of Empire at the Empire Exhibition in Glasgow. He thanked them for their hearty response to the toast so ably proposed by Colonel McNish. (Applause.)

“THE BEST BEER”

Mr Dan. Robertson in the course of a brief speech, returned thanks to the chairman and Mr Finlay for their references to himself and the bottling plant. He could assure them that that was a proud day for himself. The installation of the new plant was another step forward in the progress of James Aitken & Co. Mr Robertson, commenting on the pasteurising of the beer, remarked that they used to pasteurise in the old days, too. The beer was taken by lorry to Camelon and shipped there on canal barges to Glasgow for export. Sometimes the barge turned turtle and the beer was thrown to the bottom of the canal. It had to be retrieved and returned to the brewery, and it was very often found to be the best beer. (Laughter and applause.) Mr Robertson expressed his appreciation of the work accomplished by the architect, Mr Callander, and Mr McOustra, of the firm who installed the bottling plant, and also the tradesmen. (Applause.)

Mr J. McOustra, of the Farringdon Works, and H. Pontifex & Sons, Ltd., London, presented, on behalf of his firm, silver cigarette boxes to Mr W. E. Finlay and Mr Dan. Robertson as a tribute of their appreciation.

This concluded the proceedings at the brewery, and the directors and their wives then proceeded to the Station Hotel, Larbert, for luncheon.

LIST OF CONTRACTORS

The contractors engaged in the erection of the bottling hall and the installation of the plant were:- Brick work, J. Murdoch & Co., Larbert; joiner work, J. & A. Main; slater work, James K. Millar, Ltd.; plumber work, John T. Borland; plaster and cement work, D. MacNair & Sons, Ltd.; glazier work, D. O'May, Ltd.; electrical work, A. Mayes; steel windows, F. Braby & Co., Ltd., Glasgow; steel work, Redpath, Brown & Co., Ltd., Edinburgh; smith work, Thomas Hadden, Edinburgh; machinery, H. Pontifex & Sons, London. The building was erected from plans prepared by Mr J. C. Callander, L.R.I.B.A., architect, Falkirk.

THE MIGHTY BASS

I've recently moved through to Alloa. Well, you know how it is; the town's lost that many breweries and other industries that I reckoned it needed my support. On the week that I moved in local newspapers carried reports of the closure of the Bass Maltings. There was even talk about part demolition of the old Maclay's Brewery. As I unpacked boxes and put up shelves, the town's brewing industry was being dismantled around me.

Putting all that aside, it has been a struggle, let me tell you, to find a decent pub. Most seem grubby little places that stock nothing I like. Thankfully, in MacKinlay's in Primrose Street I have found one that actually stocks the new Forth Brewery's wares. Amazing, eh? Who'd have thought a drouthy man would have difficulties buying beer in the very town in which it is brewed? It's a crazy world.

But enough; I'm not here to moan. I'm here to tell a story about the mighty Bass empire and its constant fight to protect its good name.

I was in the Royal Oak the other night. They stock some of the Forth Brewery's bottled beer there as well. At the very back of the premises is a small notice. It's a reproduction. The original's maybe not that old anyway, not that it matters. What matters is what it



says, and what it says is this:

'THE SINCEREST FORM OF FLATTERY IS IMITATION – Unable to match the quality of William Bass's ale, countless small and obviously frustrated brewers have, over the years, endeavoured to imitate the label.'

Between 1860 and 1910, fake red triangles sprang up all over the world, as far afield as China and South America. Naturally, the ales themselves failed to deceive once the customer tasted them.

"It is the vilest stuff," reads one report, while another informant recommended action should be taken against one fake ale, "to protect the public from the beer!" Despite this, there are almost 2,000 recorded attempts to forge the famous label.

As Britain's first registered trademark in 1876, the Bass red triangle is now impossible to copy without the risk of prosecution. It remains one of the most widely known and trusted symbols of quality in the world.'

Accompanying the text are twelve illustrations of beer bottle labels, all looking almost exactly like the real Bass label, but all fake. Some have subtle, almost imperceptible differences, like those from firms with spurious names like, BAASS & Co, or BASSE & Co, and in one case they've even managed to get the red triangle upside down!

On March 31st 1877, *The Falkirk Herald* carried the story, 'BASS & CO. V. JAMES AITKEN.' This was another utterly fascinating case of Bass battling in the courts. I have to say that I have every admiration for Bass. It has to be the one company that did the most, always publicly, to protect its own, as it were. I do of course also occasionally wonder if maybe their effective and quite necessary bully boy tactics had run riot, and that they were perhaps doing what they could to repress anything that had even a tenuous similarity to their great label.

