

THE CITIE CALLS FOR BEERE: THE
INTRODUCTION OF HOPS AND THE FOUNDATION
OF INDUSTRIAL BREWING IN LONDON

1200-1700

By

KRISTEN D. BURTON

Bachelor of Arts in History

Oklahoma State University

Stillwater, OK

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Thesis Approved:

Dr. Kristen Burkholder

Thesis Adviser

Dr. Tonia Sharlach

Dr. James Huston

Dr. A. Gordon Emslie

Dean of the Graduate College

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“Ale is immortal:
And, be there no stops
In bonny lads quaffing,
Can live without hops.”¹

The introduction of hops into the brewing trade in London established the foundation of industrial English brewing. Before the use of hops, the trade relied upon un-hopped ale, a brew that spoiled quickly resulting in limited commercial growth. Hopped beer proved to be more resilient and lasted for months, whereas ale lasted little more than a week. In an area generally covered by historians as a part of the overall narrative, this thesis will show how the arrival of hops into London allowed brewers to gain more capital, which they invested in larger equipment, leading to the industrialization of brewing. The resilience of beer made beer brewers wealthier and allowed them greater social prestige than ale brewers ever experienced. Due to the use of hops, the beer trade in London quickly supplanted the ale trade and resulted in a more sophisticated, commercialized business. London was not the first location for the arrival of hops in the British Isles, but it did grow into a commercial center for brewers who

¹ Quoted in John Bickerdyke, *Curiosities of Ale and Beer: An Entertaining History* (1889; reprint, London: Spring Books, 1965), 73.

became the primary exporters of European beer by the seventeenth century.

The use of hops in brewing created beer as known in the modern sense. Before hops, the traditional brew was ale, a fermented beverage that contained yeast, malted grain, and water. While ales exist today, all beers contain hops, but the distinguishing difference depends upon the type of yeast used in brewing.² During the high and late medieval period, when hopped beers became an internationally traded commodity, ale referred to un-hopped brews, beer to the foreign beverage that contained hops.

London drinkers initially resisted beer, as they preferred ale's familiar sweet flavor to the bitter taste added by hops. The social perception of beer as a foreign import also worked to its disadvantage. Over time, taste preferences changed and beer grew in popularity, but it was the brew's greater marketability that allowed it to gain superiority over ale. Hops not only imparted the bitter flavor, but the resins contained within hops provided protection against bacterial infection, resulting in a more durable brew. This allowed beer to keep for months and made an international trade possible. Beer brewing also required a smaller amount of grain, and brewers could produce output in much larger quantities than ale brewers could. By the seventeenth century, these advantages caused beer to dominate London brewing, and the practice of brewing ale ultimately fell out of favor.

Historical research on ale and beer in medieval society has not yet received much in-depth analysis from scholars. While a few late nineteenth and early twentieth century

² The two primary categories of beer available today are ales and lagers. Ales distinguish beers brewed with top-fermenting yeast; brewers make lagers with bottom-fermenting yeast. This thesis will use the older distinction of ale as an un-hopped brew versus beer made with hops.

historians considered the importance of ale and beer to the medieval diet, it is only within the past few decades that the topic has received serious attention. The study of alcoholic beverages in history has not received its due recognition because the topic appears unnecessary and frivolous to some who perceive the consumption of alcohol as simply a mode for pleasure. This approach to the topic undeservedly diminishes the historical significance of this familiar beverage. Ale and beer served as dietary staples for centuries, since water was generally unsafe to drink unless purified of bacteria, as it was during the brewing process. Fortunately, certain scholars have noticed the significance of ale and beer in medieval life, and recent scholarship on the subject helped shed further light on the role of these very important drinks. Studies focusing on the social, economic, and political aspects of ale and beer have helped turn an area of history once viewed as trivial into a growing field of serious academic research.

One of the earliest studies of ale in medieval social history was John Bickerdyke's *The Curiosities of Ale and Beer*, originally published in 1889.³ In the Introduction, Bickerdyke lamented the lack of historical writing on ale. This book was initially the project of John Grenville Fennell, who compiled a large portion of the information included in the book. When Fennell fell ill toward the end of his life, he entrusted the research to Bickerdyke, and requested he complete the book for him. The research, which Bickerdyke states was completely unorganized, appears pieced together in a wonderfully entertaining manner.⁴ The book primarily focuses on the general history of ale and beer, with a heavy emphasis on ale's appearance in English culture. Bickerdyke's greatest

³ John Bickerdyke, *Curiosities of Ale and Beer: An Entertaining History* (1889; reprint, London: Spring Books, 1965).

⁴ Bickerdyke, *Curiosities of Ale and Beer*, viii-ix.

contribution in this book is his heavy inclusion of primary material. A multitude of drinking songs and poems appear littered throughout the work, allowing a unique glimpse into ale and beer's role in society.

Another early work, originally published in 1911, is John P. Arnold's *Origin and History of Beer and Brewing*.⁵ Similar to Bickerdyke's study, Arnold's presents a general history on the growth of the European brewing trade from localized production to industrial brewing in the eighteenth century. This study is one of the few to give considerable attention to brewing on the European continent. Arnold's work also served as a part of the foundation that historians built from when they examined specific areas of brewing history. Though Arnold presents a detailed overview of commercial and industrial brewing, the purpose of his work, like Bickerdyke's, is a presentation of the general history of ale and beer. Arnold does not include as much primary material in his book, but he does give a historical framework utilized by later scholars.

After those early studies on ale in medieval society, a lull in research on the topic occurred over the bulk of the twentieth century. It was not until the 1970s that historians again took up the subject of ale and beer with much interest. H.A. Monckton released his study *A History of the English Public House* in 1969, re-igniting research on the social history of ale.⁶ Monckton focused the social aspect of his study on tracing the history of the English pub from its early origins and examining its significant role in English society. The narrative follows the chronological history of ale and alehouses in England

⁵ John P. Arnold, *Origin and History of Beer and Brewing: From Prehistoric Times to the Beginning of Brewing Science and Technology* (1911; reprint, Cleveland: BeerBooks.com, 2005).

⁶ H.A. Monckton, *A History of the English Public House* (London: The Bodley Head, 1969).

and the evolution of the alehouse into a sophisticated, recognizable public house. Alehouses and pubs both served as places of comfort for members of all social classes for centuries. For the poor, the public house served as a place to avoid solitude where they could enjoy the company of others living in a similar situation. The primary argument of Monckton's book is that the alehouse, later the public house, was much more than a place for the thirsty to get a drink. It was a place for community and companionship.⁷

Peter Clark pursued the topic of the alehouse and its importance to English society in his 1983 monograph, *The English Alehouse*.⁸ While Monckton focused his study on the evolution of the alehouse into the public house, and how it became an essential part of social life, Clark utilized the alehouse as a window into the lives of the lower classes in England. His analysis of the changes that occurred to the alehouses in turn reveals a wondrously intricate study of the changing status of small English communities, women, and improvements in the English consumer economy. Clark also included additional research on urbanization and arguments over lower-class living standards.⁹ This informative work remains steadily focused on the alehouse, and through Clark's vividly descriptive writing, the ancestor to the pub fully comes to life. Clark spends a considerable amount of the book on the alehouse under the reign of the Tudors, and he devotes another large portion of his research to the changes wrought by the Industrial Revolution.

⁷ Monckton, *History of the English Public House*, 8-9.

⁸ Peter Clark, *The English Alehouse: a Social History, 1200-1830*, (New York: Longman Group Limited, 1983).

⁹ Clark, *The English Alehouse*, ix.

Building off Monckton and Clark's research, Patricia Fumerton looked at the role of the alehouse later in the early modern period in her article, "Not Home: Alehouses, Ballads, and the Vagrant Husband in Early Modern England."¹⁰ Although Fumerton focused on early modern England, her research indicates how alehouses developed during the medieval period, and why they were so successful throughout England. Fumerton focuses on the social aspect of the alehouse, and she agrees with Monckton and Clark regarding the alehouses' role as a second home for the urban peasant class. As Fumerton states, "I argue [that] the alehouse offered the unemployed and poor (including even employed local residents) an alternative community and an alternative home."¹¹ This distinction between the unemployed and the poor and the working class offers an alternative view from Monckton and Clark. While the two earlier studies on the English alehouse include information on all levels of society, Fumerton narrows her presentation to those at the very bottom of society.

Judith Bennett's research on ale and medieval brewing has advanced the field of knowledge unlike any other scholar. Focusing primarily on female brewers, Bennett initially presented her work on the social importance of ale in the 1986 article "The Village Ale-Wife," in which she argues that alewives fulfilled a significant social role, because ale was so crucial to the medieval diet.¹² According to Bennett, "ale was virtually the sole liquid consumed by medieval peasants," which established a fundamental social

¹⁰ Patricia Fumerton, "Not Home: Alehouses, Ballads, and the Vagrant Husband in Early Modern England," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 32, no. 3 (Fall 2002): 493-518.

¹¹ Fumerton, "Not Home," 494.

¹² Judith Bennett, "The Village Ale-Wife: Women and Brewing in Fourteenth-Century England," *Women and Work in Preindustrial Europe*, Barbara Hanawalt, ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986): 20-37.

role for women when few other occupations offered such influence.¹³ This article focuses more on brewing in the individual household, and the ways brewing served as a family affair, because women regularly relied on family members to carry out the necessary assistance. Bennett continued research on this topic in her article “Misogyny, Popular Culture, and Women’s Work,” published in 1991. This study looked specifically at the impact of misogynistic perceptions of alewives, and the ways in which men pushed women out of the brewing trade.¹⁴

Bennett also examines the use of ale as a source of charity between individuals in her article “Conviviality and Charity in Medieval and Early Modern England.”¹⁵ She specifically looks at the importance of “ales,” or social functions held to raise funds for a neighbor fallen on economic difficulties, for weddings, for repairs to local churches, as well as for many other events. These gatherings further establish how essential ale’s presence was in the medieval English community.¹⁶

The research presented in each article helped form the basis around which Bennett built her 1996 monograph *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters in England*.¹⁷ This book provided one of the most in-depth analytical works on ale and brewing in English society. Bennett explored the life of English alewives and their personal impact on ale brewing from the end of the medieval period to the beginning of the early modern period. While female

¹³ Bennett, “The Village Ale-Wife,” 25.

¹⁴ Judith M. Bennett, “Misogyny, Popular Culture, and Women’s Work,” *History Workshop*, no. 31 (Spring, 1991): 166-188.

¹⁵ Judith Bennett, “Conviviality and Charity in Medieval and Early Modern England,” *Past and Present*, no. 134 (February 1992): 19-41.

¹⁶ Social “ales” consisted of a gathering of people who drank ale communally; the money raised through the sale of ale to the participants contributed to the charitable cause.

¹⁷ Judith Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters: Women’s Work in a Changing World, 1300-1600* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

brewers, or brewsters, are the primary focus of Bennett's research, the English patriarchy and the presence of men in the brewing industry appears as well. The central thesis of *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters* is that, despite great changes in the brewing industry, the work of brewsters remained considerably consistent and stable. Bennett comments on the change in her argument, stating, "I have tried... to give patriarchy a history by showing how, in one trade, the broad relationship between male advantage and female disadvantage remained unchanged in a changing world."¹⁸ Bennett admits in her introduction that she originally hoped to show how the lives of brewsters experienced remarkable change as men took over the brewing industry. Her research instead proved the opposite, and she found that women maintained a steady position as ale-makers throughout the rise of industrialized brewing.¹⁹

Bennett's work remains one of the dominant studies in the area of medieval brewing. Regardless of the focus on gender, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters* provides a thorough and insightful look into the world of medieval brewing. By utilizing manorial and court records, Bennett discovers the regular problems brewsters experienced with government officials, and the public forms of punishment inflicted on fraudulent brewsters. Bennett also provides a unique analysis of alewives in contemporary literature, examining how such depictions reflected social views. This kind of analysis does not appear in any other study; through her extensive research, Bennett is able to present a social aspect of brewing in history that other studies only consider in a general manner. Bennett is also one of the few scholars to look at the social implications of hopped beer's arrival in England. Before *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters*, the introduction of hops to the

¹⁸ Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters*, 8.

¹⁹ Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters*, 8.

brewing trade appeared primarily as part of a general narrative. The older works, including those by Bickerdyke, Arnold, and Monckton relate the events that surrounded the introduction of hopped beer, but they give little scholarly interpretation or analysis. Bennett instead looked at how the male-dominated trade of beer brewing aided in diminishing the presence of women in the English brew trade, though her primary concern did not focus on its industrial growth past 1600.

The importance of ale and brewing was not limited to the secular realm of medieval life, but was an important part of monastic life in England as well. Barbara Harvey's thorough study on the Benedictine monks at Westminster Abbey, *Living and Dying in England, 1100-1540: The Monastic Experience*, devoted a portion of her research to the importance of ale in monastic life.²⁰ Brewing was both a specialized craft many monks excelled in and an essential part of the monk's daily diet. Harvey's research shows that monks received a one-gallon ration of ale a day, but the monks often found ways to obtain more. Overall, ale and wine made up about twenty-five percent of the monk's daily diet except in the weeks during Advent and Lent; during Advent, the proportion rose to thirty percent, while during Lent it rose to around thirty-two or thirty-three percent.²¹ Initially, the amount of ale drunk by monks was higher than the quantity of ale average laborers drank in a day, as Christopher Dyer notes in his article, "Changes in Diet in the Late Middle Ages: the Case of Harvest Workers."²² Dyer's study of the laborers in Norwich shows that ale constituted around thirteen percent of the average

²⁰ Barbara Harvey, *Living and Dying in England, 1100-1540: The Monastic Experience* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1993).

²¹ Harvey, *Living and Dying*, 58.

²² Christopher Dyer, "Changes in Diet in the Late Middle Ages: The Case of the Harvest Workers," *Agricultural History Review* 36, 1 (1988): 21-37.

harvest workers' daily diet in 1256.²³ However, over time, the consumption of ale steadily increased, and by 1424, ale made up of forty-one percent of the harvest worker's diet.²⁴ Both of these studies show the daily use of ale by both religious and lay folk, and provide statistical data regarding the amounts of ale these groups consumed, but neither Harvey nor Dyer gave much consideration to beer or hops.

Richard Unger produced one of the more recent studies on the history of brewing with his 2004 book *Beer in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*.²⁵ Unger includes social aspects in his study of ale and beer in Europe, but the focus of the book is on advancements in brewing technology. *Beer in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* is largely a narrative, but Unger does include analysis concerning the technological changes in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He also attempts to determine over-arching patterns in the brewing industry while it experienced extreme growth and progress. Unlike many of the other authors of studies conducted on medieval ale, Unger focuses his research on Holland and Germany, though he includes England as well.²⁶ As brewing on the European continent noticeably differed from brewing in England, Unger tends to treat England as an exception, and he consistently addresses English brewing separately from the rest of his research. This aspect of Unger's monograph sets it apart from other studies conducted on ale, beer, and brewing; the majority of other English-language studies on this topic typically look at one specific country, usually England, or even a particular set of towns. In *Beer in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, England is not the central

²³ Dyer, "Changes in Diet," 25.

²⁴ Dyer, "Changes in Diet," 25.

²⁵ Richard W. Unger, *Beer in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

²⁶ Unger, *Beer in the Middle Ages*, xi-xvi.

focus. As Unger devotes more time looking at other European countries, his study is one of the few to provide insightful analysis regarding ale and beer production on the continent.²⁷ Unger is also one of the few historians to include the use of hops as a prominent aspect of his research; he traces the movement of hopped beer across the European continent, although he does not give extensive consideration to the hopped beer trade in London.

Unger's study is useful because it is one of the more detailed studies of the advancements of brewing technology. L.F. Salzman briefly covered the industry of brewing in his early twentieth-century study, *English Industries of the Middle Ages*.²⁸ Salzman's discussion of ale is relatively brief, as he groups his study of ale and beer in the same chapter with wine and cider. He refers to ale as the national drink of England, and he claims that English ale received recognition as the dominant brew throughout Europe by the twelfth century. This may be a result of Salzman's own national pride, but his views appear to coincide with other historians who researched the history of ale. England is a prominent favorite among scholars when covering this topic, with John Arnold and Richard Unger standing out as an exception.

Overall, the field of study regarding medieval ale is still relatively small. The recent revival in scholarship over this topic has aided in understanding the historical importance of ale, beer, and brewing. Research regarding the social, economic, and legal aspects of ale and beer reveals the wide scope in which people utilized this commodity for all areas of their lives. The present thesis will examine the impact of hops on the

²⁷ Unger, *Beer in the Middle Ages*, 231-247.

²⁸ L.F. Salzman, *English Industries of the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), 285-299.

growth of London's brewing trade, an area that scholars generally have nodded at but have not developed in thorough detail. It will argue that the attacks on beer brewers, verbal and physical, could not prevent the more durable and marketable beer from gaining a commercial advantage, and by the end of the seventeenth century the superior qualities of hopped beer laid the foundation of industrialized brewing in London. Chapter Two establishes the components of English ale brewing and determines the extent of commercialization surrounding ale production before the arrival of hopped beer. Chapter Three includes the origin of brewing with hops, how hopped beer spread to London, and the reaction of English brewers to the new brew. Chapter Four examines the social standing of ale brewers, why they obtained a poor reputation during the medieval period, and the differences between the social perceptions of ale brewers versus beer brewers. Chapter Five centers on the ale laws established by the English government and the manner in which London officials enforced them. These conditions appear in contrast against the level of regulation enforced over the beer trade and the reactions English ale brewers had to the differences in governmental control. Taking all the aspects covered in previous chapters into consideration, Chapter Six will demonstrate how hopped beer became the dominant brewing trade in London, how the technology used allowed industrial brewing to become possible, and how ale brewing retained only a minimal presence in London by the end of the seventeenth century.

