

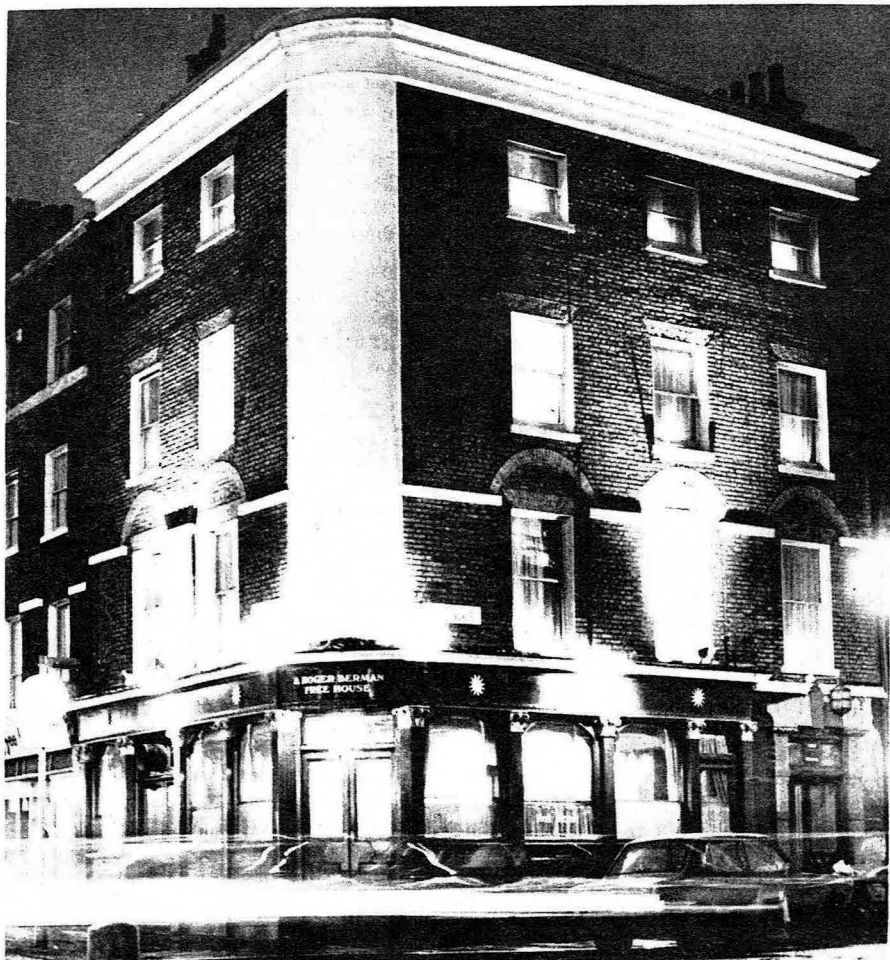
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LONDON DRINKER

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ALCOHOL AND YOU

DRINK AND ITS problems are in the news, as reports and surveys abound. We have been looking at "Drinking in England and Wales" by Paul Wilson, published late last year by HMSO at £8. It analyses data collected in 1978 from a sample of 2,000 who, among other things, were asked to recall their drinking habits of the previous week.

That alone should make one treat any conclusions with caution. So far as our primary interests are concerned, beer (which covers every type of beer other than lager) is favoured by 60% of the men compared to 14% who prefer lager; for women, the figures are 15% and 11%. The breakdown by age suggests that, while lager fares particularly well with drinkers aged between 19 and 24, the percentage of men who drink beer varies little irrespective of age. A controversial interpretation would be that lager is a spirit-substitute for young men and therefore CAMRA need not get quite so upset about lager advertising, since it makes little impact on the beer market. Some of the tables are broken down into regions. Disconcerting to note

that Greater London has more deaths from liver cirrhosis, more mental illness caused by drink and more convictions for drunkenness per head than are found elsewhere. When discussing safety levels, the book uses the upper limits of 50 half-pints of beer a week (men) and 35 a week (women) recommended by the Royal College of Psychiatrists - which were adapted to the more sophisticated 'Hock' table we printed last July. On this basis, a larger proportion of male drinkers in Inner London are 'heavy' drinkers than in anywhere outside Wales and the North.

On the other hand, men in the North are likely to consume nearly half their weekly intake in one session, while Inner Londoners prefer to spread their doses over the week, London men appear to drink proportionately less beer than others, are less likely to drink in bars and are down the list of fast drinkers.