I would love to quote the newspaper piece in whole, but I may run the risk of boring you to tears. Should you feel the need to

view the bits I have omitted, then by all means contact Falkirk District Libraries Archives Department in Callander Park, where a microfilm of the original may be viewed.

The article started thus:

'This case was heard by Sheriff Bell on Wednesday. Mr Allan, for Messrs Bass & Co., the pursuers, stated that in this case they complained of the defenders using a certain label which they (the pursuers) allege was a colourable imitation of one used by them for a very long period. The label was used in conjunction with a peculiar quality of ale of great repute both in this country and abroad for a large number of years. The pursuers began to use their trademark in the year 1854, and had had no occasion to complain of any infringement until the year 1875, when their notice was directed to the label or trade mark issued by Ayton & Co., Bishopbriggs, and also used for pale ale of Ayton & Co.'s own manufacture. They took proceedings against this firm in the Sheriff Court of Glasgow, and obtained an interdict prohibiting the defenders in the action from issuing the label. In the course of those proceedings it was pled on behalf of Ayton & Co. that their label was no more like that of Messrs Bass than was the label used by Messrs Aitken & Co. Their attention being thus drawn to the

matter, Messrs Bass at once wrote Messrs Aitken complaining that the label used by them (the defenders) was an infringement of their trade mark.'

And that's how it started. The lengthy newspaper report gives us a good insight into the actual label in question...

'The defenders said they had begun to use this label in 1863, the difference in the original label being that the red letter A was printed on a yellow ground, which was afterwards altered to paler red or pink. This alteration was particularly complained of, and it is contended that this red letter A put upon the paler red ground is a colourable imitation of the pursuers' label, which is a triangle or pyramid of dark red colour on a paler ground.' ...

'The leading points of similarity stated were that Bass & Co.'s mark was a triangle of dark red, while Aitken & Co.'s was a modification of the letter "A," the labels of each having in black letters the maker's name; the red letter "A" in the defenders' label was very thick, and might easily be mistaken for a triangle; and each label bore under the mark in script letters the name of the firm. He held that unless the defenders had had his clients' label in view so many points of similarity could not

have existed. Even in this country, where almost all could read, there was difficulty in distinguishing the labels, and much more so in India, where many of the consumers could neither speak nor read the language, and if the pursuers suffered in this was abroad, he held it affected the profits of their manufacture at home.' ...

Bass then, it seems, went, for want of a better word, a bit doolally, and objected to the very mark that the public associated with Aitken's products ...

'This matter was of the highest importance to Messrs Aitken & Co., as their commercial honour had been attacked; and while the label actually objected to had been discontinued before the action was raised, he believed that this action was only the foundation of further proceedings, as the pursuers had, since these proceedings were instituted, objected to the letter A being registered under the Act of 1875, and if they were successful in this case, the proceedings would be used there for the purpose of preventing the defenders from registering their trade mark.'

Mr Gair, defending, said:

'In India printed lists were used which Messrs Bass, in common with the trade, received,

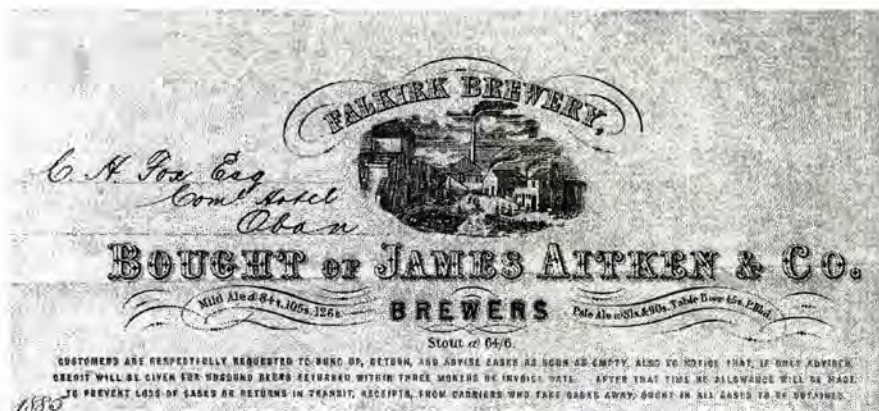
in which Aitken's ale was described as A pale ale. Mr Gair produced a collection of ale trade-marks, and contrasting those of the pursuers and defenders, pointed out that the mark used by the latter was no modification of the letter A at all, but an A pure and simple, and which could not be mistaken by any sane person for the pyramid or triangle of the pursuers, while the words "Aitken's Pale Ale" in plain Roman letters appeared above. As to the arrangement of the words, he showed from other labels that it was common to almost every one. The difference in size was also pointed out, Aitken & Co's label being the larger by fully a fifth.' ...