CHAPTER II

ALE AND THE STATE OF BREWING IN MEDIEVAL LONDON

“The Dutchman’s strong beere
Was not hopt over here,
To us ‘twas unknown;
Bare ale of our owne,
In a bowle we might bring,
To welcome the King.”²⁹

The purpose and use of ale extended well beyond a simple drink for the average inhabitant of medieval London. Ale permeated all levels of society; it served as a reliable source of nutrition and had a constant presence in England before Rome’s invasion of the island. Ale was a favored drink throughout England, but the center of regulation and development of trade was in London. Despite the ale trade’s long existence there, the enterprise experienced remarkably little commercialization up to the fifteenth century. This restriction of commercial growth occurred because of ale’s composition; the absence of hops in ale made it a weaker brew with a short life span. Such conditions made brewing a predominately domestic trade carried out by women, or brewsters, and although the number of alehouses rose exponentially over the medieval period the

²⁹ Quoted in John Bickerdyke, *Curiosities of Ale and Beer: An Entertaining History* (1889; reprint, London: Spring Books, 1965), 153.

amount of ale exported for trade remained noticeably low.³⁰ These circumstances resulted from the simplicity of the process of brewing; while it required knowledge and proficiency, society viewed the trade as unskilled and fitting for women. The trade's limited commercialization, and the instability of ale, forced London brewers to maintain their trade on a local level. This chapter will examine the state of ale brewing in medieval London: who produced ale, the process of brewing, and why the components of ale restricted commercial growth prior to the arrival of hopped beer in London.

The English consumed ale in large amounts, and it was widely available to all levels of society. Because the alcohol in ale killed off bacteria present in water, ale was safer to drink than water, and the grain content within ale made the drink a nutritious source of much needed calories. People of all ages drank ale constantly throughout the day, with children and sometimes women receiving “small beer” or “small ale,” a weaker form of ale.³¹ The alcohol content in “small beer” was minimal enough that it did not cause intoxication, as according to the drinking song:

He who drinks small beer, goes to bed sober,
Falls as the leaves do fall, that fall in October;
He who drinks strong ale, goes to bed mellow,
Lives as he ought to live, and dies a jolly fellow.³²

As well as all age groups, all societal ranks enjoyed drinking ale, favoring it over more expensive and luxurious commodities, such as wine.³³ Ale even replaced wine in some

³⁰ Brewster serves as the feminine form of the word brewer. According to Judith Bennett in *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters in England: Women's Work in a Changing World, 1300-1600* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 3, early records refer to women in brewing almost exclusively as “brewsters,” though the unisex “brewers” is also used. By the sixteenth century, this distinction began to disappear from records, and the term “brewer” applied to both men and women in the ale and beer trade.

³¹ Though often referred to as “beer” in primary sources, statements made before the late fourteenth century strictly refer to un-hopped ale and not hopped beer.

³² Bickerdyke, *Curiosities of Ale and Beer*, 284.

monasteries when they ran short of wine for religious ceremonies. A church synod held in 816 gave monasteries permission to use ale in place of wine if there was not enough wine available.³⁴ Ale production was widespread throughout the medieval period up to the outbreak of plague in 1348, and brewers largely produced ale within their households. Due to this, ale as an industry lacked cohesive structure, and it remained a craft predominately practiced in the household. Thousands of individuals brewed, causing the product to be widely available, but also creating implications that the trade was unspecialized and low in skill level.³⁵ Despite this notion, ale brewing certainly required skill, and ale brewers developed reputations based on the quality of their brews.³⁶ The nature of medieval brewing is difficult to reconstruct since so many practiced making ale, and because few documents refer to commercial brewing before the sixteenth century. As ale brewers did not join to form a recognizable group until the reign of Henry IV in the first half of the fifteenth century, one can assume that ale brewing was largely a localized, disorganized industry.³⁷ Despite these factors, ale was regularly available to almost everyone living in England throughout the medieval period.³⁸

Only three ingredients were necessary to brew ale: grain, water, and yeast.

Brewers utilized a variety of grains that affected the overall taste of the ale; in the south of England, barley malt was the preferred grain for making ale, though its popularity did

³³ Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters*, 44.

³⁴ Richard W. Unger, *Beer in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 29.

³⁵ Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and, Brewsters*, 18.

³⁶ The ale-wife in the sixteenth-century poem *The Merry Hoastess* receives clear praise for her skill and is touted as one of the best brewsters in London. Bickerdyke, *Curiosities of Ale and Beer*, 308-309.

³⁷ Bickerdyke, *Curiosities of Ale and Beer*, 134.

³⁸ Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and, Brewsters*, 20.

not become national until the sixteenth century. In the early fourteenth century, London brewers maintained a preference for brewing with oats over other grains. Wheat or mixtures of grains could also serve as the base for ale, though different grains carried varying costs that restricted grain options for poorer brewers.³⁹ Oats were the cheapest grain available for brewing, and brewers mixed oats in with other grains as a way to lower the overall cost of producing ale. One such mixture, known as dredge, contained both oats and barley. The greater the amount of oats used in the mixture, the lower the overall cost of brewing. Wheat was a higher quality grain that nobles and clerics typically consumed more often than an average peasant.⁴⁰

While grains helped to give ale its flavor, water served as the predominant factor in the brewing process. To malt the grain it was soaked in water for several hours, allowing the grain to germinate. After this process, the grain was heated and dried, after which the grain was ground until coarse. The drying process required regular turning of the grain and careful observation to ensure the grain dried evenly on all sides. To make the mash, the brewer poured hot water over the grain, producing the wort. The anonymous author of seventeenth-century manual *The Art of Brewing* describes the process of making the wort in this way:

First, Make your Water or Liquor near boyling hot, then put just so much into your Mashtub as will wet your Mault, stir it, and let it stand half an hour, which will dispose the Mault the better to give forth its Virtues and Sweetness into the Liquor; then add your whole quantity of Water or Liquor to your Mault that you

³⁹ Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters*, 17; Anne C. Wilson, *Food and Drink in Britain: From the Stone Age to the 19th Century* (Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 1991), 373.

⁴⁰ Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters*, 17, 22-23. Bennett estimates that ale brewed with wheat, oat, and barley mixed together cost about twenty pence, while a mixture predominately made of oats with only a small portion of barley and wheat cost about fifteen pence.

purpose to put up the first time, then let it stand one hour and a half, but if you would have your first Wort very strong then two hours.⁴¹

Repeating this process of pouring water over the grain produced greater amounts of wort, though the strength of the wort decreased with repetition. Once the wort was ready, the brewer boiled the wort, sometimes with additives for flavoring. The liquid required rapid cooling in order to avoid bacterial infection of the brew; the chance of this occurring was greater the longer brewers exposed the mixture to air.⁴²

The entire process depended on the availability of water, and brewers needed a large amount in order to engage in their trade. This resulted in problems between the brewers and other occupants of a town, as shown in a complaint to Edward III in 1337. Several men put forth their grievance against the brewers, stating the brewers helped themselves to too much water from a conduit, taking it “in vessels called ‘tynes,’” which deprived the rest of the community of necessary water.⁴³ Another complaint in 1345 stated that a conduit built in London specifically “so the rich and middling persons therein might there have water for preparing food, and the poor for their drink,” had become soiled by the brewers so that its quality was not even suitable for the poor of the city.⁴⁴ By 1345, a proclamation strictly forbade brewers from accessing water from the

⁴¹ Anon., *The Art of Brewing* (London, 1691), 17.

⁴² Bickerdyke, *Curiosities of Ale and Beer*, 121; Unger, *Beer in the Middle Ages*, 5-6. Traditionally, brewers rapidly cooled ale and beer by adding cooler water to the boiled mixture.

⁴³ Reginald Sharpe, ed., *Calendar of Letter Books Preserved Among the Archives of the Corporation of the City of London at the Guildhall, Letter Book F: 1337-1352* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1904), folio xx, also available online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=33529>.

⁴⁴ Bickerdyke, *Curiosities of Ale and Beer*, 122-123.

London conduit; those who did so in spite of the law faced confiscation of equipment, fines, or even imprisonment.⁴⁵

Making the malt was the crucial step in the eyes of the English, who proclaimed in literature the art and skill malt making required. One writer, only identified as Old Fuller, states, “I confesse it facile to make Barley Water, an invention which found out itself, with little more than the joyning of the ingredients together. But to make mault for Drink, was a masterpiece indeed.”⁴⁶ Because of the importance of the malt to the quality of ale, brewers were very careful about the quality of water used in the brewing process and they were always looking for a source of clean water. For London brewers, the best source of water during the medieval period was the Thames, though as the above complaints show conduits were regular sources of water as well.⁴⁷

Yeast, the final ingredient necessary to make ale, was the most difficult for brewers to acquire in a controlled manner. Yeast cannot survive at high temperatures and naturally floats in the air, so brewers during the medieval period left their boiled wort exposed to the air as a way to add the yeast. The longer brewers left the wort directly exposed to the air, however, the greater the risk of bacterial infection.⁴⁸ Furthermore, this system was not reliable, as the brewers could not control the amount or type of yeast that went into their brew. Nevertheless, it remained the best method available until the fifteenth century. Under Flemish influence, brewers began to skim the top layer of foam

⁴⁵ Sharpe, *Letter Book F*, folio cvii b, available online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=33538>.

⁴⁶ Old Fuller quoted in Bickerdyke, *Curiosities of Ale and Beer*, 120.

⁴⁷ Bickerdyke, *Curiosities of Ale and Beer*, 122.

⁴⁸ Unger, *Beer in the Middle Ages*, 5-6; 152.

off a fermenting brew and add that to the next batch. This allowed brewers to gain greater control over the addition of yeast, which is necessary for fermentation to occur.⁴⁹

Once the brewing process was complete, the ale had to sit for a few days in order to clear itself. People complained against brewers who served their ale so quickly that the sediment in the brew did not have time to settle at the bottom. This prompted a law outlined in the *Liber Albus* requiring London brewers to let their ale sit for at least one full day before selling it. Nobles did not drink ale under five days old, as they had the money and space to build up a stock supply of ale.⁵⁰ A sixteenth-century physician, Andrew Boorde, stated that letting the ale sit for at least five days was always necessary and that ale was not good for drinking unless it was “fresshe and cleare.”⁵¹ Considering the cost and the short lifespan of ale, however, this five-day delay may not have been possible for most peasant brewers.

Until hops became a popular additive, brewers used a variety of herbs to help flavor their ale. Few records directly reference the specific additives used, though the case of a fraudulent brewster named Alice Causton indicates that rosemary was one herb used in ale. Officials caught and punished Alice Causton in 1364 for placing a layer of pitch at the bottom of a quart-sized vessel, lowering the overall amount of ale the vessel could hold. As a way to hide her deception, Alice placed a layer of rosemary sprigs over

⁴⁹ Unger, *Beer in the Middle Ages*, 152. According to Unger, pure yeast cultures would not be available to brewers until the end of the nineteenth century.

⁵⁰ John Carpenter, *Liber Albus: The White Book of the City of London*, trans. and ed. Henry Thomas Riley (London, 1861), 311; Anne C. Wilson, *Food and Drink in Britain: From the Stone Age to the 19th Century* (Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 1991), 374.

⁵¹ Andrew Boorde, *A Dyetary of Helth*, ed. F.J. Furnivall (1542; reprint, New York: C. Scribner & Co., 1893), 256.

the pitch.⁵² Herbs and spices served as a way to enhance the flavor of ale, and knowing what additives to use required a level of skill. According to Andrew Boorde, “Ale is made of malte and water; and they the which do put any other thyng to ale then is rehersed, except yeast, barme, or godegood, doth sofystical theyr ale.”⁵³ Some spices that brewers favored included long pepper, nutmeg, and cinnamon; these spices worked in conjunction with ale’s naturally sweet flavor, and ale served as the base for still sweeter mixtures such as bragot.⁵⁴ Brewers also added herbs or spices to ale as a way to cover its poor flavor when the brew began to sour. Ale turned sour very quickly, usually in a week or so, which did not allow much time for all the ale to be consumed.⁵⁵ These attempts to hide the spoiled flavor of ale did not work very well, and Andrew Boorde stated that “sowre ale, and dead ale the which doth stande a tylt, is good for no man.”⁵⁶ However, that did not stop some from drinking spoiled ale. Thomas Eccleston commented in 1258 that he saw clerics in a London friary drinking ale so sour that others preferred to drink water instead.⁵⁷

Despite ale’s poor keeping quality, it remained a popular drink for all ages and all levels of society. People consumed ale at all meals throughout the day, partly for ale’s

⁵² Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters*, 137; Peter Clark, *The English Alehouse: A Social History, 1200-1830* (London: Longman, 1983), 30; H.A. Monckton, *A History of English Ale and Beer* (London: Bodley Head, 1966), 60-61; L.F. Salzman, *English Industries of the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), 289. For breaking the ale laws, Alice Causton had to “play go pepe thorowe a pillory.” More on ale laws and regulation of the laws will appear in chapter five.

⁵³ Boorde, *A Dyetary of Health*, 256.

⁵⁴ Wilson, *Food and Drink*, 373. Bragot was a drink comprised of ale, honey, cinnamon, cloves, ginger, fine wort, and galingale.

⁵⁵ Philip Eley, *The Portsmouth Papers: Portsmouth Breweries, 1492-1847* (Portsmouth: Portsmouth City Council, 1988), 2.

⁵⁶ Boorde, *A Dyetary of Helth*, 256.

⁵⁷ Eccleston quoted in Monckton, *English Ale and Beer*, 47.

nutritious quality and partly due to its regular availability. Wine was too expensive for most to enjoy, and milk largely went to produce butter and cheese. Ale was affordable by all, except the very poorest, and it received appreciation from both nobles and peasants.⁵⁸ Even from the early medieval period, ale was a popular drink among royalty. Charlemagne brought a brewer to his court in 778, and ale was sent as a gift from England to the French royals in honor of Princess Margaret's marriage to Henry II's son, Henry "the Young King," in 1172. Thomas Becket, Chancellor of England at the time, took the brewed wedding gift to France for the royal court.⁵⁹ According to William Fitzstephen, author of Becket's biography, eight wagons laden with gifts went to France, two of which were solely ale. Fitzstephen writes:

Two wagons bore nothing but beer, made by a decoction of water from the strength of corn and carried in iron-hooped barrels, to be given to the French, who admire liquor of this sort, for it is certainly a wholesome drink, clear, of the colour of wine and of a superior flavour.⁶⁰

Although royalty and the nobility enjoyed ale, they also had access to the more expensive beverage wine, which remained out of the English peasant's economic reach.⁶¹ Yet, according to Fitzstephen's account, English ale had a reputation of being equal, or even superior, to wine on the European continent. This could simply reflect the English Fitzstephen's national pride in English ale, but the fact it served as such a substantial wedding gift from England to France indicates that continental Europeans viewed English ale as a high-quality drink worthy of consumption by the royalty.

⁵⁸ Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters*, 17.

⁵⁹ Unger, *Beer in the Middle Ages*, 26.

⁶⁰ William Fitzstephen, *The Life and Death of Thomas Becket Chancellor of England and Archbishop of Canterbury*, ed. George Greenaway (London: Folio Society, 1962), 46.

⁶¹ Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters*, 8. According to Bennett, even nobles who could afford wine preferred to drink ale, and later beer, instead.

Ale also served as an important part of monastic life in England. The Plan of St. Gall, drawn around A.D. 820, represented a model monastery, and it featured all the necessary elements church officials believed an order should have. While the monastery drawn in the print never came into existence, it shows the importance of ale brewing in monasteries. The plan included three different brew houses to produce ales of varying strength. The three brew houses were also necessary because monasteries needed to produce large amounts of ale.⁶² Every member of a monastic order received healthy rations of ale. Along with bread, ale made up the bulk of a monk's diet. Monks always drank the best ale brewed in the monastery, and each person received a ration of one gallon of ale a day. Some monks even found ways to obtain and consume more than their daily gallon. If a monk's chores were laborious, he could gain one or two extra pints. Monastic members not only drank ale, but they cooked with it as well. One particular dish called *umbles* consisted of sheep entrails, breadcrumbs, ale, and spices cooked together.⁶³ Monks did drink wine, but the supply of ale surpassed the availability of wine. Wine was also more expensive than ale, and English monasteries preferred to save wine for religious services.⁶⁴

Monks not only brewed ale for members of the order, but they also made ale for traveling nobles, pilgrims, or peasants who stayed at the monastery. Monastic oaths placed heavy emphasis on hospitality, and all visitors received food, drink, and lodging. The monks served specific qualities of ale to particular social classes. Nobles and other

⁶² Lorna Price, *The Plan of St. Gall in Brief* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982), 57-60.

⁶³ Barbara Harvey, *Living and Dying in England, 110-1540: The Monastic Experience* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 56-58.

⁶⁴ Harvey, *Living and Dying*, 58; Unger, *Beer in the Middle Ages*, 30.

wealthy visitors received the best ale, typically made of wheat, while pilgrims and peasants received weaker ale made from oats. Monks weakened the ale by using the same malt grain in the brewing process several times; the monks usually reserved this ale specifically for the poor.⁶⁵ In general, monastery ale was typically stronger than domestically produced ale, and even weak ale brewed by monks received acknowledgement as a high-quality drink. Monks labeled the barrels containing different strengths with crosses, from one to three; one cross signified the weakest ale, while three crosses meant the barrel held the strongest brew. They used the sign of the cross to show by an oath sworn on the cross that the ale was of good quality and brewed correctly.⁶⁶

While monasteries served as some of the first large-scale breweries, most of the ale produced in medieval England was brewed in individual homes, and early accounts of brewing show that the production of ale relied almost entirely upon the labor of women.⁶⁷ The dominance of women in the ale trade remained in place until the sixteenth century, when the beer brewing industry, controlled almost wholly by men, began to displace ale brewers in England. When John Carpenter compiled the *Liber Albus* in 1419, he specifically described the ale trade as predominantly confined to women.⁶⁸ Known as brewsters or ale-wives, these women carried out brewing in their home in addition to their other daily work. As brewing required skills similar to baking, society viewed brewing to be suitable work for women, and brewing in general did not command a high

⁶⁵ Unger, *Beer in the Middle Ages*, 27-29.