"Going out for a drink" comes second only to watching TV among recreational activities, though the Budget may affect this. The Andy Capp Award is won by Wales for the lowest proportion of times when a man is seen in the bar accompanied by his wife. Finally, if you want to give it up, the places to go seem to be East Anglia or the East Midlands.

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Design Editor: Mike Hammersley

Copy Editor: Ron Atkins

News Editor: Keith Wildey

Contributing Mostyn Lewis
Editors: Louise Joselyn

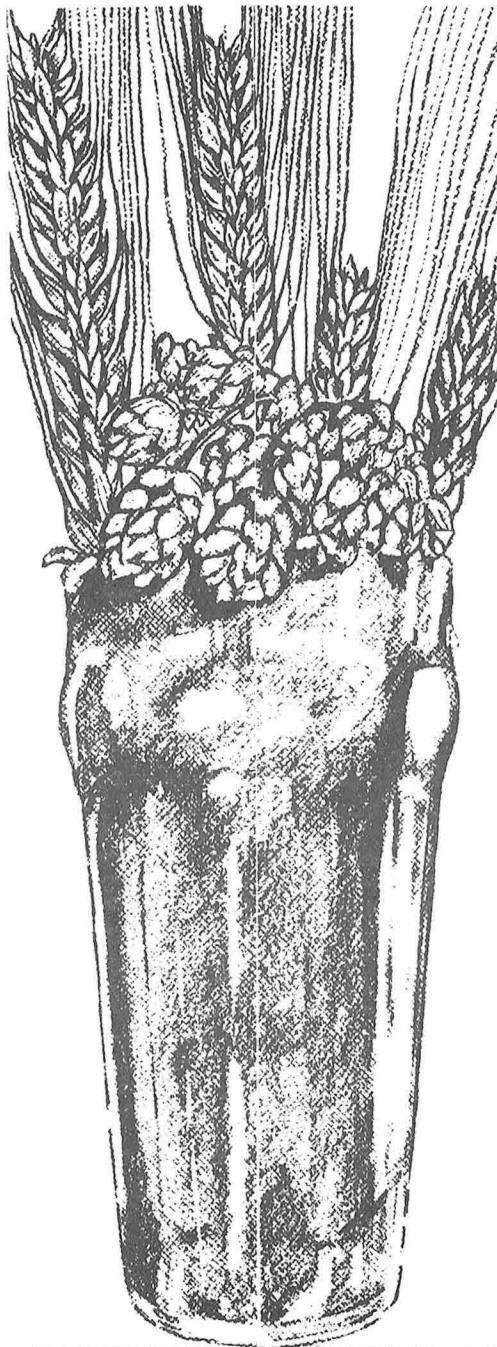
Subscriptions: Stan Tompkins

Advertising: Mike Hammersley
62 Avondale Road
South Croydon
Surrey. CR2 6JA.
Tel: 432-4389.

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THE PURE PINT

LAURIE BISHOP looks at what goes into the beer.



MUCH HAS BEEN made of CAMRA's success in getting breweries to change back to brewing beer traditionally and serving it by traditional methods. What CAMRA has been less successful in is getting brewers to stop using inferior materials to brew ale.

Malted barley is the traditional heart of a pint of top fermented British beer. Many beers nowadays use all sorts of other fermentable materials. Unmalted barley, rice grits, flaked maize, potato starch have all been used recently. Now it is perfectly possible to make an alcoholic drink out of these materials. The starch they contain is converted to sugar and this is turned into alcohol by fermentation, which is how vodka, whisky and gin are made.

Where beers are brewed using substitute fermentable materials, this is done to save costs. There is no doubt that beer brewed with cheaper materials tastes cheap. Brewers do not lower the price of beers when they use cheap substitutes; they make bigger profits and the customer gets a poorer drink and hence less value for money.

This is why CAMRA ought to be concerned about the use of these substitute materials (or "adjuncts" as they are known in the trade). Certainly, CAMRA has fought for brewers to be required by law to brew only beers which contain not less than 80% malted barley (I think that's the figure but if it isn't I stand corrected). A layman might think this to be a perfectly acceptable level and very fair indeed to the brewers, particularly the big brewers who use more adjuncts than smaller ones on percentage terms. To hear the howl of protest from the breweries you would think CAMRA has been advocating halving the price of beer!

One major brewer has apparently produced a beer brewed without using