'The reason for the alteration recently made by the defenders of the ground colour of the label from light red to blue was that on the former the dark red letter A was not found to be sufficiently clear and distinguishable.'

To cut a long story short, Bass lost their case, and it was decided that Aitken's label was not a colourable imitation of that used by Bass.

You know, it's strange, but I think I feel a large raspberry coming on.

Edward Burns



SCOTTISH BREWERY PLAYING CARDS AND THE DAWNING OF THE B.B.P.C.S.

The interest in collecting British Brewery Playing cards, both as full packs and single cards, has been around for many years. It is easy to see why there is such a desire to become a collector when you look at the attractive examples below!



I have chosen the above cards as I understand the theme of this issue of the Scottish Brewing Archive journal is the "Brewers of Falkirk". The above cards are very unusual in that they include details of Aitken's on the white border, i.e. Glasgow Office & Store, 431 Keppoch Hill Road, Tel No Douglas 699 – James Aitken & Co (Falkirk) Ltd, Tel No 27. I'm sure that these details give enough information to date the cards. Can anyone confirm this? I have also focused this article on Scottish brewery playing cards but would point out that there exist many fine English, Welsh and Irish examples.

In the early days, in the United Kingdom, collecting was a disorganised affair with fellow enthusiasts meeting up through other hobbies such as at beermat collectors meetings. This was in spite of the existence of societies

dedicated to those with an interest in playing cards. The reason for this was that none of these other organisations specialised in purely British brewery playing cards.

Around 1993 a few collectors got together and began comparing their collections. As a result of these gatherings it was discovered that over five hundred different specimens existed. It was at this stage that the notion of a catalogue of British brewery playing cards was born. The idea was to record details of every known card, which would in turn make trading and identification much easier. No longer would you need to carry your collection around with you!

This first catalogue, produced in 1994, contained a full textual description of each known card. Although this was of great assistance to the collector, it suffered a number of problems. The greatest of these drawbacks was the interpretation of the description. Some of the more prolific card-issuing breweries produced over fifty different examples and to actually identify which ones you had from a string of text was a time consuming business. If you were looking through a fellow collectors swap-box it could actually take hours to establish which cards you wanted.

This situation continued until 1996 when the idea of a pictorial catalogue was floated. Modern technology would allow the images of the cards to be scanned and stored on a computer file as opposed to being photostatted. This idea was adopted and the awe-inspiring task then began of reviewing all the major collections, which by this time had become much larger. In many cases the scanning equipment had to be transported around the country as people were unable to travel with their collections to the computer.

Once the scanning was completed a structure had to be put in place by which the scanned images could be sequenced in the catalogue. It was deemed that the finished document would be a means of allowing each card to be identified as easily as possible rather than necessarily reflecting which brewery it had actually been produced for. In the majority of cases the two would be the same, but not always. This is reflected in the case of the card illustrated on the left.

Most collectors of brewery playing cards will have heard of William Younger



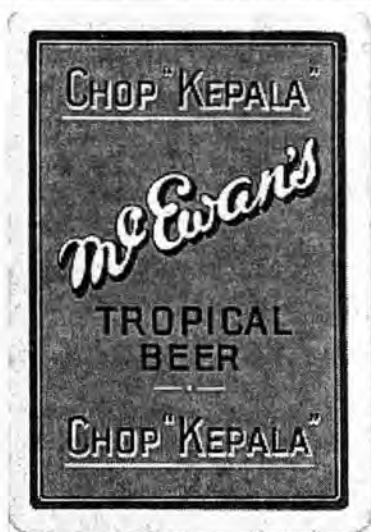
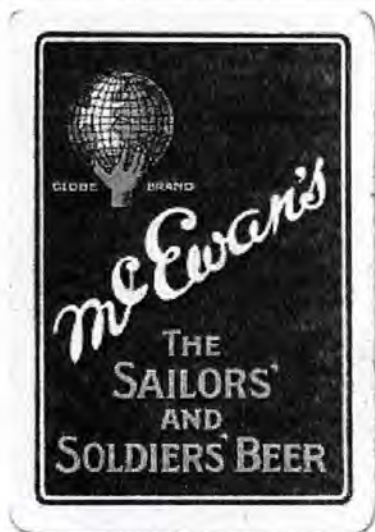
and McEwan as separate brewing companies. Things became less apparent when these two firms got together in 1931 and Scottish Brewers was formed. Add to this the merger with Newcastle Breweries in 1960 to form Scottish & Newcastle and you are going beyond the knowledge of the majority of playing card buffs. In addition, also in 1931 but after the merger, a separate company named McEwan-Younger Ltd was set up to handle the joint export and naval and military trade of both Younger and McEwan. To try and avoid confusion any card which does not advertise McEwan or William Younger as separate entities was catalogued under the heading of Scottish & Newcastle.