⁶⁶ Monckton, *English Ale and Beer*, 43. This system of labeling alcohol strength carried through into the modern era; the mark of the crosses evolved into an “x” and the symbol “xxx” became synonymous with strong alcoholic beverages.

⁶⁷ Bickerdyke, *Curiosities of Ale and Beer*, 33. Anglo-Saxon literature like *The Geste of Kyng Horn* and *Beowulf* includes references to women providing ale to dinner guests, and Bickerdyke states that such an action was “the custom in the land.”

⁶⁸ Carpenter, *Liber Albus*, 232.

level of esteem as a trade. Judith Bennett sums up the ale's trade association with women thus: "The medieval ale industry – a small-scale, low-investment, low-profit, low-skilled industry – suited especially well the economic needs of married women."⁶⁹

Women treated brewing as a supplementary form of income, as they generally sold excess ale the family could not consume before the ale spoiled. While women sold their excess ale locally, women rarely made a profession out of the trade. Most ale-wives brewed simply for domestic purposes, to provide enough ale for their families, and the sale of any left-over ale brought in extra income. This income was not reliable, as even women who sold ale regularly enough to be considered by-industrial brewers would take breaks from selling ale for long periods of time. Ultimately, brewing was a household occupation for brewsters who produced ale for their families first and sold excess ale to their neighbors if necessary.⁷⁰

A noticeable shift in the brewing trade occurred after the devastating appearance of the Black Death in 1348. The difficulty with ale's marketability was its short lifespan. Ale soured within a week or two of being brewed, and it was susceptible to temperature changes and rough handling that went along with long-distance travel, forcing brewers to find quick means of distributing their product.⁷¹ The Black Death had a noticeable impact on life in England, and the brew trade experienced great changes in a short amount of time. Prior to the plague, brewing was a highly localized, widely practiced trade that did

⁶⁹ Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters*, 34.

⁷⁰ Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters*, 19-20; Judith Bennett, "The Village Ale-Wife: Women and Brewing in Fourteenth-Century England," in *Women and Work in Preindustrial Europe*, ed. Barbara Hanawalt, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 22. A definition of by-industrial work provided by Bennett is, "productive work pursued in the home as one of many employments, not a sole occupation."

⁷¹ Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters*, 20; Clark, *English Alehouse*, 97.

not feature sophisticated organization or respected skill. In the wake of the plague, the overall ale trade underwent noticeable consolidation for several reasons. First, the decrease in population meant both fewer brewers and fewer people to drink, but the per capita demand for ale increased to levels unheard of in the years before 1348.⁷² Pre-plague brewers of St. Paul in London produced around 550 gallons of ale per week, estimated to be the upper limit of ale production in that era. Following the plague, the numbers of gallons of ale brewed dramatically increased; one brewer named John Kep produced about 1,500 to 2,000 gallons of ale per week.⁷³

The demand for ale increased because the lower population numbers meant greater amounts of money for the survivors, as well as an increased interest in a healthier lifestyle.⁷⁴ The lower number of brewers who survived the plague found themselves with a greater demand for their product and less competition than before. Grain prices in the decades following the Black Death decreased, meaning the brewers were able to produce ale for a lower price but they could still charge the same amount for their ale as they had when grain prices were higher.⁷⁵ Fewer brewers, greater demand, and greater profits allowed the ale trade to consolidate and improve in a matter of a few decades. This led to a rise in professional brewers who took up ale production as their sole occupation, as opposed to intermittent labor performed for supplementary income.⁷⁶

⁷² Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters*, 44.

⁷³ Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters*, 20, 48.

⁷⁴ People viewed ale as nutritious due the grains contained in the brew. As ale was still safer to drink than water, it remained a safe way for people to consume the necessary amount of liquid to stay hydrated.

⁷⁵ More on the connection between grain prices and the cost of ale will appear in chapter five.

⁷⁶ Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters*, 46.

The ability to market ale improved with the post-plague changes of the brewing trade. Ale-sellers, also known as tipplers, appeared with higher regularity and in greater numbers following the Black Death. Ale-sellers, those who sold but did not brew ale, hawked ale at local markets and fairs. Before the plague, tipplers were not always welcome at town markets, and laws in London even after the plague prohibited the actions of ale-sellers. According to the *Liber Albus* in 1419, “no huckster from henceforth [may] buy any manner of ale for resale, under pain of losing the ale so bought, or the value thereof... the body of such a person being also [committed] to prison, at the will of the Mayor.”⁷⁷ Such laws did little to prevent the appearance of tipplers, though, and after the plague, tipplers slowly became a regular feature at markets, where they assisted brewers in selling their product.⁷⁸

People continued to buy ale directly from brewers, but marketing the ale also through tipplers, who could sell greater amounts of ale before it spoiled, allowed brewers to produce more ale than before and helped lead to an overall professionalization of the trade.⁷⁹ As ale brewing developed into a profession, brewers were able to help each other whenever issues with the authorities arose, later leading to the developing of a brewers’ guild. The rise in profits from brewing allowed brewers to invest more in the equipment used, and they could hire servants to help them carry out their labor.⁸⁰ The rise of larger breweries caused the level of competition among brewers to increase; this in turn pushed smaller brewers, typically brewsters, out of the business. While small-scale, domestic

⁷⁷ Carpenter, *Liber Albus*, 313.

⁷⁸ Clark, *English Alehouse*, 29.

⁷⁹ Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters*, 45-46.

⁸⁰ Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters*, 48-49.

production of ale continued, the growth of commercial brewing brought about greater consolidation among brewers, resulting in fewer but larger breweries in London.⁸¹

Another venue brewers used to market their product were public drinking houses. Alehouses and taverns maintained a lengthy presence in London, as indicated by a legally appointed system for licensing public houses put in place by 1189.⁸² The government closely controlled public drinking houses, enforcing laws requiring nightly curfews. On October 3, 1327, London officials established a curfew law for all taverns, though no specific closing time appears in the record.⁸³ Less than a century later, in 1419, the *Liber Albus* outlined details regarding the punishment for tavern owners who broke curfew. The *Liber Albus* states:

It is forbidden that any person shall keep a tavern for wine or for ale open after the hour of curfew... And if it is found that any taverner does otherwise, he shall [perform public punishment]; and he shall be amerced in the sum of forty pence. [For a second offence] he shall be amerced in the sum of half a mark; and the third time, in ten shillings. The fourth time, he shall pay [twenty shillings]... And the fifth time, he shall foreswear the trade in the City for ever.⁸⁴

The gradual increments of punishment indicate the level of severity the law carried. Five offenses and a tavern-keeper could no longer engage in that business. Most seem to have complied with the laws, however, since by the beginning of the fourteenth century, 354 taverns were in operation in London.⁸⁵

⁸¹ Clark, *English Alehouse*, 32-33.

⁸² Unger, *Beer in the Middle Ages*, 50.

⁸³ A.H. Thomas, ed., *Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls of the City of London: Volume I, 1323-1364* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926), roll A 1b, membr. 6 (8)b., also available online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=36652>.

⁸⁴ Carpenter, *Liber Albus*, 240-241.

⁸⁵ Unger, *Beer in the Middle Ages*, 50.

While taverns featured several similar qualities as alehouses and inns, there were distinct differences that separated the establishments. The similarities between the venues did lead to confusion, even for London officials. The plethora of names used for public drinking houses, such as “tippling houses,” “beer-houses,” and “boozing kens,” only led to further confusion. Despite the close resemblance in function, taverns and alehouses differed from each other as well as from inns, based on the social prestige each business carried and on the nature of service. Inns maintained a level of higher social prestige that taverns and alehouses did not have. Inns were larger buildings that served ale and wine in conjunction with full meals, and their lodgings targeted wealthier travelers. Taverns maintained ties with the wine trade, with some taverns selling wine exclusively, but taverns did not feature all the comforts available at an inn since they were from their origin establishments for drinking.⁸⁶ Alehouses were the lowest in rank, with peasants making up the bulk of their customer base. Alehouses were smaller than taverns and sold ale exclusively; they offered food to customers as well, though the servings were smaller and the dishes more basic in nature.⁸⁷

Though taverns were of a higher quality than alehouses, London officials proclaimed their distrust for the potential harm that tavern customers might cause. The *Liber Albus* portrays late-night tavern patrons as suspicious individuals who “lie in wait and watch their time to do ill.”⁸⁸ Taverns and their customers maintained this reputation into the early modern era, as John Earle stated in 1628 that a tavern is “a pair of stairs

⁸⁶ Clark, *English Alehouse*, 11. Clark speculates that laws may have kept tavern-keepers from selling ale, which is why they largely featured wine. Tavern owners also worked as vintners, who had a strong foothold in London society. Vintners, several of whom were property owners, made up the third largest group of tradesmen serving as Aldermen.

⁸⁷ Clark, *English Alehouse*, 5.

⁸⁸ Carpenter, *Liber Albus*, 240.

above an alehouse where men are drunk with more credit and apology.”⁸⁹ Because alehouses stood lower than taverns in the eyes of society, it would appear officials were just as suspicious of their customers as well. H.A. Monckton states that such proclamations targeted toward taverns embraced alehouses as well, due to the many similarities between the establishments.⁹⁰ The number of alehouses or brewshops surpassed that of the taverns, as by 1309 an estimated 1,330 alehouses stood in London, roughly one for every sixty residents.⁹¹

Alehouses grew out of the ale-selling business, which as already described did not experience much growth before the outbreak of plague. As a result, the number of established alehouses in London before 1348 was very low. Festivals, local gatherings known as church-ales or scot-ales, and holidays offered multiple opportunities for laborers to drink, leaving little demand for alehouses up to the fourteenth century.⁹² After the plague, alehouses emerged as a thriving business. Previously, ale-sellers of London brewed their own ale and sold it, but by 1350 ale-sellers began to buy their ale from other brewers instead, following the overall trend of consolidation. Although London officials passed laws prohibiting this act, the shift persisted. Ale-sellers moved their business indoors once laws against the outdoor sale and consumption of alcohol went into place.

⁸⁹ Clark, *English Alehouse*, 12.

⁹⁰ H.A. Monckton, *A History of the English Public House* (London: The Bodley Head, 1969).

⁹¹ Unger, *Beer in the Middle Ages*, 50-51.

⁹² Clark, *English Alehouse*, 23-25.

Keepers of alehouses used ale-stakes to signify the purpose of the building, and they also used the ale-stakes to show that an alehouse was open for customers.⁹³

Alehouses gained popularity in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century when laborers stopped receiving free food and drink while at work. The practice of subsidizing wages in this manner continued throughout the fifteenth century, but it experienced a steady decline. This motivated peasant laborers to seek alternative means for obtaining food and drink. The shifting trend caused outcries against the decline of hospitality during the fifteenth century, but the trend persisted, and laborers began to move closer to towns, such as London, in order to have regular access to alehouses. Over the course of the fifteenth century, alehouses became social centers for the working class, and they regularly featured social activities such as games, musical performances, and neighborhood gatherings.⁹⁴

Ale brewing throughout the medieval period was a widely dispersed, slow to commercialize trade that English society did not consider to be a sustainable profession. Brewing was suitable work for women in the eyes of society, which did not see ale production as skilled labor. All ages and all levels of society regularly drank ale, and domestic production served as the primary way to obtain ale. Ale-wives occasionally sold their leftover ale before it spoiled as a way to bring in supplementary income, but

⁹³ Clark, *English Alehouse*, 28-29. Ale-stakes were long, wooden poles that had brush on one end. These ale-stakes also served to stir the ale, and whether or not the brewers or alehouse owners simply hung the ale-stakes out to dry, the practice of using an ale-stake as a sign gained popularity. Over time, the ale-stake evolved into the more recognizable pub sign. Richard Unger states that this practice was unique to England and that continental public houses used different markers to signify the business' purpose. Unger, *Beer in the Middle Ages*, 51.

⁹⁴ Clark, *English Alehouse*, 29, 33-34.

brewing in general was an underdeveloped business throughout the medieval period. The outbreak of plague in 1348 signaled a change in the brewing trade. Consolidation occurred, reducing the number of brewers, and the overall profits made on brewing ale increased, allowing brewers to invest in better equipment and turn brewing into a professional trade.

While the Black Death appears to have signaled the beginning of commercialization in brewing, the characteristics of ale contributed to its ultimate downfall. Despite the growth in professional brewers and the number of alehouses over the course of the fifteenth century, ale distribution remained highly localized due to the brew's poor keeping qualities. Even though brewers placed more effort into brewing and could produce larger amounts of ale at a time to meet the growing demand, they still only had a few days to sell their ale before it began to sour. While the fifteenth century featured great growth within the ale trade, it also featured the advent of a new brew in London. With the introduction of hops into brewing, ale found a new competitor in beer. The preserving quality hops brought to beer gave the new brew a longer lifespan that quickly began to challenge the growing ale industry throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

CHAPTER III

HOPS: THEIR ORIGIN AND USE IN BREWING

“But now they say, Beer beares it away;
The more is the pity, if Right might prevaile:
For with this same Beer, came up Heresie here;
The old Catholique Drink is a Pot of good Ale.”⁹⁵

While English ale existed for many centuries, it lacked an additive that would come to revolutionize brewing during the Middle Ages: hops. Hops, or *humulus lupulus*, produce cone-shaped infructescences that serve to both flavor beer and act as a preserving agent.⁹⁶ With the addition of hops into brewing, modern beer came into existence, and the sweeter ale faced a challenging new competitor. Europeans knew about hops as far back at the Roman period, but the early uses of hops focused on medicinal purposes. The first active use of hops in brewing occurred occasionally in the ninth century, but their popularity grew and by the high medieval period, German and Bavarian brewers regularly added hops to make beer.⁹⁷ The use of hops in brewing did not spread to England until the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century. Historians do not fully

⁹⁵ Quoted in John Taylor, *Ale Ale-vated into the Ale-titude, or A Learned Oration Before a Civill Assembly of Ale-Drinkers* (London, 1653), 26.

⁹⁶ Karl-Ernst Bahre, “History of Beer Additives in Europe – A Review,” *Vegetation History and Archaeobotany*, 8 (1999): 39.

⁹⁷ Bahre, “Beer Additives in Europe,” 35.

understand the reason behind this delay, but once hopped beer appeared in London toward the end of the fourteenth century, ale brewers found themselves in a troublesome situation. While beer presented a stronger and more durable brew, the English had an immediate adverse reaction to the bitter-tasting beer, but the growth of hopped beer's popularity was imminent. With higher production yields, and a life span that lasted months instead of mere weeks, hopped beer progressively began to take over the brewing trade in London. This change did not occur easily, though, and ale brewers took strong action to prevent the spread of beer. In spite of the ale brewers' attempts, hopped beer began to displace traditional English ale by the sixteenth century.

When used in brewing, hops resulted in a stronger beer that was more resistant to bacterial infection. This result is due to the resins that reside within the hop; the resins brought about the bitter aroma and flavor of the beer, and helped sterilize the wort when boiled with it.⁹⁸ Hops are cone-shaped, and whether the cone is whole or not serves as an indication of the hops' quality. The color and smell of the hops are markers of the plant's overall quality as well.⁹⁹ Reginald Scot constructed a guide on how to grow hops and properly prepare them for brewing in 1574; in his guide, Scot explains how a grower will know when the hops are ready for cutting off the plant. A "good and kindly hoppe beareth a great and greene stalke, a large and a harde bell," whereas a "hoppe that lykes

⁹⁸ Brewers also ran the boiled wort over a bed of hops as an alternative to boiling the hops directly in the wort. Richard Unger mentions that Flemish brewers added the hops to the wort after the mixture cooled, but such a practice was rare among brewers and remained limited to brewers of Finland. Unger, *Beer in the Middle Ages*, 56.

⁹⁹ P.R. Ashurst, "Hops and Their Use in Brewing," in W.P.K. Findlay, ed., *Modern Brewing Technology* (New York: Macmillan Press, 1971), 32-33.

not his entertaynement... appeareth at the first out of the grounde greene and small in stalke, thicke and roughe in leaues, verye like unto a Nettle.”¹⁰⁰

Scot outlines the best method of growing hops, which entails building a hill for the plants to grow on, and setting poles to support the hops as they grow. Hop gardens by their nature grow very tall, and Scot recommends using poles that are fifteen or sixteen feet in length, with at least nine or ten inches of the pole secured in the ground.

According to Scot, “The Hoppe neuer stocketh kindly, untill it reache higher than the Poale,” and when the color of the hops begins to change they are ready for gathering.¹⁰¹

Scot states that the best time to plant the hops is in the month of April, “for hee that neglecteth the Moneth of Aprill, shall have a bad season to cut or plant Hoppes,” and the best time to gather the hops is during the month of September, before Michaelmas.¹⁰²

After the hops are gathered they are to be dried, but careful observation is necessary so the grower may avoid drying the hops too little or to excess. Feeling the hops will tell the grower if the hops have dried to an appropriate level; hops that are not sufficiently dry will not have a springy texture, and over-dried hops will feel brittle.¹⁰³

Europeans had known about hops for centuries, going as far back as the Greeks and the Romans, but active cultivation of hops for brewing did not occur until the ninth century A.D. The Carolingians, the first to initiate large-scale brewing, took up brewing with hops at this time as shown in Adalhard of Corbie’s written recipe for brewing

¹⁰⁰ Reginald Scot, *A Perfite Platforme of a Hoppe Garden* (London: 1574), 8.