Other decisions had to be made about the sequencing of the catalogue. For example some cards advertised more than one brewery, such as the card below:



In this case the card was listed under Bass not Younger, i.e. the brewery name which fell first in alphabetical order. In fact this card was issued by a beer importer in Belgium, probably c1930. One interesting thing about the octagonal design on the card is the number 253. This appears on some beermats as well as playing cards, but nobody knows its significance. Can anyone help?

Sometimes breweries issued different cards for the UK and Non-UK markets. The resolution in this case was to list them as separate groupings. The McEwan card on the left is for the UK market. The one on the right is for European market.



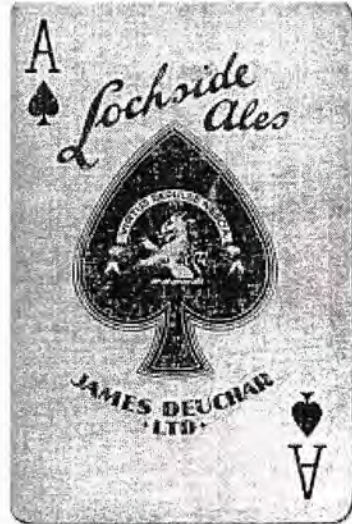
Many other rulings had to be made to resolve anomalies such as domino cards. I've never seen dominoes played using cards as opposed to bones but as all the illustrations were produced by Scottish breweries can anyone confirm that it was a pastime, using a card medium, enjoyed by those north of the border?

These cards are found in the catalogue in their own specific category.

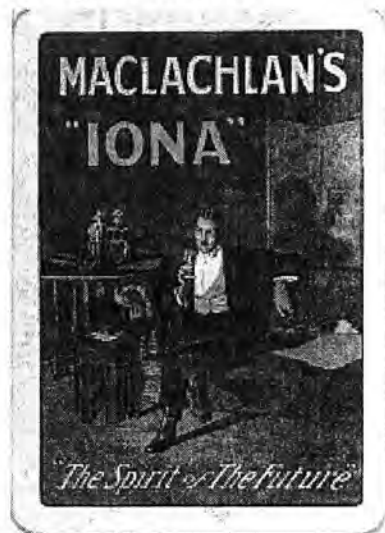


As well as advertising the products of the brewery on the reverse side of a card some companies also used special designs on the face side. These normally included the aces and jokers. Below are two aces used by

McEwan-Younger and James Deuchar. Like the domino cards these also have their own section in the catalogue.



Another grouping to have its own category in the catalogue was the card issued by a brewery company but actually promoting a whisky. The cards below advertise "The Squire's Best" whisky "Blended by James Deuchar Ltd" and Maclachlan's "IONA" whisky "The Spirit of The Future".



Eventually by late 1996, and after burning the midnight oil on many occasions, the pictorial catalogue was completed and issued to all those who had contributed to its compilation. By the beginning of 1997 the news that a catalogue of British brewery playing cards existed had spread to other collectors of breweriana who then started to become interested in the hobby. This sudden added fascination with brewery playing cards led to the formation of the British Brewery Playing Card Society, or "BBPCS" for short.

Today the BBPCS has approximately one hundred members domiciled in Australia, Belgium, Germany, England, Holland, America, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The latest version of the catalogue has details of over two thousand British Brewery cards and has been enhanced to include bottling and cider companies. A further catalogue has been produced to include cards promoting foreign beers brewed under license in the United Kingdom such as Budweiser and Heineken. There is a quarterly newsletter with details of meetings, sales and exchanges, updates to the catalogue and articles on matters of interest to card collectors.

As has already been stated, the number of recorded brewery cards has increased by more than fourfold since the original catalogue of 1994. This has occurred for a number of reasons, two of which are noted below.

Firstly, as more people become interested in the hobby we have increased numbers out on the hunt. With over one hundred pairs of eyes



scanning the bric-a-brac shops, collector's fairs, car-boot sales, etc. we are constantly making new discoveries. This Murray card turned up at a label-collectors' meeting in York. Secondly, cards are still produced regularly today by certain breweries and our various liaisons with the manufacturers ensure we nearly always get to know about them. The Tennent card on the next page is a recent issue for the Spanish market.

The current catalogue gives illustrations of all cards in black and white with the colours described in text below. Further information, such as cases where a card exists in standard and wide variations, comes in the form of text notes. No attempt has been made to date the cards but the experienced eye of the breweriana / playing card specialist will no doubt enable an

accurate estimate to be made.

From the catalogue various conclusions can be drawn. Over the last two decades the number of new cards issued each year has been much less than the 1920-1960 period. This reflects the changes in the culture of the pub pastime. No longer, along with darts and dominoes, is card playing a major activity seen in pubs. It has been overtaken by pool and gaming machines. In fact a lot of the more recent cards have been issued more for their value as a novelty or memento than to actually play with. The “drunken can” shaped card below was issued by Tennent as a reward for having drunk four pints of Pilsner Lager!

Most recorded cards can be identified and categorised without too much trouble, but a couple still have a mystery element. The William Younger card on the next page promoting “The Monk Brand” is the only single copy known and has a strip down one side missing.



From an excellent article on the Monk trade mark by Paul Dean, we have dated the card to the very early 20th century, but the hieroglyphics around the archway are still a mystery. Can anyone read them?

Paul came to the rescue again with the second card issued by the “Crystal Brewery”. There are no known specimens of this card, just a scanned image taken from a poor quality illustration, of unknown origin, found on the internet. Paul sent us an image of a label with the same design and added the following information:



“The Scottish Brewing Archive has a hand-written note book containing various export labels from Scottish Brewers Ltd., originally kept by the works manager (a Mr James Bonnyman) at the Port

Dundas bottling plant in Glasgow during the 1930s. This label is included. Unfortunately, the export destination is not given specifically, but the other labels were destined for various importers in India, Ceylon and Burma.



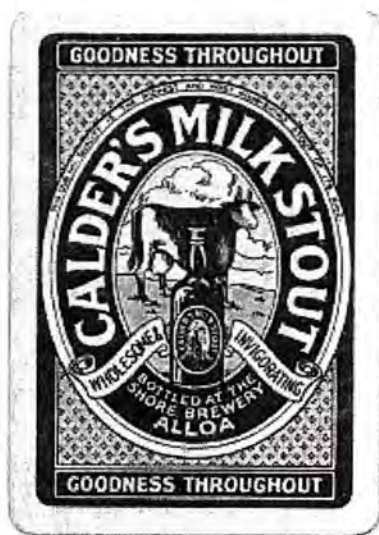
There is no reason to suppose that Scottish Brewers were the only company contracted to produce this product. I doubt, however, that there ever was an actual Crystal Brewery."



Finally, if you've read this far without becoming bored, on the next page are just a few of the more attractive Scottish brewery cards that we have recorded in the catalogue.

In conclusion, if you think you have any cards which we won't have catalogued, or you would like to know about the British Brewery Playing Card Society then don't hesitate to email me at mike_s_johnson@hotmail.com, or write to 65 Chandlers, Orton Brimbles, Peterborough, Cambs, PE2 5YW, tel: 01733 239585.

Mike Johnson





The QUESTION

WHY don't more pubs get rid of their one-armed bandits, their piped music and their televisions, and allow people to do something as simple as talk, play cards or dominoes, and all in front of a real fire made from real wood?

You know, It might just catch on.

TODAY'S BREWERIES

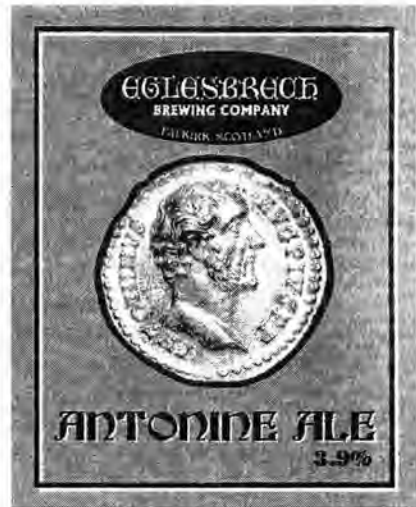
EGLESBRECH BREWING COMPANY

When sitting in the bar attached to Falkirk's micro-brewery it is not unusual to find one's thoughts turn to women's breasts. Should this happen to you, then have no fear, it is just a paranormal relic of the past – the building was once a Playtex bra factory!

The brewery was put together in 1999/2000 by Crispnew Ltd, a company established in 1985, as an add-on to their growing pub business. It would allow them to diversify from their existing product portfolio and to offer something special for the discerning beer drinker. The name – Eglesbrech – is derived from the Gaelic for 'speckled kirk,' which is the historic name for Falkirk.