¹⁰¹ Scot, *Perfite Platform*, 16-17, 29. The poles used in growing the hop garden also served as a source of firewood when the poles became old or broke.

¹⁰² Scot, *Perfite Platform*, 11, 29.

¹⁰³ Ashurst, “Hops,” 33.

hopped beer, from 822.¹⁰⁴ The Carolingians placed particular importance on the quality of beer brewed, and the *Capitulare de villis imperialibus*, written in 812 under Charlemagne's rule, outlined the proper procedure of brewing. Manorial administrators provided a steady supply of wine, beer, cider, and mead to the court, and the record states that the beer must be brewed by "brewers capable of making good beer."¹⁰⁵ The Carolingians required the presence of a brew master, a *magister*, to supervise the brewing process, and these masters served as early brewing professionals.¹⁰⁶ Despite the early emphasis on high quality beer in the Carolingian Empire, hops still primarily served as a medicinal treatment at this time. St. Hildegard wrote her *Physica Sacra* in the early twelfth century, and the book briefly mentions hops and their medicinal qualities. In addition to hops as medicine, St. Hildegard directly refers to the positive aspects of brewing with hops, stating "The hop is of a heating and drying nature... Its bitterness, though, when added to beverages, prevents in the latter putrefaction, and gives to them a longer durability."¹⁰⁷ St. Hildegard mentions further that a beer brewed with hops, oats, the popular additive *gruit*, and ash leaves will result in a drink capable of purging the stomach and easing the chest of a sick man.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Bahre, "History of Beer Additives," 35; Richard W. Unger, *Beer in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 54.

¹⁰⁵ John P. Arnold, *Origin and History of Beer and Brewing: From Prehistoric Times to the Beginning of Brewing Science and Technology* (1911; reprint, Cleveland: BeerBooks.com, 2005), 204. The record does not specifically state that the beer brewed contained hops, but it does show the level of importance the Carolingians placed on drinking quality ale or beer.

¹⁰⁶ Arnold, *Origin*, 205.

¹⁰⁷ As quoted in Arnold, *Origin*, 229-230.

¹⁰⁸ Arnold, *Origin*, 231. According to Arnold: "since the 12th century what was understood by grut or gruit was the macerated or crushed aromatic substances used in brewing instead of hops." Quote in *Origin*, 236.

Poorer classes also ate hops as a vegetable, usually when the hops were young and fresh.¹⁰⁹ Roots of the hop plant contain a starch-based substance that can be prepared into glucose or alcohol, as well as tannin, useful for tanners.¹¹⁰ Andrew Boorde, with his experience as a physician, commented on the medicinal use of wild hops, especially for serving as a remedy for choleric. Boorde states, “Colorycke men shoulde not be longe fastyng. These thynges folowyng do purge color: Fumytory, Centory, wormewod, wylde hoppes... and the whay of butter.”¹¹¹ Other perceived medicinal aspects of hops included their purification of the blood, and an apparent protection against scurvy. A syrup made of the hop flower helped to break fevers, and a pillow stuffed with hops allegedly worked to induce sleep.¹¹²

The growth and use of hops in brewing remained limited to northern areas of Europe, and little evidence regarding the growth of hops south of the Alps indicates that the southern areas, dominated by viticulture, did not devote much interest to producing hopped beer.¹¹³ For continental Europeans, the additive of choice before the advent of hops was *gruit*. Made from *myrica gale*, also known as sweet gale or bog myrtle, *gruit* was an essential component of ale brewing in northwest European countries.¹¹⁴ Historians do not know the exact composition of *gruit*, but John Arnold describes it as a “mixture of vegetable substances,” including juniper berries, ginger, caraway seeds, aniseed, as well

¹⁰⁹ Hops used for brewing are dried before they are boiled with the wort.

¹¹⁰ Bickerdyke, *Curiosities of Ale and Beer*, 84-85.

¹¹¹ Boorde, *Dyetary of Helth*, 2882-289. The term “choleric” applies to an individual’s humor; those who were choleric in nature were highly ambitious and energetic.

¹¹² Bickerdyke, *Curiosities of Ale and Beer*, 85. The doctors of George III advised the king to sleep on a pillow stuffed with hops to ease the king while he suffered from mental illness.

¹¹³ Bahre, “Beer Additives,” 39; Unger, *Beer in the Middle Ages*, 263 n. 9.

¹¹⁴ Bahre, “Beer Additives,” 36-37.

as other ingredients, with bog myrtle serving as its base. According to inventory records from *gruit* producers, *myrica gale* and juniper berries were the primary ingredients.¹¹⁵

As it became the standard additive for continental ale, governments established control over the production and sale of *gruit*. An example of this appears in the Carolingian Empire; because of Charlemagne's firm control over his land and what it produced, access to the popular additive was only possible through required payments to the Emperor. *Gruit* became a commercial product, and as feudalism grew in Europe, power over this lucrative business devolved into the hands of local nobles and town governments.¹¹⁶ Monopolies over the production of *gruit* arose, and bishoprics and localized governments looked to capitalize on the profits made. When interest in brewing with hops grew to noticeable levels, those controlling the monopolies on *gruit* sought to bar the availability of hops in their districts to ensure *gruit* remained the primary additive.¹¹⁷ While popular on the continent, the use of *myrica gale* did not spread very far in England. Archaeological finds show that the remains of bog myrtle remained limited to the western coast of the island.¹¹⁸

By the thirteenth century, hops steadily began to replace *gruit* as the additive of choice on continental Europe. The primary appeal of hopped beer was its greater durability compared to un-hopped ale. When boiling the wort with hops, resins from the hops release into the wort. The resins help prevent the growth of bacteria in the brew, aiding in the greater stability of beer. Before using hops, brewers raised the alcohol

¹¹⁵ Arnold, *Origin*, 239.

¹¹⁶ Unger, *Beer in the Middle Ages*, 30-33.

¹¹⁷ Arnold, *Origin*, 236-237.

¹¹⁸ Bahre, "Beer Additives," 36-37.

content of their ale as a way to combat the growth of bacteria that caused ale to spoil, but with the addition of hops, the brewing process no longer required high-alcohol brews for the purpose of killing bacteria. Brewing with hops also allowed brewers to use lower amounts of grain, relative to the amount of water, making the overall cost of production lower than traditional ale. The smaller quantities of grain resulted in a lower amount of malt sugar; this in conjunction with the bitter flavor of the hops caused beer to take on a sharper taste, forcing drinkers to adapt to an unfamiliar flavor that few initially favored.¹¹⁹ Early production of hopped beer undoubtedly involved a trial and error period in which brewers likely used too many or too few hops, resulting in strongly bitter beers, or weakly hopped beers that spoiled faster than anticipated. The overly hopped beers would have been especially challenging to drinkers unfamiliar with the bitter flavor provided by hops, causing their first reactions to beer to be unfavorable. Thus although hopped beer served as a competitor to traditional ale, ale remained a threat to beer in the early years of beer's commercial growth.¹²⁰

Brewing with hops presented several benefits, but there were also drawbacks to the use of this particular additive. Records concerning ale brewing regularly mention that brewers reused the same mash mixture to make as much ale as possible. The successive use of the same mash resulted in weaker ale that was not as flavorful and spoiled much faster.¹²¹ The same type of problems occurred with hopped beer. Boiling hops in the wort too long, or too many times, resulted in beer that could be harmful to one's health. In a "how-to" guide written in 1691, *The Art of Brewing*, the unnamed author states that "the

¹¹⁹ Unger, *Beer in the Middle Ages*, 55.

¹²⁰ Unger, *Beer in the Middle Ages*, 56-57.

¹²¹ Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters*, 17.

boiling of Hops two, three, or four hours in Beer, is a thing of a pernicious Consequence, tho' it be unadvised, and ignorantly practised, they falsly imagine that there Drink become the better thereby."¹²² Spent hops, used in the brewing process multiple times, could lead to a bacterial infection of the beer, but this was information medieval brewers learned only through practice over time.¹²³ Resistance to the practice of reusing mash did not gain much recognition during the high medieval period. Throughout the Middle Ages, "small beer," or weak ale, usually went to children and occasionally women, as a low-alcohol alternative drink.¹²⁴ The late seventeenth-century author of *The Art of Brewing* illustrates the harmful qualities of reusing hops or grains too many times.¹²⁵ The presentation of "small beer" in this work takes a decidedly negative perspective of this weaker brew. It states "small beer" could lead to possible diseases, especially scurvy.¹²⁶ Overall, the consumption of "most small beer... is injurious to Health, and the common drinking thereof does generate various Diseases."¹²⁷

Another downside to brewing with hops was the added cost brought on by growing and maintaining a supply of hops. Scot's description of the necessary actions one must take in raising and caring for a hop garden shows the demand and careful observation the plant required. Since planting a hop garden is both time consuming and laborious, the hops became the most expensive aspect of the brewing process once the plant's popularity secured its place as an additive for beer. During the medieval period, brewers did not know how to use the plant to full efficiency, and Ashurst estimates that

¹²² Anon., *The Art of Brewing* (London, 1691), 12.

¹²³ Unger, *Beer in the Middle Ages*, 56.

¹²⁴ Bickerdyke, *Curiosities of Ale and Beer*, 284.

¹²⁵ Anon., *The Art of Brewing*, 20-21.

¹²⁶ Anon., *The Art of Brewing*, 22.

¹²⁷ Anon., *The Art of Brewing*, 22.

brewers only used about twenty to forty percent of the hops' capacity. Hops also required drying, and to prevent spoilage, brewers had to keep the dried hops cold.¹²⁸ These factors added cost to a procedure that already carried several heavy expenses, including the purchase of the necessary equipment, grain, and vessels for storage. The negatives did not outweigh the positives, though, and hopped beer gained in popularity among brewers, as the resins within the hops created a more durable brew capable of trade at greater distances than ever offered by ale.

When preparing hopped or unhopped ale, the author of *The Art of Brewing* takes a decided stance against the act of boiling the wort or the water used to make the wort during the brewing process. The author suggests the reader compare boiled and unboiled water together, and states that the boiled water will develop an unpleasant smell and will lose all sweetness.¹²⁹ The author states:

Unboyled Wort hath a fine pleasant sweetness in taste, and it is of an opening, cleansing quality and operation; and then taste or drink some of the same Wort boyled with or without Hops, and you will find that this last hath not only lost its pleasant taste and sweetness, but also its opening penetrating Virtues, by which it becomes of another Nature and Operation.¹³⁰

Though the guide presents brewing techniques with hops, the author is highly resistant to boiling the water during the brewing process, and mentions that fact several times, but boiling the wort with hops was how brewers traditionally produced hopped beer. To that the author states, “[I]f any think that so short a time of Infusion as I have prescribed will not get out the Virtue and Goodness of the Hops, without boyling of them stoutly, I answer, That all the mild, friendly virtues of Hops lie as it were outward and ready,

¹²⁸ Ashurst, “Hops,” 43-44; Unger, *Beer in the Middle Ages*, 55-56.

¹²⁹ Anon., *The Art of Brewing*, 19.

¹³⁰ Anon., *The Art of Brewing*, 13-14.

which with the least violence are drawn forth.”¹³¹ The extent to which brewers actually practiced this simmering method is unclear, but the author of this guide remained adamant that no brew, made with or without hops, should undergo any boiling during the process.

In spite of the initial resistance to the bitter flavor of beer, growth in the commercial trade of hopped beer grew during the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century in northwestern Europe. The German port towns of Bremen, Wismar, Rostock, and Hamburg became the first large-scale producers and exporters of hopped beer. Easy access to water shipping routes allowed these towns to establish a trade market in beer with the Low Countries by the end of the thirteenth century. This growth of commercialization received praise in the fourteenth century from Emperor Charles IV, who favored the economic boost provided by beer, calling it *novus modus fermentandi cervisiam*, “a new way of brewing beer.”¹³² The different export centers competed with each other over the market in the Low Countries, with Hamburg gaining dominance over the other shipping centers. Eventually, Flemish and Dutch brewers in turn began to export hopped beer to England.¹³³ By the end of the fourteenth century, London imported hopped beer or “Flemish ale” primarily to satisfy the interest of alien residents who sought beer in preference to traditional English ale. By the early fifteenth century, the

¹³¹ Anon., *The Art of Brewing*, 29.

¹³² Unger, *Beer in the Middle Ages*, 59.

¹³³ Unger, *Beer in the Middle Ages*, 59-60.

practice of brewing hopped beer developed in England, though in London it remained a trade dominated by aliens until the mid-sixteenth century.¹³⁴

Ale brewers in London did not receive the arrival of hopped beer warmly. Alien brewers experienced enough harassment from English brewers, or Englishmen in general, that Henry VI put forth an ordinance in June of 1436 that called on the Sheriffs of London to protect the foreign brewers and allow them to continue producing hopped beer. The ordinance refers to the actions taken by the English against the alien brewers as “malevolent,” and acknowledges that such action against foreign brewers forced many of the aliens out of work. Henry VI denounced the arguments made by brewers who portrayed hopped beer as poisonous, and he instead described beer as a wholesome drink that is particularly good during the summer time.¹³⁵ Whether or not the ordinance gained much attention in London is not clear, as a further ordinance from the king issued one month later expressly calls on the Sheriffs to protect all Flemish merchants who took an oath of allegiance to Henry VI. Those who acted against the ordinance faced arrest and punishment in court for their actions.¹³⁶ Henry VI took great interest in protecting the rights of the Flemish merchants, including brewers, working in London due to the aid the Flemish gave to England during the continuous conflict between England and France over control of Calais. When English forces, led by the Earl of Salisbury, could not reach

¹³⁴ Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters*, 78 -79; William Page, ed., *Letters of Denizations and Acts of Naturalizations for Aliens in England, 1509-1603* (London: Huguenot Society of London, n.d.), xliii.

¹³⁵ Reginald Sharpe, *Calendar of Letter Books of the City of London: Letter Book K* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911), folio 161, p. 205, available online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=33722>.

¹³⁶ Sharpe, *Letter Book K*, folio 161b.

Calais in a timely manner, the Flemish, under Duke Philip, ensured Calais' protection and helped maintain England's control over the area.¹³⁷

The role of drink as a part of military rations helped give the new hopped beverage an advantage over ale. Providing armies with enough drink, usually ale or cider, was a crucial aspect of military campaigns. Ale's weakness rested with its lack of durability, and traveling with ale was especially difficult as the movement and shaking of ale caused it to sour at a faster rate. If an army did not have enough ale or cider they became restless, and reports from military leaders to the king indicate that low rations led to low morale or restless behavior among the troops.¹³⁸ Ensuring there was enough ale to supply an army proved challenging to English brewers since an average batch of ale topped out at 120 gallons. The introduction of hopped beer into England helped solve this matter because beer could keep for several months and traveled better than ale. Long-standing military campaigns and sieges over Calais during the mid to late fourteenth century introduced English armies to the advantages of hopped beer. While the military received both ale and beer during campaigns, beer began to gain the advantage due to its ability to travel farther and keep longer. The preference of beer over ale for military supply appears during England's siege of Rouen in 1418; as the soldiers waited several months to capture the city, brewers in London reportedly sent a greater supply of beer to the army than ale. Throughout the fifteenth century, the English began to supply its

¹³⁷ Sharpe, *Letter Book K*, Introduction, available online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=33706>. The report of the siege laid by the Flemish army concludes with an interesting event. In their hurry to return home after the siege ended, the Flemish army reportedly left behind "a great quantity of bere."

¹³⁸ Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters*, 17, 44, 92. The production of cider remained more prominent in southwestern England and it fell out of favor following the outbreak of plague in the fourteenth century, resulting in low production numbers that failed to meet the army's high demands.

armies almost exclusively with beer, and after 1487, ale no longer appears in records concerning victuals for the English army.¹³⁹

As the army became accustomed to receiving beer, the soldiers grew to favor London beer and by the sixteenth century began to refuse oaten malt ale from the countryside. The poor keeping qualities of the traditional malt caused ale to fall out of favor for the English soldiers, and the army reportedly had a strong preference for London beer brewed in March, which the record states was the best month. The army was capable of consuming massive amounts of beer, and while stationed in Brittany the army drank twenty-five tuns in twelve days, indicating the importance of this particular victual.¹⁴⁰ When the army ran out of London beer while in Brittany, they reluctantly drank the ale made in the countryside, but the report states a replenished supply of London beer prompted the English soldiers to refuse ale in favor of the hopped beer. Because of this clear preference, the report indicates that England made all efforts to ensure its army maintained a healthy supply of beer.¹⁴¹

Ensuring an army had enough beer was not an easy matter for royal officials or London brewers. When the English engaged in hostilities with the Scots in 1542, a request for victuals included a demand for 600-700 tuns of London beer.¹⁴² Shipping beer

¹³⁹ Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters*, 92-93.

¹⁴⁰ One tun was equal to 252 gallons. In twelve days, the English army managed to drink 6,300 gallons.

¹⁴¹ J.S. Brewer, ed., *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 1: 1509-1514* (1920), under "1864," available online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=102684>.

¹⁴² James Gairdner and R.H. Brodie, eds., *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 17: 1542* (1900), under "719, Norfolk to the Council," available online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=76668>. Peter Clark states that the cost of beer in Boston in 1547 was 1.5 d. per gallon, and he states that price was

to the armies resulted in its own difficulties, as shipwrecks caused important army supplies to be lost at sea. A report of a ship carrying such victuals to the English army in Calais ran aground, and threatened the loss of 300 tuns of beer, as well as £40 worth of bread.¹⁴³ One letter sent from the Earl of Surrey, Thomas Howard, expressed high concern at the low levels of beer available to the army. Problems with supplies occurred when the English army could not obtain reliable means of transport for the victuals in a hostile environment. Howard stated, “We always find a difficulty in getting horsemen to conduct our victuals, which I fear may soon lead to a disaster. If we had not been better supplied with beer out of England and Calais than from the Emperor's countries, we should have long ago been compelled to quit the field.”¹⁴⁴ This shows the place of importance beer held within the English army, and the particular favor soldiers expressed for London beer. According to these reports, without ample supplies of that particular commodity, English campaigns in Calais would fall under great risk.