The small brewery sits at one end of a large attractive bar and café which goes under the name of Behind The Wall, or BTW for short. It's in Melville Street, not far from the railway station, and once in the main building you go up the second tiny flight of stairs to arrive in what really is a very delightful public house. It's got strange, but exceedingly comfortable, leather and wooden seats, and in general a nice old atmosphere where one might while away the hours supping ale and eating superb food and trying desperately hard not to think of nipples.

The equipment was obtained from a variety of places, but mostly via Bruce Williams of Heather Ale. It's a five-barrel plant, brewing twice a week if necessary. Since August 2000, when the brewery was first commissioned, they've brewed a fine range of beverages. These include, Antonine Ale (3.9%), Tall Blond (4.2%), Falkirk 400 (3.8%), Alt Bier (4.5%), Eglesbrech 80/- (4.1%), Spring Fling (3.7%), Pilsner (5.2%), Wheat Beer (4.1%), Scrooges Porter (6%), Blizzard Ale (4.2%), and, of course, the 'Falkirk F.C. Bairns 125th Anniversary Ale,' at 3.8%. They have plans to expand their range, and are looking to produce a Jubilee Ale.



Like every brewery they use a variety of materials, depending on the brew. They get their malt (Otter, Carramalt, and Crystal) from Kilgours, Kirkcaldy, and their hops (Goldings – used in Antonine – and Cascade – used in 400) from Brupak. For yeast, they use SAF Ale and Lager yeast from DCL, and also add isinglass finings and Caragreen. Their spent grains go to a local farmer. (You know, there really are times when I wish I was calmly munching my way through a field of grass, occasionally being treated to tasty stuff from a brewery. The life of a sheep, or a cow, must indeed be a happy one. Sigh. Perhaps I'll come back as a woolly friend in another life. Should your descendants happen to see a wide-eyed sheep staggering about a pasture in about 60 years time, then please instruct them to call me Ed, pat me on the back, and treat me to a few gallons of whatever it is that will pass for ale in the future.)

But to get back to the main subject, if you're ever in Falkirk then the only decent hostelry in the town is BTW. And the fact that they also have a brewery is, as far as I am concerned, icing on a very tasty cake.

You can contact the brewery by phoning 01324 633338, or you can even log on to their web site at www.behindthewall.co.uk.



Edward Burns

HOMEBREW CLASSICS. *India Pale Ale*, by Clive Le Pensée and Roger Protz; ISBN 1-85249-129-9; paperback, 181 pages, illustrated, published in 2001 by CAMRA Books, price £8.99.



BREWING A TASTE IF HISTORY –

Clive Le Pensée and Roger Protz have written their book on India Pale Ale (IPA) for the home-brewing enthusiast (experienced or slightly less experienced) who likes to give his/her hobby a historical perspective. The book is divided into two parts. The first section, written by Roger Protz, the editor of the *CAMRA Good Beer Guide*, is dedicated to the history of the development of IPA, while Clive Le Pensée, whose previous works included *The Historical Companion to Home Brewing*, recreates and explains the historical brewing methods and recipes for the home brewer.

Roger Protz's history of IPA brewing traces the origins of this beer to the London brewery of George Hodgson and his son Mark who developed their "India Ale" (almost certainly a pale ale) specially for the India market at the end of the 18th century. This ale was a highly hopped beer which also contained more alcohol than other contemporary ales, which meant it would keep well on long voyages and also meet the taste requirements of beer drinkers in a hotter climate for a more refreshing drink. However, the beer was soon brewed for the home market as well as for the colonies. IPA became a staple beer style of English and Scottish breweries throughout the 19th century. The Edinburgh IPA differed from the English product by being darker and sweeter and having lower hop rates. IPA's popularity came to an end in the 1880s when the consumers demanded a drink less potent and less bitter. A revival of India Pale Ale took place about 100 years later in the early 1990s. This revival coincided with the foundation of many small and micro-breweries. Two seminars were held in 1993 and 1994 where brewers brewed and sampled recreated IPAs, and several breweries started to commercially brew IPA again.

Roger Protz's history of IPA brewing serves as a general introduction to the subject. The lack of references, however, especially to the primary sources consulted in the process of writing the book, makes the history section less valuable to historians, as the evidence cannot be retraced. Also, Roger Protz's use of quotations does not always seem to support the statements he is trying to make, especially when he tries to show that

Hodgson's "India Ale" was actually of a pale colour.

The second part of the book by Clive Le Pensée deals with the practical side of brewing from historical recipes. Supported by detailed descriptions of brewing methods from historical accounts he explains the methods and products peculiar to the brewing of IPA and how to recreate these recipes today. He gives advice on what types of hops and yeast to use and why it makes sense to make your own malt. He also makes clear that although we can convert old recipes to recreate old beer styles we are unlikely to reproduce the authentic taste of the time, since the variation in the natural ingredients is too great.

This second part also includes 25 recipes for IPA modified for the home brewer. Le Pensée decided to include only recipes which in his opinion 'have something remarkable about them' (p. 95) and the selection includes Scottish as well as English recipes. The section concludes with a number of useful appendices, for example, a glossary of brewing terms, information on water treatment, and a reproduction from William Younger & Company's brewing book.

Clive Le Pensée's part of the book is packed with valuable and well-structured information for the home brewer trying to recreate IPA style beer. The author's humorous style makes this section an entertaining read. Unfortunately, I cannot comment on how easy it is to brew the various beers by following the recipes. Suffice to say that for a beginner in brewing there would not be enough practical information available to get your own home brewery started.

Wiebke Redlich

THE LABELS OF JAS. AITKEN & CO., FALKIRK

(No. 10 in a series of short articles on Scottish beer labels)



There has been much in the news recently about the planned opening of the Falkirk Wheel - the world's only rotating boatlift which re-establishes the connection between the Forth & Clyde and Union canals in Central Scotland. The wheel, showpiece of the so-called Millennium Link will allow coast-to-coast navigation for the first time in almost half a century.

It is appropriate to mention this here because the original routing of the canals through Falkirk was instrumental in its establishment as a thriving industrial town, and Aitken's benefited greatly, particularly by using the Forth & Clyde Canal for access to the port of Glasgow, from where ales were sent to England and exported to various parts of the world. Indeed, beer was transported along both canals in a fleet of the company's own barges until after the First World War when motor lorries took over.

Although Aitken's, in common with other similar Scottish brewers had built a reputation on the quality of their strong ale, by the 1860's when the first of the firm's labels appeared (and especially after the 1870's) it was inevitably the newer lighter pale ales which were in demand in bottle.¹ Aitken's Pale Ale was popular not only in the home market, but as far afield

as Australia, Egypt, India, Malta and Singapore, and particularly Burma, for which a special label showing a peacock was affixed - the peacock being the national emblem of Burma and a good luck symbol. (See illustration). Exotic designs such as this one, were invariably associated with foreign exports and would generally be attached to one side of the bottle with the plainer (but more informative) product label on the other.² For the home trade the latter usually sufficed.

In similar vein, the rectangular *NUN NICER BRAND*, exhibited a long-faced and rather dismal looking nun framed within an arch of hop plants, while an even more bizarre label contained the image of a shipwrecked man, alone in the vastness of the ocean, clinging to a lifebelt inscribed *AITKENS PALE ALE* (or in a slightly different form - *AITKENS BROWN STOUT*)! Usually, however, a large capital letter 'A' was the main feature of the labels and although the background layout changed from time to time, a remarkable uniformity is apparent when looking at the Aitken's pages in any collection - including that of the Archive.

In 1921 the company won The Brewers Journal Challenge Cup for the best brewed beer in cask at the Brewers and Allied Traders International Exhibition in London, and for a number of years thereafter described their products as 'Aitken's Championship Ales'. Victory Ale was bottled for export with a label showing the goddess Ceres apparently dancing between the hops and barley. And lest the *trade* customer should forget this momentous achievement, postcards were supplied to order beer with a large picture of the cup on the reverse side !

Aitken's used an 'A' extensively on their labels and also in adverts - typical slogans being "*A*" *Match for the Best*, or *Take a Note of the Trademark "A"*. But they also had another famous trademark - that of a tiger. Stripes on the tiger's side formed the word *AITKEN'S* while an accompanying motto sometimes proclaimed '*Strength Behind Bars!*' Strangely enough, the tiger featured only on the small neck labels as far as bottles were concerned, the usual dressing in the 1940s and 50s (for example) being a product label with large 'A' to the front, a tiger label on the neck, and a stopper strap (again with an 'A') over the crown.

In 1960 Aitken's became part of the United Caledonian Breweries group, but the brand only survived for another few years until 1966 when U.C.B. merged with J. & R. Tennent. The last set of labels comprised rectangular versions (with rounded corners) of 90/- Ale, Export Ale and Sparkling Ale, all with minimum contents in fluid ounces.

(1) Aitken's were in fact the first Scottish firm to do their own bottling at the brewery, having taken out a patent prior to 1850 for specialised carbonating equipment for use in preserving bottled beer.

(2) I avoid using the terms 'front' and 'back' here because, depending on the intended customer, either side could be on display.