Supplying the English army with beer instead of ale also served as a testament to beer's superior durability. Records indicate that London brewers made hopped beer to last for at least five months, and they managed to produce an increasing amount of beer as well. A list of necessary goods for a military expedition in 1542 includes beer made by London brewers “to last five months,” and a meeting of the London Privy Council documents that the beer brewers of London claimed to be capable of brewing 1,000 tons

similar in surrounding areas. Using that data, the estimated cost of 600-700 tuns of beer would have been around £960-1,120. Clark, *English Alehouse*, 97.

¹⁴³ J.S. Brewer, ed., *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 3: 1519-1523* (1867), under “2582, W.M. Briswode to Nic. Waryn,” available online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=91106>.

¹⁴⁴ Brewer, ed., *Letters and Papers, Vol. 3*, under “2568. [Surrey] to Wolsey,” also available online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=91106>.

of beer in eight days, and that this beer would last for five months.¹⁴⁵ The Privy Council called on the London brewers to provide a great quantity of beer for Norfolk's army, and stated the intended destination of the beer was Berwick, in the far north of England, just south of Scotland's border.¹⁴⁶ This shows not only how much longer hopped beer could last, but also how much farther the beer trade could extend. Ale brewers marketed and sold ale within a region local to its production, and they most often sold ale directly from the house where it was brewed. Due to ale's short life span, exportation of ale across England was not a possibility, but the resin from the hops extended the life of beer to the point that such a trade became a reality.

Hops not only resulted in a more durable product, but allowed brewers to make beer in quantities never attained in ale production. Due to its favorable aspects, hopped beer presented an immediate threat to the traditional ale market on both the European continent and in England. Those who monopolized the *gruit* trade in Germany resisted hops in order to protect their industry, and English ale brewers emphasized the connection between hops and aliens as a way to create public distrust of the new commodity. Though hops required additional costs in the brewing process, they also lowered the overall need for grain and sugar. The positives of brewing with hops outweighed any negatives, and as European palates adjusted to the new flavor of hopped beer, the preference for beer quickly began to outweigh the demand for traditional ale. As

¹⁴⁵ Gairdner and Brodie, eds., *Letters and Papers, Vol. 17*, under "718, 2. A Note of Necessary Provisions for the Expedition," available online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=76668>.

¹⁴⁶ Gairdner and Brodie, eds., *Letters and Papers, Vol. 17*, under "704. The Privy Council," available online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=76667>.

English soldiers altered their interest toward beer, London brewers gained a market that demanded both steady supplies and a high amount of beer. The ability to ship beer over long distances was the greatest advantage beer held over ale, and the market of hopped beer quickly progressed to the point of international trade to Calais and Scotland. Despite these advances, beer brewers still faced social persecution from ale brewers and native English citizens alike. The connection of beer brewers with foreign residents remained a long-standing tie, and it served as the primary hindrance of the beer industry in London.

CHAPTER IV

SOCIAL PERCEPTIONS OF ALE, BEER, AND BREWERS

“[W]hen the drynke is in, the wytte is out,
And then haue at the, and thou at me:
Fooles be they that wold them part
That wyl make such a dronken marte.”¹⁴⁷

The widespread consumption of ale in England attaches a level of social importance to the brew, as so many depended on ale as a source of safe drinking water and calories. Despite ale's role as a social necessity, ale brewers received little credit and had a poor reputation throughout the medieval period. Frequent cases of fraudulence and the connection between women and brewing fueled the ill repute of ale brewers. The disdain of drinking to drunkenness only fueled this social degradation, as popular thought portrayed brewers as encouragers of such behavior. While ale drinking was acceptable for all ages and members of English society, those who drank to inebriation received public scorn and sometimes punishment. Ale brewers struggled to improve their standing in society, and as the trade gained greater organization throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, ale brewers managed to improve their reputation. Their attempts fell short, as they never became a leading gild in London, and the arrival of foreign beer

¹⁴⁷ Quoted in Andrew Boorde, *A Dyetary of Helth*, ed. F.J. Furnivall (1542; reprint, New York: C. Scribner & Co., 1893), 94.

brewers presented an additional challenge. Flemish brewers brought with them a superior product, but English society did not place much trust in the alien brewers, and ale brewers attempted to capitalize on the beer brewers' disadvantage to improve their own standing in society. Ultimately, however, beer brewers attained a level of social acceptance by the end of the seventeenth century, and they gained public positions ale brewers never reached, such as election to the aldermen of London.

A wide variety of sources, including literary and legal documents, reveals the social perception of brewers. The differing nature of the sources requires some interpretation, as legal documents do not necessarily reflect the societal view of an individual's occupation, but they do serve to explain why brewers often appear in a consistently negative light. The most frequent legal charge brought against brewers was the serving of false measure. Standardized measurements applied to the ale trade by the mid-thirteenth century, and the government regulated the price of each ale serving. After the Assize of Ale went into effect during the reign of Henry III, London officials regularly reissued laws pertaining to the appropriate cost of ale, primarily to remind brewers who frequently worked around the laws as a way to obtain greater profit. In 1316, the Mayor and Aldermen of London declared:

Proclamation that no brewer nor brewster nor any one else sell a gallon of ale for more than 3 farthings and at a penny, and the best at three halfpence. Any one convicted of doing the contrary shall at first lose his brew, at the second offence abjure the trade, and at the third abjure the City for ever.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ Reginald Sharpe, *Calendar of Letter Books of the City of London: Letter Book E, 1314-1337* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903), folios li b – lx, 66-75, available online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=33100>. More on the Assize of Ale will appear in chapter five.

A later decree in 1351 from the Mayor and Aldermen of London increased the threat of punishment to include the burning of the measure used to serve ale, not a cheap expense to the brewer, and imprisonment.¹⁴⁹ The continuous appearance of laws pertaining to the serving of false measure and the increasing levels of punishment for doing so indicate the importance of protecting the ale trade. It also shows that dishonest brewers were a common nuisance to London authorities and society.

Ale brewers resisted the regulations implemented by the English government, either by openly objecting to the prices set by officials, or by subversive means of fraudulence. Multiple accounts appear of brewers approaching the Mayor and Aldermen with complaints of the legal price of ale appear, and often the brewers threatened to discontinue their service of providing ale to the public. The *Plea and Memoranda Rolls* feature many accounts of London brewers who appeared in the Mayor's Court, including Adam le Brewere, Simon Macchyng, Thomas Goudsyre, among others, challenging or refusing to abide by the ale laws. The brewers made these objections in hopes they would receive higher wages, but their attempts to alter the ale laws ultimately failed.¹⁵⁰ London officials viewed such demands as particularly harmful to society, as threats to cut off or diminish the ale supply would directly affect the ability of London citizens to obtain the

¹⁴⁹ Reginald Sharpe, *Calendar of Letter Books of the City of London: Letter Book F, 1337-1352* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1904), folios ccii - ccxvi, 232-249, available online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=33548>.

¹⁵⁰ A.H. Thomas, ed., *Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls Preserved Among the Archives of the Corporation of the City of London at the Guildhall: Rolls A1a-A9, A.D. 1323-1364, Volume I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926), 260-70; A.H. Thomas, ed., *Calendar of the Plea and Memoranda Rolls of the City of London: Volume II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1929), Roll A 21, Membr. 3 and 3b, available online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=36685>. Specific details pertaining to Brewere, Macchyng, Goudsyre, and other disruptive brewers' appearances before the Mayor's Court appear in chapter five.

necessary victual. The majority of the brewers who threatened to cease brewing faced imprisonment as a result. The *Liber Albus* outlines such punishment, stating:

And if any brewer or brewster be not willing to brew, or brew less than such person was wont to brew, let such person be held to be a withholder of victuals from the City, and for such disobedience and malice incur the penalty of imprisonment, at the will of the Mayor for the time being; and nevertheless, let such person forswear the said trade within the franchise of the City for ever.¹⁵¹

The severity of the law shows the level of importance attached to the ale supply in London. Brewers not only had to adhere to measurement and cost restrictions, but they faced an obligation to engage in the trade regularly to ensure a steady supply of ale to the public.

In spite of the closely regulated ale laws, brewers regularly found ways around the laws, and London officials placed harsh penalties on brewers caught breaking the Assize of Ale. To ensure the brewer engaged in the trade honestly, the law required all brewers to call on an Ale-conner, or Ale-taster, to determine the quality of their ale before selling. The measures used had to be inspected by an alderman and sealed to show the measure was legally acceptable.¹⁵² Brewers often used their measures as a way to flout the laws; one example of this kind of fraudulence involved William Nosterfeld and his wife, Rose, who served their ale in a measure featuring a false seal of the Aldermen. The measure was short by one-third of the amount required by law, and William and Rose both admitted to engaging in this practice as a way to obtain greater profits.¹⁵³ Breaking the Assize of Ale in this manner resulted in a number of punishments; the *Liber Albus* lists

¹⁵¹ John Carpenter, *Liber Albus: The White Book of the City of London*, trans. and ed. Henry Thomas Riley (London, 1861), 311.

¹⁵² Carpenter, *Liber Albus*, 311.

¹⁵³ Thomas, ed., *Plea and Memoranda Rolls: Vol. II*, Roll A 10, Membr. 2b, available online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=36673>.

finer, imprisonment, or banishment from the trade in London as appropriate punishments for serving ale in a fraudulent manner. The fines a brewer faced for breaking the Assize were upwards of twenty shillings for multiple offenses. Twenty shillings, equal to one pound, was a harsh payment for ale brewers. As ale brewing was a trade of lower social standing, it typically involved peasant laborers who, if men, made one to one and a half pence a day; women made roughly one-half to three-quarters the amount of money as men.¹⁵⁴ Those who could not afford to pay the fine, and at the time of the *Liber Albus* small-scale women brewsters still dominated the brewing trade, faced public punishment as a way to pay for the crime.¹⁵⁵

Two of the primary punishments used on fraudulent brewers were the cucking stool and the pillory. The cucking stool consisted of a chair tied to a rope; the offending brewer, tied to the chair, would be dipped repeatedly into the Thames in front of a large crowd, who typically found such spectacles highly entertaining. Andrew Boorde commented on the cucking stool when regarding fraudulent brewers, stating:

Where euyl [evil] ale-brewers and ale-wyues, for theyr euyl brewing [and] euyl measure, shuld clacke and ryng theyr tankardes at dym myls dale, I wold you shuld shake out the remnaunt of your sakes, standynge in the Temmes vp to the harde chynne, and [three] ynches aboue, that whan you do come out of the water you might shake your eares as a syanyell that verily commeth out of the water.¹⁵⁶

The pillory was another form of punishment for dishonest brewers; consisting of a stand through which the offender's head and hands, and at times the feet were placed, the

¹⁵⁴ Judith Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters in England: Women's Work in a Changing World, 1300-1600* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), "A Brief Note on Conventions and Terms."

¹⁵⁵ Carpenter, *Liber Albus*, 307, 311-314.

¹⁵⁶ Boorde, *A Dyetary of Helth*, 260-261. A footnote on page 261 includes details on an ale-wife who faced punishment on the cucking stool in 1745. The crowd witnessing the punishment consisted of an estimated 2,000 to 3,000 people.

pillory shared similarities with the stocks. The confined brewer would serve his or her punishment in a public center, so as many witnesses could observe or ridicule the offender as possible. The pillory, unlike the cucking stool, did not impose physical harm to the criminal's body, but it did serve to announce the brewer's fraudulence to the local community, who would presumably be reluctant to conduct business with that brewer in the future.¹⁵⁷

As women served as the primary brewers up to the sixteenth century, condemnations against fraudulent brewers often laid blame on ale-wives. This may have resulted from the public connections English society made between women and brewing, and the fact that far more women faced punishments for breaking the Assize of Ale than male brewers.¹⁵⁸ Brewsters also faced harsher punishments than male brewers did. A sentenced brewer could escape public punishments like the pillory or cucking stool by paying higher fines. Male brewers earned higher wages and generally had more money readily available to pay the fines. However, female brewsters could not afford to pay their way out of the sentences, and records show brewsters faced the cucking stool in much higher numbers.¹⁵⁹ Perhaps frequent public punishments of brewsters helped promote negative perceptions of female brewers. If more male brewers paid their way out of public sentences, the general community might not have been as aware of their misconduct. Despite misconstrued social perceptions of male and female brewers,

¹⁵⁷ John Bickerdyke, *Curiosities of Ale and Beer: An Entertaining History* (1889; reprint, London: Spring Books, 1965), 101.

¹⁵⁸ Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters*, 11, 35.

¹⁵⁹ Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters*, 104-5.

engaging in the ale trade remained a low-status labor that received little credit due to the reputation of brewing with dishonesty.¹⁶⁰

The portrayal of brewers in popular thought appears in a variety of literary sources, including morality plays, poems, and allegorical writings which feature dishonest brewsters who often commit the crime of serving false measure. The English held a special disdain for this crime, and literary depictions often associate the practice with sinful natures. The morality play *The Harrowing of Hell* emphasizes the sacrilegious behavior involved in serving false measure, and it illustrates where dishonest brewers ranked in the eyes of society. The play begins with Jesus going into hell to save all the worthy souls caught in Satan's domain. All the souls taken back to Heaven with Jesus rejoice, stating, "Nowe goe wee to blys, ould and yonge, and worshippe God all willinglye."¹⁶¹ The lone soul left behind in hell is that of a brewster. The abandoned woman cries out against her sins, which comprised cheating her customers with false measure and mixing ashes in with her ale. The brewster declares, "Of kannes I kept no trewe measre. My cuppes I sould at my pleasure, deceavinge manye a creature."¹⁶² The brewster readily submits to the will of Satan, and the other demons appear to rejoice in her company. One demon even offers a marriage proposal to the fraudulent brewster.¹⁶³ *The Holkham Bible Picture Book* also features this concept of sacrilegious brewsters in the section on judgment and damnation. The portrait features a demon carrying a brewster to a boiling cauldron. The alewife appears holding a miniature jug over her head

¹⁶⁰ Frank A. King, *Beer Has a History* (New York: Hutchinson's Scientific and Technical Publications, 1957), 60.

¹⁶¹ R.M. Lumiansky and David Mills, eds. *The Chester Mystery Cycle, Vol. I* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 336.

¹⁶² Lumiansky and Mills, *Chester Mystery Cycle*, 337.

¹⁶³ Lumiansky and Mills, *Chester Mystery Cycle*, 338-9.

to signify she sold ale at a false measure.¹⁶⁴ Both of the sources encourage the idea that giving out false measure was a sin against society that offered no redemption from eternal damnation.

Fraudulent dealing for brewers was a tempting option; the ability to gain more for less appealed to a wide array of brewers who sought greater profit. John Skelton presents in his poem *The Tunning of Elinour Rumming* a despicable brewster who not only weakens her ale, but drools in the batch and allows chicken droppings to fall into the ale as well. Skelton's seven-part poem dedicates an entire passage to the description of Elinour's unappealing physical character. Skelton shows no sympathy as he lists all of Elinour's faults; he states:

Droopy and drowsy,
Scurvy and lousy;
Her face all boozy...
Her lewd lips twain,
They slavery, men sayne,
Like ropy rain...¹⁶⁵

Skelton's scathing words continue in the same manner throughout the entire poem.

However, when Skelton approaches the subject of Elinour's alehouse, his malicious representation extends to all of Elinour's customers as well. He portrays people running to Elinour's alehouse and giving the alewife precious materials, like wedding rings and livery hoods, in exchange for ale. Elinour's customers do not appear to mind the chicken dung Elinour adds to her ale to make it thicker, or the filthy swine that wander about the

¹⁶⁴ W.O. Hassall, *The Holkham Bible Picture Book* (London: The Dropmore Press, 1954), folio 42v, 156.

¹⁶⁵ Gerald Hammond, ed., *John Skelton: Selected Poems* (Manchester: Fyfield Books, 1980), 74.

alehouse.¹⁶⁶ Skelton also brings Elinour's piety into question, when he depicts her learning brewing tricks from a Jew, accepting rosaries as payment for ale, and being "sib" with the Devil.¹⁶⁷ This emphasizes the sacrilegious aspect of fraudulence as well, and Skelton suggests that by being associated with a Jew, Elinour is a character of a particularly low nature.

Brewers falling into the tempting appeal of serving false measure also appear in William Langland's *Piers the Plowman*. The series of poems features two brewsters, with the depiction of neither giving the women much credit. One poem regards the husband of a brewster named Rose the Retailer, who first works as a spinster, a trade that helps her and her husband earn enough profit, "mine own balance whoso weighed true."¹⁶⁸ Rose's husband purchases barley malt for Rose to brew and sell, initiating the couple's troubles. Immediately, Rose begins to cheat her customers with false measures and weakened ale. Rose's husband laments his wife's wickedness, and he calls on various saints to raise his family out of the debt brought on by his wife's actions. However, Rose's husband is not the only man in *Piers Plowman* hurt by a brewster. Another poem depicts Glutton, an allegorical figure, as making his way to church to restore his piety and seek forgiveness for his sins. On his way to mass, a brewster named Betty persuades Glutton to drink her ale instead. Glutton foregoes prayer in order to drink Betty's ale and keep company with

¹⁶⁶ Hammond, ed., *John Skelton*, 78-81.

¹⁶⁷ Hammond, *John Skelton*, 76. While reading Skelton's poem, it is unclear whether he attacks Elinour's character because of her leanings toward blasphemous behavior or the wretched condition of her ale and alehouse.