Sources (not otherwise indicated in the text) :-

E. Burns, Scottish Brewery Trade Marks (1986 & 1987)

I. Donnachie, A History of the Brewing Industry in Scotland (1976)

C. McMaster & C. Rutherford, The Tennent Caledonian Breweries (1985)

The Wee Murray, (No. 1, 1981) pub. by Charmed Circle, Edinburgh

Paul Dean



Bottling and Packing Stores in Aitken's Export Department in 1889 (Barnard)

OLD PHOTO CORNER

Hi. There are a number of strange things about Old Photo Corner in this issue. First, it's, as usual, not in a corner, and second, it's not even a photo! How much stranger do you *wan*? And, what's even stranger *still*, is that the image seems to show a man having a bath in a vat of ale!!



Aitken's brewery in 1889, as taken from Alfred Barnard's splendid publication

BREWING WORDS

wort wotsit
the thingy
wash whadyamacallit
draff doodah



PUNDIE (also PUNDY) – a strong type of beer

The Scottish National Dictionary (1968) –

‘A strong type of beer, “the residue of the beer vats.” Pundie-house – a brewery.’

‘They drink baith punch and pundie.’ (1841)

‘Nane were seen gaun doon the brae, To imbibe the cursed pundie.’ (1876)

‘He’s had owre muckle pundie.’ (1923)

‘The “pundy”, a stronger cousin of the later “skeechnan,” that was a popular refreshment on Sunday mornings.’

‘A measure of beer, usu. 3 pints, given free to brewery workers by their firm on certain days of the year

[Pundler – various meanings, one of which is, ‘the instrument employed for weighing malt, meal, beer, oats, and other gross and weighty commodities.’]

Stirling Journal & Advertiser, 2nd October, 1840 –

‘ORIGIN OF
THE CELEBRITY OF STIRLING SMALL BEER, COMMONLY
CALLED PUNDY – In the days of yore, when the celebrated George

Buchanan, preceptor to James the Sixth, lived in our town, he seems to have been in the habit of visiting the house of a brewster wife, whose ale did not at all please him. He knew, at the same time, that the wife had great confidence in him as a necromancer, and in order to chime in with her superstitious ideas, he offered to put her in possession of a charm which would infallibly produce good ale, and secure a large run to her house. He then wrote a few Hebrew words upon a piece of paper, and folding it up curiously, committed it to her, with the injunction to hold it in her left hand, opposite to her heart, when the browst was in a certain state, and then to take her largest ladle, and with it take out three fills of the water then in the boiler, which she was to throw over her left shoulder, and to replace that with three fills of the ladle of good malt; which, being attended to, the house was well frequented – Stirling Observer.'

If you know of any old words, or obscure little-used terminology, even slang, exclusive to the brewing industry, then let's hear 'em. Address at front of journal.

MORE THOUGHTS FROM ED – There's an old song that goes something along the lines of: 'Oh when Irish eyes are smiling ...' And I have to say that there is indeed something rather captivating about looking into the eyes of an Irish barmaid, especially when you see pints of Guinness staring back out at you! Because in our desperate search for places in which to advertise our product (well, let's face it, there's not the same number of playing-cards or beer mats available these days) (and – Hey! – I know it's not even Scottish), we have turned to people's eyes. Yup, bar-people have been wearing contact lenses advertising the black stuff. And rather than indulge in my usual pastime of moaning I'm not going to say a word other than to suggest that my eyes may be available to anyone who wishes to use this prime promotional space. All I ask in payment is a lifetime's supply of whichever hoppy beverage you're selling. In fact, I could even pleat the hair coming out of my ears to form a subliminal message visible to all. I'm nothing but a walking talking billboard. And cheap at the price.

EB

APPLICATION FORM

I wish to join the Friends of the Scottish Brewing Archive, and enclose a crossed cheque or postal order, payable to the Friends of the Scottish Brewing Archive, for the appropriate amount. (Remember £10 is the minimum subscription)

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THE SCOTTISH BREWING ARCHIVE was established in 1982 to collect and preserve the records of the brewing industry in Scotland and to make them available to researchers. It is funded by the industry and employs a part-time Archivist. There are records of 120 companies including breweries, maltings, a cooperage, some public houses and hotels, the Brewers' Association of Scotland and the Institute of Brewing (Scottish Section). A complete list of collections is available on the web site.

It has a library of historical, scientific and technical books, some dating to the 18th century, and periodicals. There is also a collection of cans, bottles, advertising material and brewing equipment.

The Archive is open to the public. Please contact the Archivist for further information or to make an appointment.

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AITKEN'S
FALKIRK BEER

STRENGTH BEHIND "BARS!"