¹⁶⁸ William Langland, *The Book Concerning Piers the Plowman*, trans. and ed. Donald and Rachel Attwater (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co. Inc., 1957), 38.

a rat-catcher, a street sweeper, and a tinker.¹⁶⁹ Glutton drinks over a gallon of ale and remains in Betty's alehouse until nightfall, when "[h]e could neither step nor stand."¹⁷⁰ After sleeping for two full days, Glutton faces harsh criticism from Repentance for his wickedness, which was ultimately a result of Brewster Betty's encouragement.¹⁷¹ This allegorical poem reflects the social perception that brewers acted as encouragers of sin and vice by promoting drunkenness.

The perception that brewers encouraged drunkenness in their customers is another aspect that served to diminish the reputation of brewers. Though ale was necessary in the medieval diet, English society harshly regarded those who drank to inebriation. Maintaining one's self-control was an essential aspect of life, as it held strong connections with Christian practices and beliefs. According to the physician Andrew Boorde, drunkenness results from "wekenes of the brayne, or els by some greate hurte in the head."¹⁷² Boorde's recommendation for curing drunkenness includes purging the body through vomiting, or simply the avoidance of drinking strong alcoholic beverages. Boorde credits drunkenness as a primary cause of injuries, "for when the drynke is in, the wytte is out," and people become incapable of controlling basic emotions, acting foolish and lashing out in anger.¹⁷³

Drunkenness, while a sin of gluttony, was a menace to English society as well, for drunkards presented harm not only to themselves but also to others. Records throughout

¹⁶⁹ The tone of the poem indicates the characters present at Betty's alehouse are of low status and unappealing.

¹⁷⁰ Langland, *Piers the Plowman*, 41-2.

¹⁷¹ Langland, *Piers the Plowman*, 43.

¹⁷² Boorde, *A Dyetary of Helth*, 90.

¹⁷³ Boorde, *A Dyetary of Helth*, 94.

the medieval and early modern era include instances where drunkenness became a problem. A late thirteenth-century drunkard by the name of John le Hancrete killed himself and endangered the lives of others as he, “being very drunk,” fell asleep leaving a candle lit which burned until it caught his bed on fire. The fire did not immediately kill le Hancrete, but he died the following day after “languishing from the effects” of the fire.¹⁷⁴ Other individuals brought harm upon themselves due to their intoxication, as in the case of Matilda le Coffeur, who died in 1277. Matilda reportedly fell and broke her arm, and after suffering for almost a week, she died as a result of her injury. Roger Canny died indirectly from drunkenness as well, as he fell down on the King’s Highway during extremely cold weather and “died there by misadventure.”¹⁷⁵ In each of these cases, the record states that each death occurred as a result of the person’s own folly, and expresses little remorse for the loss of the drunkards.

Drunkenness among the clergy remained a consistent problem throughout the Middle Ages as well, and monastic records feature regular reports of inappropriate clerical behavior due to intoxication. Church leaders released proclamations forbidding clerics from social drinking bouts, and the frequency of the proclamations coupled with the increasing severity of punishments indicate that drunkenness among members of the religious community was especially problematic.¹⁷⁶ Drinking remained a favorite pastime of monks and clerics, despite the frequent proclamations against it from prominent

¹⁷⁴ H.T. Riley, ed., *Memorials of London and London Life* (London: 1868), 1-8, available online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=57628>.

¹⁷⁵ Riley, ed., *Memorials of London*, 9-17, available online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=57629>.

¹⁷⁶ For a list of proclamations against clerical drunkenness, see H.A. Monckton, *A History of English Ale and Beer* (Toronto: The Bodley Head, 1966), 28-29, 42-43.

church officials. Monastic records indicate an association of clerics who had a reputation for drunkenness with troublesome behavior.

Acts of clerical drunkenness regularly appear in monastic records, though not always from religious houses located in London. Looking at documents from across England a clearer understanding of the frequency ecclesiastics divulged in drunkenness appears. One incident included in the records of the priory Wootton Wawen in 1281 involved an altercation between the prior and another monk. The prior, named Peter de Altaribus, argued and fought with Brother Roger de Pauiliac in an incident in which the prior “was held guilty of laying violent hands” on his fellow monk.¹⁷⁷ The information concerning this incident goes into considerable detail over the issue, and strong favor for Brother Roger appears throughout the text. The record tarnishes the prior’s reputation before information regarding the fight even appears. The opening statement declares Prior Peter’s life “was anything but creditable,” and a list of his faults includes frequent bouts of drunkenness.¹⁷⁸ While it does not specifically state the prior was drunk during the fight with Brother Roger, the notoriety of the prior’s troublesome behavior worked against him in this case. The fight between the two monks had no clear cause, and the archbishop found the prior guilty for assaulting Brother Roger and drawing blood from his nose. Despite the prior’s claims that Roger de Pauiliac caused his nose to bleed by fraudulent means of “wounding himself in his nose with his own finger,” witnesses

¹⁷⁷ William Page, ed., *A History of the County of Warwick: Vol. II* (1908), under “The Priory of Wootton Wawen,” available online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=36525>.

¹⁷⁸ William Page, ed., *A History of the County of Warwick: Vol. II*, under “The Priory of Wootton Wawen.”

claimed the prior was at fault.¹⁷⁹ Following this quarrel, the presiding abbot conducted an investigation into Wootton “concerning the dilapidations” of the prior.¹⁸⁰

Individual monks were not alone in their guilt of consuming too much ale. Details regarding an investigation of St. Botolph’s abbey hospital in 1257 reported problems with drunkenness among the members of the order. When a group of bishops investigated the abbey to determine the spiritual right of the hospital over the monastery, they inquired why a canon, named Rusus, a secular enforcer of ecclesiastical law was present. The people in charge of the hospital explained he was there to halt the drunken and contentious behavior of the monks. The record uses the plural “brethren” when explaining who was at fault, indicating all members of the monastery held some level of guilt. The canon swore to restore the abbey to its appropriate state of “religion, sobriety and devotion,” but the bishops deposed the canon in place of clerical control.¹⁸¹ The bishop’s actions seem irregular, and the record describes his eagerness to “please the queen rather than God,” as the queen, Eleanor of Aquitaine, called for the investigation in the first place. The bishop enforced his power over the monastery, requiring all members

¹⁷⁹ Page, ed., *A History of the County of Warwick: Vol. II*, under “The Priory of Wootton Wawen.” A servant to the vicar stated the prior hit Brother Roger between the eyes with a set of keys and called him a “leprous clown.” Several other witnesses also laid blame on the prior.

¹⁸⁰ Page, ed., *A History of the County of Warwick: Vol. II*, under “The Priory of Wootton Wawen.” Both the prior and Brother Roger faced a brief sentence of excommunication for fighting each other, despite the overwhelming favor given to Brother Roger. The abbot forced Peter de Altaribus to leave his office and Wootton church; however, the prior refused and appealed to the bishop. The issue proceeded up the hierarchy until the archdeacon of Worcester intervened, granting both Prior Peter and Brother Roger absolution from excommunication. The archdeacon then had both parties removed to the monastery of Conches where they carried out their penance under the observance of the local abbot.

¹⁸¹ G. A. J. Hodgett, ed., *The Cartulary of Holy Trinity, Aldgate* (1971), under “The Hospital of St. Katherine, 986,” available online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=64087>.

to swear by him and not the prior. Various bishops conducted regular inspections over the state of the monastery during the successive years.¹⁸²

The Benedictine monastery at Selby experienced several problems with a troublesome monk who frequently engaged in drunken behavior. This monk, named Adam de la Breuer, appeared in a list of problematic clerics made by Archbishop Melton in 1335. The Archbishop noticed de la Breuer's disruptive manner during a visit to Selby's monastery; the monk's recorded faults include his constant inebriation, and his role as a "sower of discord among the brethren."¹⁸³ De la Breuer also maintained an inappropriate relationship with a woman named Alice Smith, who lived outside the monastery. Other crimes committed by de la Breuer included leaving mass early, sending alms to his favorite women, and thieving from the monastery. De la Breuer apparently altered his monastic habit in order to make room for stolen objects. This drunken monk also gossiped with women, which the Archbishop considered particularly shameful. Archbishop Melton punished Adam de la Breuer with a one-year sentence "to bewail his sins" locked away from the business of men and access to women.¹⁸⁴ De la Breuer received punishment twice a week, and on those days, he received minimal rations that included "light ale," or smaller portions of the monk's preferred drink. On the other days, the Archbishop allowed de la Breuer to consume the regular rations of a monk, except for

¹⁸² Hodgett, ed., *The Cartulary of Holy Trinity, Aldgate*, under "The Hospital of St. Katherine, 986," 988-989. The reason for the queen's investigation of the abbey's hospital does not appear in the Abbey's records.

¹⁸³ William Page, ed., *A History of the County of York: Vol. III* (1974), under "The Abbey of Selby," available online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=36216>.

¹⁸⁴ Page, ed., *A History of the County of York: Vol. III*, under "The Abbey of Selby."

delicacies. However, the record does not say if the Archbishop considered ale a delicacy or not.¹⁸⁵

Clerics regarded drunkenness as a deplorable quality, and in 1366, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Simon Langham, denounced all drinking sessions carried out by multiple men. Archbishop Langham prohibited all “common drinking bouts” that involved ten or more individuals drinking together in the same house for a long amount of time.¹⁸⁶ The Archbishop was careful to say he did not include strangers and travelers in his proclamation. Instead, his prohibition extended to everyone who drank in the name of charity, which included all members of holy orders and the Church, as well as church and scot-ales. The Archbishop declared that all participants and organizers of public drinking bouts would face punishments of immediate excommunication if caught.¹⁸⁷ Langham’s proclamation shows the previous denouncements from church leaders went ignored and clerics continued to engage in the drinking parties. It also reveals an increase in the severity of punishments against public or group drinking; however, like the proclamations before Langham’s, the Archbishop’s threat had little effect against clerical drinking.

The English also looked down on the Flemish and the Dutch and viewed such individuals as drunkards who regularly drank beer to excess and engaged in socially offensive behavior. The Flemish and Dutch were responsible for bringing hopped beer to England, and supporters of ale emphasized the reputation of the alien brewers as drunkards. Andrew Boorde, who made it clear that he did not care for the alien brew,

¹⁸⁵ Page, ed., *A History of the County of York: Vol. III*, under “The Abbey of Selby.”

¹⁸⁶ Monckton, *English Ale and Beer*, 64.

¹⁸⁷ Monckton, *English Ale and Beer*, 64.

described the affinity the Flemish and Dutch had for drinking beer. Boorde paints the Flemish as “dronken... as a rat,” and he mentions that Dutch “wyl quaf tyl they ben dronk, [and] wyl pysse under the table where as they sit.”¹⁸⁸ Boorde also emphasizes the notion that beer was a fattening beverage, saying, “[Y]et it doth make a man fat, and doth inflate the bely,” and that due to drinking large amounts of it, the Dutch and Flemish were regularly overweight.¹⁸⁹ The political commentator Thomas Wright presents the Flemish in a similar vein as Boorde, stating that they drink beer by the barrel and soil the ground by urinating around their feet. John Taylor, a London ale-brewer, discredits the claim that the Dutch taught the English how to drink, stating, “‘Tis said the Dutchmen taught [us] drinke and swill; I’m sure we goe beyond them in that skill.”¹⁹⁰

As with native ale brewers, the English were concerned with the impact stronger beer had on social conduct. They viewed beer, which could ferment longer and produce brews with higher alcoholic content, as a particular threat to those susceptible to drunkenness.¹⁹¹ Beer brewers were able to produce a variety of beers that contained weaker or stronger levels of alcohol, and the English population denounced the availability of such strong brews. A proclamation put forth in 1619 by London officials forbade brewers from fermenting their beer in wine casks, a practice that apparently produced highly alcoholic beer, as the proclamation stated such brew, “being long kept in

¹⁸⁸ Boorde, *A Dyetary of Helth*, 147-149.

¹⁸⁹ Boorde, *A Dyetary of Helth*, 256.

¹⁹⁰ Wright and Taylor quoted in Boorde, *A Dyetary of Helth*, 337-338.

¹⁹¹ Peter Clark estimates that double beer brewed during the Tudor period, a beer made by brewing with wort instead of water, was equal in strength to modern beers. Peter Clark, *The English Alehouse: A Social History, 1200-1830* (New York: Longman Group Limited, 1983), 98.

those vessels becomes strong and heady to the enticing of our people to drunkenness.”¹⁹²

This reinforces the manner in which the English deplored drunkenness and the loss of self-control. An anonymous sixteenth-century writer presents a sarcastic portrayal of a younger generation who lacked the ability to escape gluttony:

But how far we in these present daies are swarued from the vertues and temperance of our elders, I beleeeue there is no man so eloquent, no indued with such vtterance, as that he is able sufficientlie to expresse. For whereas they gae their minds to dowghtinesse, we applie ourselues to droonkennes: they had plenty with sufficiencie, we haue inordinate excesse with superfluitie: they were temperate, we effeminate; and so is the case now altered with vs, that he which can deuoure and drinke most, is the noblest man and most honest companion.¹⁹³

This aspect of drinking remained a constant struggle for both brewers and drinkers, as the English refused to give up a favorite drink, but did not want to succumb to the disgrace of drunkenness.

As ale brewers took centuries to establish themselves as a viable gild in London, they were not able to improve their social reputation in a quick or efficient manner; this was not the case for beer brewers who met greater success in a matter of decades, allowing them to hold a higher standing in the eyes of English society. Wealth led to greater influence, and foreign beer brewers were accustomed to such wealth and prestige in their native countries. In the mid-fifteenth century, when ale brewers finally began to gain greater influence over their trade and incorporated as a gild, beer brewing in Holland and Germany was a profitable industry.¹⁹⁴ Although ale brewers attempted to discredit the use of hops in brewing, and English authors such as Andrew Boorde stressed the

¹⁹² Quoted in Clark, *English Alehouse*, 98.

¹⁹³ Quoted in Boorde, *A Dyetary of Helth*, 259-260, n. 4.

¹⁹⁴ Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters*, 82.

deplorable qualities of the alien brewers, beer brewing grew into a viable industry by the mid-sixteenth century.

One aspect that differentiated beer brewers from ale brewers, and which might have aided the social standing of the foreign brewers, was the lack of women in beer brewing. At the time the ale brewers gained incorporation, about one-third of the gild members were women. Despite women's traditional prominent involvement in the English brewing trade, beer brewers almost exclusively hired men. If a beer brewer did hire a woman, he employed her to work as a servant and she would likely be the only woman working there. This kept male brewers separate from the negative reputation of women as tempters and encouragers of sinful behavior. Beer brewers could then establish their own reputation, despite the negatives tied to beer brewers from their foreign roots. English brewers who brewed beer, few as they were, took on this practice and only hired male servants as well, helping to push women out of industrial brewing in London.¹⁹⁵

The record of men who served as aldermen in London illustrates the ability of beer brewers to ascend the social ladder in a way unattained by ale brewers. By the mid to late seventeenth century, beer brewers established their dominance in London, and ale brewing became a practice carried out predominantly in the countryside. Brewers were not able to gain enough social acclaim to serve in high governmental positions, such as alderman, until the seventeenth century, indicating that the brewers who did serve as aldermen were beer, rather than ale, brewers. The overwhelming majority of brewers who served in the prestigious office did not do so until the mid-seventeenth century, with the only exception being Ralph Dodmer, who became an Alderman for the Queenhithe ward

¹⁹⁵ Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters*, 82-83.

in October of 1521. This is the earliest appearance of a brewer in this office, and another brewer does not appear in the records until Samuel Cranmer served for the Cripplegate ward in 1631.¹⁹⁶ The ability of beer brewers to gain governmental offices of this nature indicates that they attained a level of social prestige denied to ale brewers.

The state of ale brewing as a widespread, low-skill trade dominated by women did little for the social perception of brewers. Regular accusations of fraudulence, public displays of punishment, and problems associated with drunkenness caused ale brewers to gain a poor reputation that was difficult to shake. The presence of women caused society to view brewers as tempters who sought to harm an individual's piety. The problem of drinking among clerics and spiritual leaders also damaged social beliefs of drinking and drunkenness. These perceptions kept the ale brewers at a lower level of society, despite their role as providers of an essential commodity. Such factors did not apply to beer brewers, though, and because of their separation from ale brewers, they did not gain the same reputation. Although beer brewers had to face natural English opposition to foreigners, that connection did little to prevent beer brewers from eventually gaining wealth and social respect. By the seventeenth century, beer brewers obtained prestigious offices within London's government that ale brewers did not have an opportunity to enjoy. The higher social standing of beer brewers allowed the trade to flourish and grow into a greater industry, unlike ale brewers who continued to practice their trade in the countryside instead of the urban center of London.

¹⁹⁶ Alfred P. Beaven, *The Aldermen of the City of London – Temp. Henry III-1912*, (1912), list for all wards available online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/source.aspx?pubid=558>.

CHAPTER V

GOVERNMENTAL REGULATION OF ALE AND BEER

“Yet beer, they tell us, now will be
Much cheaper than before;
Still if they take the duty off,
In duty we drink more.”¹⁹⁷

The high demand for ale in England throughout the medieval and early modern period resulted in close governmental control of the lucrative trade. The regulation of ale began with the Assize of Bread and Ale in 1267, and through subsequent ale laws London officials managed to profit off local brewers for centuries. Dishonest brewers had to pay fines for breaking the ale laws, but honest brewers had to pay fines and taxes as well despite their adherence to the law. The system established by the Assize of Ale set ale prices based on the cost of grain, restricting the amount for which brewers could sell their goods, and government officials known as ale-tasters both ensured that all ale sold was of good quality and helped regulators keep track of all the practicing brewers. Regular presentments by the ale-tasters kept all London brewers under the close watch of the local government, and brewers regularly voiced their complaints against this tight

¹⁹⁷ Quoted in John Bickerdyke, *Curiosities of Ale and Beer: An Entertaining History* (1889; reprint, London: Spring Books, 1965), 119.

control.¹⁹⁸ The regulation of ale, while gradually changing over the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, faced a new and troublesome problem with the arrival of hopped beer in the fifteenth century. Government officials were familiar with the ale laws, but they saw beer as a completely different commodity that lacked regulation laws of its own. This led to beer brewers gaining direct control of their trade in a matter of decades, unlike ale brewers who struggled against close governmental regulation for centuries.

Although London officials sought to establish control over the new market in beer, the laws implemented did not initially share the same level of tight control as older ale laws. This unequal approach to regulation resulted in anger and resistance from ale brewers who had abided by the government's demands since the thirteenth century. The actions taken by London officials with regard to hopped beer further distinguished the ale market from its new competitor, which resulted in a boost to the beer trade and the decline of ale production.

Taxation was not a new condition for ale brewers to face; before the Assize of Bread and Ale, brewers regularly paid taxes to manorial lords or local governments. Manorial taxes on ale, known as a *tolsester*, varied in amount and required the brewer to send a portion of the freshly brewed ale to the lord. Ale brewers used the *tolsester* as a way to pay their rent on the manorial lands, or a way to pay the lord if the brewer borrowed the equipment used to make ale.¹⁹⁹ The origin of the *tolsester* is unclear; historian John Bickerdyke places the tax in the time of the Anglo-Saxons, but the records

¹⁹⁸ Judith Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters in England: Women's Work in a Changing World, 1300-1600* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 100-101.

¹⁹⁹ Bickerdyke, *Curiosities of Ale and Beer*, 35.

for the county of Wiltshire state it began around 1232, under the reign of Henry II.²⁰⁰ Outside of manorial *tolsesters*, ale brewers also had to pay town governments simply for the right to brew. Records from Winchester mention fees required only of the people who made ale. They state the brewers' names, as well as those who did not brew and did not have to pay. The rates fluctuated, and records show the profits made from fining brewers steadily dropped throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The tax averaged around 5 d. per brewer in the early thirteenth century, which earned the local government around 16 s.²⁰¹ The town's profit decreased in 1267, as the local government gathered 12 s. 11 d. By the beginning of Edward III's reign, around 1312, the overall earnings dropped to 6 s. 7 d.²⁰² While the cause of the fluctuation in the price of payments is uncertain, it shows how ale brewers had to deal with taxes through the form of ale or monetary payments.

Once demand for ale reached a level of national interest, Henry III put forth the Assize of Bread and Ale in 1267 to ensure that a steady supply of quality ale would always be available. The Assize set the price of specific ale measurements based on the cost of grain. It would remain the dominant law over the ale trade until the end of the

²⁰⁰ Bickerdyke, *The Curiosities of Ale and Beer*, 35; Elizabeth Crittall and R.B. Pugh, eds., *A History of the County of Wiltshire: Volume Three* (1956), under "Houses of Gilbertine canons: Priory of St Margaret, Marlborough," available online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=36543>. Examples of a *tolsester* include a manor in Tidenham which required an eight-gallon payment, one in Gloucestershire that called for a fourteen-gallon payment, and one in Coventry set at sixteen gallons.

²⁰¹ One shilling [s.] was equal to twelve pence [d.], or pennies. Before the outbreak of plague in the thirteenth century, an average male worker made around one and one-half to two pence a day. Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters*, 6.

²⁰² William Page, ed., *A History of the County of Hampshire: Volume Five* (1912), under "Winchester: The Ancient Custom," available online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=42049>.

sixteenth century.²⁰³ As bread and ale contained similar ingredients and both served as staples in the English diet, the law grouped the two trades together. The importance of bread and ale to peasants caused the upper class to fear possible riots if either provision ran out.²⁰⁴ The Assize set the price of ale so all members of society could afford the brew. The law stated, “whan the quarter of whete is sold for iii s. or for iii s. iv d... than the brewers in the cities maye selle ii gallons of good ale for i d. and in the borowghes iii gallons for i d.”²⁰⁵ The price standards changed with the cost of grain, which is one of the reasons why the government periodically reissued the Assize. The measures state the government would revise the Assize if the price of grain fell or rose above six pence in price. The government expected every brewer in England to learn and abide by the Assize. Those who did not faced legal punishment through fines or public humiliation in the pillory or on a cucking stool.²⁰⁶

From the Assize’s initial appearance, brewers frequently broke the ale laws in order to obtain higher personal profits. Literary works reflect the most common ways brewers broke the Assize. Poet William Langland’s *Piers Plowman* features a female brewer who sold her ale by false measure, cheating her customers. This deceptive brewster also mixed “penny,” or weak ale, with “pudding,” or strong ale, but she still

²⁰³ H.A. Monckton, *A History of English Ale and Beer* (Toronto: The Bodley Head, 1966), 48.

²⁰⁴ Richard Unger, *Beer in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 211. While brewing and baking shared similar ties, English bakers already had a royal charter and an official guild by the time Henry III introduced the Assize of Bread and Ale. The brewers did not receive their own royal charter or the status of incorporation until 1438.

²⁰⁵ Anon., *The Assise of bread and ale, and dyuers other thynges as appereth on the other syde of the leafe* (London: Thomas Berthelet, 1532), 4.

²⁰⁶ Anon., *Assise*, 4-5. See chapter four for a discussion of punishments levied on law-breaking brewers.

charged her customers the standard price for a stronger brew. The brewster also kept the best ale for herself, while reserving the weakened drink for the public.²⁰⁷

As brewers continued to break the Assize, local governments released stricter versions of the law to remind brewers of their legal obligation. City and town governments enforced the Assize of Ale as administrative systems grew more structured.²⁰⁸ Bristol developed its own regulatory law over ale in 1276. The wording of the Bristol Assize of Ale indicates worry among town leaders that brewers would not follow the law. The Assize states, “[T]he mayor and Commonalty of the town of Bristol fear that they [brewers] will be severely punished unless the assize... be strictly observed.”²⁰⁹ The Bristol Assize of Ale emphasized the repercussions facing any brewer caught breaking the law. Guilty brewers caught by officials not only faced fines and public ridicule, but they also risked losing their breweries, as well as the ability to engage in the trade completely.²¹⁰

Although the Assize of Ale did not establish an open tax on brewers, those who did not break the ale laws still had to pay required fines for engaging in the practice of ale production. Richard Unger sums up the process, stating, “Few people avoided violating the regulations, so governments charged almost everyone who made beer in England, in effect turning regulation into taxation of brewing.”²¹¹ This practice was possible through

²⁰⁷ William Langland, *The Book Concerning Piers the Plowman*, Donald and Rachel Attwater, trans. and eds. (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co. Inc., 1957), 38-39.

²⁰⁸ Monckton, *English Ale and Beer*, 49.

²⁰⁹ Quoted in Monckton, *English Ale and Beer*, 50-1. The original quote appears in the *Little Red Book of Bristol*; Salzman, L.F., *English Industries of the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), 287.

²¹⁰ Monckton, *English Ale and Beer*, 51.

²¹¹ Unger, *Beer in the Middle Ages*, 41.

the employment of ale-tasters. Each city created its own laws concerning the appointment and role of the ale-taster. This administrative office persisted for several centuries; the local governments of Friern Barnet in Middlesex, Steyning in Sussex, and Walsall in Staffordshire all kept the office of the ale-taster until the eighteenth or nineteenth century.²¹² Ale-tasters were typically men of some rank or merit; their duties consisted of upholding the national Assize, as well as any local ordinances that regulated the quality and price of ale.²¹³ A brewer could not legally sell any ale unless it received the taster's approval. Brewers used an ale-stake to notify ale-tasters that a batch of ale was ready for sale.²¹⁴ Since scientific methods of checking the quality of ale did not exist, ale-tasters determined if the ale was ready by examining the level of sugar present in the brew. To do this, the ale-taster poured a small amount of the fresh ale onto a bench until it pooled. The ale-taster, wearing leather breeches, sat in the ale and waited until it dried before

²¹² T.F.T. Baker and C.R. Elrington, eds., *A History of the County of Middlesex, Volume Six* (1980), under "Local Government," available online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=22494>; T.P. Hudson, ed., *A History of the County of Sussex, Volume Six, Part One* (1980), under "Local Government and Public Service," available online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=18257>; M.W. Greenslade, ed., *A History of the County of Stafford, Volume Seventeen* (1976), under "Local Government," available online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=36194>.

²¹³ Reginald R. Sharpe, ed., *The Calendar of Letter Books Preserved Among the Archives of the Corporation of the City of London at the Guildhall: Letter Book H* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1907), folio cclvi, available online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=33480>.

²¹⁴ Clark, *The English Alehouse*, 28-29; Monckton, *English Ale and Beer*, 54. Brewers placed ale-stakes over an outside door as the signal to ale-tasters, but this practice led to the development of a particular problem. Complaints over ale-stakes arose in 1375 London, as some of the poles extended too far over into the king's highway, creating a troublesome and unwanted obstacle. This resulted in legislation that required all ale-stakes remain under seven feet in length.

standing. If the ale-taster's breeches stuck to the bench whenever he stood, it meant too much sugar remained, showing the ale had not completely fermented.²¹⁵

If an ale-taster came across poorly brewed ale, local laws gave him the ability to set the appropriate price for the brew based on his own intuition. The oath of ale-tasters, recorded in London's *Calendar of Letter Books*, outlines this legal right of ale-tasters: "And if hit [ale] be nat good and able to... [be sold at] seid pris ye shall be... [allowed by] your alderman [to set] on a resonable pris after your discrecion."²¹⁶ The oath goes on to forbid ale-tasters from taking any bribes, or from protecting any brewers should the ale fail to meet the proper standards.²¹⁷ Ale-tasters made bi-annual reports on all the brewers under their jurisdiction to the local governing body known as the frankpledge. The ale-tasters distinguished between those who brewed honestly, and those who brewed dishonestly and were in need of punishment.²¹⁸ Yet, in the ale-tasters' report, he provided the names of all the brewers under his watch, and it was based on this report that officials applied the *de facto* tax to all brewers, honest or not.²¹⁹

Along with setting the price of ale, the English government also regulated the size and cost of serving measurements. The London Aldermen only allowed three measurements for selling ale: the quart, the pottle, and the gallon.²²⁰ An Assize from 1277 declares that, "no brewster henceforth sell except by true measures, viz. the gallon,

²¹⁵ Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters*, 4; Monckton, *English Ale and Beer*, 53.

²¹⁶ Sharpe, ed., *Letter Book D*, folio xciii b, available online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=33082>.

²¹⁷ Sharpe, ed., *Letter Book D*, folio xciii b.

²¹⁸ Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters*, 4.

²¹⁹ Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters*, 103; Clark, *The English Alehouse*, 28

²²⁰ A pottle measured around one-half of a gallon.

the pottle and the quart. And that they be marked by the seal of the Alderman.”²²¹ The law required all brewers to have their quart, pottle, and gallon containers inspected by an Alderman four times a year.²²² If a brewer brought any container to the Alderman that did not meet the measurement standard – the wooden serving containers shrank over time – the Alderman destroyed the vessel. Brewers who neglected to present their measures to the Aldermen had to pay a monetary fine.²²³

H.A. Monckton quotes a section of the *Liber Albus* that lists the punishments for any brewer caught serving ale in a measurement that did not have the seal of an Alderman. According to the *Liber Albus*, those caught breaking the laws of appropriate measurements faced a fine of forty pence and the destruction of the brewer’s measures for the first offense. The punishments increased for multiple offenses: “The second time let her be amerced to the amount of half a mark. And the third time, let her be amerced to the amount of twenty shillings.”²²⁴ As the government reissued the Assize of Ale, the punishments for breaking the law became harsher. A proclamation from 1316 set the cost of one gallon of ale at three farthings and one penny for the city of London.²²⁵ Any brewer caught breaking the ale law lost her brewery for the first offense, and she lost

²²¹ Sharpe, ed., *Letter Book A*, folio 129 b, available online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=33031>.

²²² Monckton, *English Ale and Beer*, 57.

²²³ Monckton, *English Ale and Beer*, 57-58.

²²⁴ Monckton, *English Ale and Beer*, 56-7. The feminine form appears in this declaration because women made up the majority of brewers during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. A half-mark was equal to six shillings and eight pence.

²²⁵ A farthing was equal to a quarter of a penny. The price for a gallon of ale cost 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ pence.

access to engage in the trade completely for the second offense. For the third offense, the guilty party faced exile from the city.²²⁶

As the English government tightened its control over the brewing trade through the Assize, problems between brewers and local authority figures developed during the fourteenth century. On May 19, 1350, Adam le Brewere proclaimed before both the Mayor and the Sheriffs of London that brewers deserved exemption from the Alderman's regulation and control. Adam states that he intended to "gather together the brewers, and they would agree not to take service except by day only and at the wage of 12d. [pence] a day."²²⁷ Adam's threat to halt the availability of ale to the public resulted in his imprisonment, as, according to the Alderman, his demands directly displayed contempt for the King and the commonwealth of the people.²²⁸

Other brewers openly challenged and made threats in public and in the Mayor's Court against ale taxation caused by the Assize. In 1375, a brewer named Simon Macchyng declared that the brewers of London "would or could not observe the recent proclamation" of the Assize, which put in him prison.²²⁹ Like Simon, Thomas Goudsyre also faced charges of imprisonment in the same year for refusing to sell a gallon of ale at

²²⁶ Sharpe, ed., *Letter Book E*, folio lvii, available online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=33100>.

²²⁷ A.H. Thomas, ed., *Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls Preserved Among the Archives of the Corporation of the City of London at the Gildhall: Rolls A1a-A9, A.D. 1323-1364, Volume I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926), roll A6, membr. 5b, available online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=36660>. Although wages increased following the outbreak of bubonic plague, Le Brewere's demand of 12 d. is particularly high.

²²⁸ Thomas, ed., *Plea and Memoranda Rolls: Vol. I*, roll A6, membr. 5b.

²²⁹ A.H. Thomas, ed., *Calendar of the Plea and Memoranda Rolls of the City of London: Volume II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1929), roll A21, membr. 3b, available online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=36685>.

the legal price.²³⁰ In 1364, brewer William de Assheford openly insulted the previous Mayor of London, Stephen Cavendyssh, in the presence of the sitting Mayor. William claimed that Cavendyssh “committed extortions on the brewers of the City whilst seeing that the Assize of Beer was duly kept.”²³¹ For his actions, William received a prison sentence for one year. Additional incidents included an unnamed brewer who threatened a government official with violence when the official attempted to check the brewer’s ale measures.²³² Another troublesome brewer named William Ronyn made a public declaration in a market place in November of 1375 that he and all other brewers of London would stop brewing due to the price set by the Assize.²³³ William faced additional charges for carrying out his threat, as he convinced a portion of the brewers to cease production or refuse the price of the Assize.²³⁴

Ale brewers made up a unique area of England’s economy during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Due to the wide practice of the trade and the high demand for ale, the English government regulated brewing more than most other crafts. While brewing and baking shared a similar importance, the early thirteenth-century formation of the Bakers’ Guild provided bakers with a greater advantage than brewers. Bakers faced public humiliation for providing small loaves of bread, as did other craftsmen caught breaking the law by short-changing their customers, including brewers. Unlike brewers,

²³⁰ Thomas, ed., *Plea and Memoranda Rolls: Vol. II*, roll A21, membr. 3b, available online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=36685>.

²³¹ Thomas, ed., *Plea and Memoranda Rolls: Vol. I*, roll A9, membr. 2b, available online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=36663>.

²³² Thomas, ed., *Plea and Memoranda Rolls: Vol. I*, roll A9, membr. 2b, available online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=36663>.

²³³ The price of ale during listed in the record at this time was 1 ½ d. per gallon.

²³⁴ Thomas, ed., *Plea and Memoranda Rolls: Vol. II*, roll A21, membr. 3b, available online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=36685>.

however, neither bakers nor members of other trade guilds had to pay fines in order to engage in their ordinary work. Instead, the English government left guilds largely to control their respective industries themselves.²³⁵ Other craftsmen could freely manufacture goods in accordance with the law, but brewers had to pay standard fees simply because they made ale. The government regulated brewing more because it wanted to ensure the public had access to ale, but also because of the profits gained by taxing ale brewers.²³⁶

Although government officials closely regulated the ale brewing trade, brewers formed into professional groups in order to have greater say over the way the trade operated. The Mystery of Free Brewers within the City, founded in 1342, worked to supervise the production of ale and the actions of brewers in London. Despite the greater organization of brewers within the trade, the overall reputation of those involved in brewing remained low in comparison to other craftsmen. This resulted in open conflict with London officials, especially during the term of Richard Whittington, who served as Mayor of London in 1419. The brewers had attempted to work well with previous mayors in hopes of favorable treatment in return, but this approach did not work with Whittington, who held a personal dislike for the ale brewers in London. Whittington regularly accused the brewers of selling ale at false measure, as well as forestalling malt in the countryside.²³⁷ For these accusations, Whittington regularly charged brewers fines

²³⁵ Salzman, *English Industries of the Middle Ages*, 313-15.

²³⁶ Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters*, 47; Salzman, *English Industries in the Middle Ages*, 297. Brewers remained below the ranks of other guilds, because an overall social perception that brewers were public servants existed at the time.

²³⁷ The Statute of Forestallers (*Statuta de Forstallariis*) c. 1300 states: "And also Forestallers, that buy any thing afore the due and accustomed hour ["hour which is due and appointed in the Town"?] against the good state and regulation of the town and

that ranged upwards of £20, and when the brewers refused to pay the fines, Whittington had the brewers imprisoned. Whittington's disdain for the Mystery of Brewers apparently resulted from his having taken offense at the brewers exceeding their social standing by feasting on fat swans while honoring St. Martin.²³⁸

Richard Whittington was the only Mayor of London to take such a hostile stance against the mystery of brewers, and outside of Whittington's term as Mayor, the mystery managed to maintain a growing level of control over the brewing trade in London. In 1406, the brewers presented a petition to the Mayor and Aldermen of London requesting greater oversight into the production of ale, asking specifically for eight members of the mystery "to rule the mistery and exercise assay, search, and survey over all who brew ale within the franchise of the City to sell by wholesale or retail."²³⁹ The brewers also asked in the petition for the right to oversee all who brew and make reports to the Chamberlain of the Gildhall regarding those who served ale by false measure, taking on an activity that government officials had managed since the issuing of the first Assize of Ale. The most telling aspect of the petition is the brewers' request to survey all the barley brought into London for sale, and to limit the production of ale to those belonging to the mystery,

market, or that pass out of the town to meet such things as come to the market, and buy outside of the town, to the intent that they may sell the same in the town more dearly, that utter it more dear than they would that brought it, in case they had come to the town or market. And their names shall be presented distinctly and openly, and they be amerced for every default, or to be judged to the Tumbrel, if they forestall contrary to the statute." A. Luders, ed., *The Statutes of the Realm: Printed by Command of His Majesty King George the Third, in Pursuance of an Address of the House of Commons of Great Britain, From Original Records and Authentic Manuscripts, Volume I* (London: Record Commission, 1810), 202 available online at <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/forestall.html>.

²³⁸ Bickerdyke, *Curiosities of Ale and Beer*, 134-136; George Unwin, *The Guilds and the Companies of London* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1964), 232-235.

²³⁹ Sharpe, ed., *Letter Book I*, folio lii, available online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=33678>.

indicating that they sought to establish a monopoly on the London ale trade regardless of the long history of strict government regulation. The Mayor and Aldermen granted the mystery its petition, on the condition that the wardens and masters of the mystery operate the industry correctly, or else face punishment from the Aldermen of London. With the granting of this petition, the ale brewers of London gained the right to monitor everyone who brewed and the importation of barley into the city, and they also gained the right to place limits on who could engage in brewing ale for retail. For those caught breaking the ale laws, it became the mystery, not the government officials, who doled out fines and punishments.²⁴⁰

Despite the early formation of guilds for other trades, and the rise of the Mystery of Free Brewers, ale brewers did not officially gain incorporation as a guild until 1438.²⁴¹ The nature of brewing and the slow consolidation of the trade, in conjunction with the strict governmental regulation, caused this delay in the formation of an ale brewers' guild. The early guild included a wide variety of laborers and craftsmen, including several ale-wives who engaged in the trade regularly on the domestic and by-industrial level, as well as bakers, hucksters, and cooks. With the incorporation of the brewers' guild in 1438, accomplished by the payment of £141 to the king, the guild took steps to control the

²⁴⁰ Sharpe, ed., *Letter Book I*, folio lii, available online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=33678>.

²⁴¹ Several trades received official incorporation during the fourteenth century under the reign of Edward III, almost a full century before ale brewers gained their own guild. Before incorporated, the Mystery of Free Brewers lacked a royal charter and was therefore not a guild.

production of ale completely.²⁴² Although the gild allowed the company greater oversight of ale production, the government did not relinquish all of its control over the ale trade.

The introduction of hops and the appearance of beer on the English market affected the strength of governmental regulation over brewing. After beer became popular throughout England, the government became aware of the need for change, since the Assize no longer applied to a growing population of brewers. Henry VI attempted to establish regulation over beer in 1441, by employing Richard Lounde and William Veysy as “Searchers of Berebrewers.” The record does not state what their exact task was, but the King called on the Sheriffs of London to assist the men in their work.²⁴³

Unfortunately for the King, Lounde and Veysy knew little about brewing and they failed to exert any noticeable influence over the beer trade.²⁴⁴ By 1464, beer brewers petitioned the Mayor of London asking for incorporation into a separate gild from the ale brewers. The beer brewers pointed out the lack of regulation throughout the trade, and asked for control over any business tied to beer brewing. The proposal states:

But as for bruers of Bere as yet beene none Ordenaunces nor Rules by youre auctorites made for the comon wele of the saide Citee... that no manne nether Freman nor foreyn take upon hym to brewe any Bere or sill any Bere w^lin the Citee aforesaide or brew Bere out of this Citee and sil it unto any personne of the saide Citee to be dronke [within].²⁴⁵

The petition gained approval from the Mayor, establishing a beer brewing gild, which controlled the beer trade as a separate entity in London completely on its own.²⁴⁶

²⁴² Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters*, 62.

²⁴³ Sharpe, ed., *Letter Book K*, folio 202, available online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=33726>.

²⁴⁴ Monckton, *English Ale and Beer*, 67.

²⁴⁵ Sharpe, ed., *Letter Book L*, folio 30, available online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=33642>.

²⁴⁶ Monckton, *English Ale and Beer*, 69.

The sudden rise of a beer brewers' gild led to reactions of anger among ale brewers, who had worked to repress the growing popularity of beer consumption in London since hopped beer first appeared. A writ passed in 1436, shortly before the ale brewers gained incorporation, sought to put down the practice of brewing hopped beer in London, and the ale brewers regularly emphasized the dangers associated with hops. The ale brewers stated that hopped beer, or "Biere," was a dangerous drink and that hops were poisonous to consume; these attacks against beer brewers especially emphasized the fact that most beer brewers were not natives to England but came from Holland or Zeeland.²⁴⁷ The attacks on foreign brewers resulted in the closure of several alien-operated breweries, but due to Holland's support of England's defense of Calais, for which the alien beer brewers of London contributed more money than the native ale brewers, Henry VI issued a writ to the Sheriffs of London in 1436 calling for the protection of beer breweries. The writ forbade "the molestation of Flemish merchants and others in the City who had taken an oath of allegiance to the King, and ordering the arrest of those found acting to the contrary."²⁴⁸ With governmental protection, beer brewing managed to flourish to such a successful level that the beer brewers gained their own gild less than thirty years after attacks by ale brewers threatened to eliminate their industry.

As the producers of hopped beer largely consisted of foreigners, English ale brewers took particular offense to the invasion of hops into their trade. Ale brewers lauded the long history of ale brewing in England, and they proclaimed, in the words of

²⁴⁷ Thomas, ed., *Plea and Memoranda Rolls: Vol. II*, roll A 17, 132-149, available online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=36681>; Sharpe, ed., *Letter Book K*, folio 161, available at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=33722>.

²⁴⁸ Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters*, 80; Sharpe, ed., *Letter Book K*, folio 161b, available online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=33722>.

Andrew Boorde, that “Ale for an Englysshe man is a naturall drynke.”²⁴⁹ Despite the successful rise of beer brewers, ale brewers persisted in their resistance against hops through the seventeenth century in an attempt to preserve their trade. John Taylor’s proclamation of ale’s superiority in 1653 illustrates the longevity of the ale brewers’ disdain for beer brewers. Taylor emphasizes the long history of ale brewing, and its consumption by royalty throughout the ages, stating, “Ale is of that Venerable, and Reverend esteeme, that the most Worthy, Wisest and Wealthiest Senators are called Aldermen; for there is Sage Ale, and to bee Sage, is to bee Grave and Wise; and by drinking Sage Ale, the Wisemen of Greece were called the seven Sages.”²⁵⁰ When Taylor reaches the subject of hopped beer, he refers to the drink as a “Dutch Boorish Liquor” and readily makes proclamations regarding the sinful nature of hops. Taylor refers to beer as a usurper of ale’s proper place as England’s favored drink, and he emphasizes that ale-houses, though they sell beer, are not known as “beer-houses,” which he apparently considers an indication of ale’s superiority. Taylor later continues with his railings against hopped beer by stating that, unlike ale, beer contained no medicinal value, with the exception of warmed beer and butter serving as a useful remedy for a traveler’s weary feet.²⁵¹

As a way to distinguish between ale and beer production, the city of London passed laws establishing the appropriate ingredients for both brews. In April of 1481, the Ale Brewers of London petitioned the Mayor and the Aldermen calling for a clear and legal separation between ale and beer, stating:

²⁴⁹ Boorde, *A Dyetary of Helth*, 256.

²⁵⁰ John Taylor, *Ale Ale-vated into the Ale-titude: Or, A Learned Oration before a Civill Assembly of Ale-drinkers* (London, 1653), 8.

²⁵¹ Taylor, *Ale-vated*, 11, 15.

“No maner of persone of what craft condicion or degree he be occupying the craft or fete of bruyng of ale wtin the saide Citee or libertie thereof from hensfurth occupie or put or do or suffre to be occupied or put in any ale or licour whereof ale shalbe made or in the wirkyng and bruyng of any maner of ale any hoppes herbes or other like thing but onely licour malt and yeste,” under penalty prescribed.²⁵²

The Mayor granted the ale brewers their petition, causing ale and beer to become two entities in the eyes of government officials, and especially in the eyes of the ale brewers’ gild. From 1481, no ale brewer could include hops in his or her brew, or the brewer would face direct punishment from the gild. This action shows that the ale brewers, despite the enduring presence of hopped beer in London, refused to acknowledge or take advantage of the benefits brewing with hops presented their market. Instead, ale brewers reinforced the notion that ale was not beer, simply because it did not include the single additive of hops. Ultimately, this refusal by ale brewers to use hops led to an overall decline in the industry as English taste buds adapted to the new bitter taste of beer, and the preserving qualities of hopped beer allowed beer brewers to export their product much farther and on a greater scale than ale brewers ever could.²⁵³

Although ale brewers attempted to degrade their hops-using counterparts, beer brewers gained greater control over the beer brewing trade in a similar manner to the way that ale brewers had achieved more control over their own trade at the beginning of the fifteenth century. In an ordinance to the Mayor and Aldermen of London in September of 1493, the beer brewers petitioned for the right to search and survey all grain, malt, and hops used in beer brewing, as well as the vessels used, every four months to ensure quality products went into hopped beer. This petition, which the Mayor granted to the

²⁵² Sharpe, ed., *Letter Book L*, folio 195-195b, available online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=33658>. “Licour” used here refers to water.

²⁵³ Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters*, 85-86.

beer brewers, shows that by the end of the fifteenth century, the government viewed ale and beer as completely separate, furthering the competition between the two trades in London.²⁵⁴

As the Beer Brewers' Guild obtained more control and influence over their trade, they were not immune to governmental regulation. In 1517, the wardens of the Brewers' Company ran into trouble with the government when the wardens refused to produce their records kept on fines. This action occurred in response to frequent complaints from beer drinkers who claimed they did not receive the full measure paid for; this shows that the problems concerning false measure did not subside. The complaint states, "[T]hynhabitants of the City paye for more ale and bere than they doo receive, which is agenst alle good reason and conscience."²⁵⁵ When the wardens neglected to fulfill the government's request for the books of recorded fines, city officials called for the arrest and imprisonment of the wardens. In response, the wardens immediately produced the requested books, but the men did not escape punishment as an appointed committee investigated the wardens to determine if the men were fit for office.²⁵⁶

With the rise of a Beer Brewers' Guild, and a change in the palate of English drinkers, beer began to replace ale as the preferred brew by the sixteenth century. Ale brewers continued to make and sell their un-hopped brew, but beer gained the upper hand in urban centers and among the elite. In John Grove's humorous seventeenth-century dialogue between wine, beer, ale, and tobacco, the different characters contend against

²⁵⁴ Sharpe, ed., *Letter Book L*, folio 303b-304, available online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=33666>.

²⁵⁵ Bickerdyke, *Curiosities of Ale and Beer*, 143.

²⁵⁶ Bickerdyke, *Curiosities of Ale and Beer*, 143.

each other for superiority. Wine represents a gentleman, while beer serves as a citizen of a city, and ale is the countryman. The dialogue begins with an argument between wine and beer over which is the superior drink, and neither gives ale much consideration until ale claims to be greater than both wine and beer, leading to greater contention between the beverages. Neither wine nor beer have many positive remarks for ale, which they call “O base Ale... O muddy Ale,” and beer persists in such insults, stating, “If you looke thus ilfauouredly Ale, you may fright men well enough, and be held terrible by weake stomacks; but if you call to mind the... valour of Beere, invincible Beere.”²⁵⁷ Eventually, the characters make peace, with the urging of water and sugar, and all sing a song that epitomizes the changing trend in early modern English drinking habits:

Wine, I loniall Wine exhilar ate the heart.
Beere, March Beere is drinke for a King.
Ale, But Ale, bonny Ale, with Spice and Tost,
In the Morning’s a daintie thing.

Then let us be merry, wash sorrow away,
Wine, Beere, and Ale, shall be drunke today.

Wine, I generous Wine, am for the Court.
Beere, the Citie calls for Beere.
Ale, But Ale, bonny ale, like a Lord of the Soyle,
In the Countrey shall domineere.²⁵⁸

Even though the inhabitants of London developed a preference for beer over ale, the market remained dominated by foreign brewers. The Privy Council of London estimated in 1585 that half of the beer brewers in the city were foreign residents. An earlier survey, conducted in 1574, reflected similar results pertaining to beer brewers, but in its examination of ale brewers, all were native to England. The dominance of alien

²⁵⁷ John Grove, *Wine, Beere, Ale, and Tobacco: Contending for Superiority, A Dialogue*, (London: 1630), no pagination.

²⁵⁸ Grove, *Wine, Beere, Ale, and Tobacco*.

influence in the beer brewing trade persisted throughout the sixteenth century; whether this was due to the understanding that beer was a drink for the Dutch or Flemish man and must be prepared by one of them, or due to ignorance among English brewers of how to prepare hopped beer, is not certain.²⁵⁹ The distinction in nationalities helped keep ale brewing a separate entity from beer brewing, and certain English brewers continued to see beer brewers as foreign invaders of England and a direct threat to ale brewers. Even after the guilds of ale brewers and beer brewers reconciled during the reign of Edward VI, native ale brewers continued to resist the damaging influence of beer on the ale trade. A petition presented to the House of Commons in 1700 illustrates a late complaint against the beer trade, and makes several requests that essentially demand the end of the beer trade in London. The petition focuses on the difference in funds received by beer and ale brewers, with beer brewers obtaining greater profits over ale brewers. The petitioners state, “to make the Barrels of Beer and Ale equal, and the Allowances the same, will be the Ruine of most Beer-Brewers in the Country.”²⁶⁰ The demands made in the petition appear to be a feeble attempt to restore ale to the level of beer, the popularity of which well surpassed that of the traditional brew by that point. In spite of the complaints, beer became the dominant brewed beverage in England by the end of the seventeenth century.

As mentioned, the separate guilds of ale and beer brewed merged during the reign of Edward VI. The reason behind the sudden change is not clear, but it is certain that by the mid-sixteenth century, beer brewing produced the superior commodity and was in greater demand than ale. The union occurred initially as an unofficial move, as neither guild approached London officials concerning the change. This act resulted in anger

²⁵⁹ Bennett, *Brewsters*, 81-82.

²⁶⁰ Anon., *The Case of the Common Brewers* (London: 1700), no pagination.

among the city leaders, and both guilds received punishment for the unsanctioned merger. In 1552, the city passed ordinances against the beer and ale brewers' guilds, barring any member of the Beer Brewers' Guild from serving on the Common Council, and forbidding any new members to be admitted to the Ale Brewers' Guild. The officials of London strictly forbade the union between the two guilds, a situation which persisted until 1556 when both ale and beer brewers humbly petitioned the Common Council for union, and the Council consented.²⁶¹

The union between ale and beer brewers signified beer's ultimate success over the ale trade. The inclusion of hops in the brewing process produced a beverage of high quality, greater sustainability, and better marketability than ale. The arrival of alien beer brewers presented a challenge to both ale brewers and regulators, since the new product presented a multitude of opportunities ale did not: greater chances for export, higher levels of output, and a stronger brew that English palates eventually adapted to and preferred. Government officials initially did not know how to approach the regulation of beer, but the trade in London received explicit protection from the King when the native ale brewers threatened to eliminate the new commercial threat. With legal protection, beer brewers received incorporation as a guild in a matter of a few decades, where the ale brewers took several centuries to organize. After becoming a guild, beer brewers kept regulation of their trade largely under their own control, and they even attempted to flout the demands of the government on occasion. Less than a century after the beer brewers obtained their own guild, the two separate guilds came together, signifying ale's ultimate defeat by hopped beer.

²⁶¹ Bickerdyke, *Curiosities*, 143-44.

CHAPTER VI

DOMINANCE OF HOPPED BEER IN LONDON

“You Ale I remit to the Countrie
As more fit to liue where you were bred...
[I]f you come into the Citie, you may be drunke with pleasure
But neuer come into the fashion.”²⁶²

Once beer brewing became an established trade in London by the sixteenth century, ale brewers found themselves defending a dying industry. While brewing itself did not slow, the preference of London drinkers, as well as the English army, for beer caused the overall demand for ale to dwindle. Although beer brewing gained in popularity, English brewers were slow to pick up the practice of brewing with hops. A survey taken in 1585, over a century after the arrival of hopped beer, showed that over half of the beer brewers in London were still aliens.²⁶³ Beer brewing required more equipment, as well as greater knowledge and skill on the part of the brewer, and was more labor intensive, which might have deterred English brewers who were more familiar with ale’s traditional simplicity. As beer brewing advanced in London, ale production moved to the countryside and more writings by the English, including works by Reginald Scot and William Harrison, denounced ale as they praised hopped beer. The

²⁶² Quoted in John Grove, *Wine, Beere, Ale, and Tobacco: Contending for Superiority, A Dialogue*, (London: 1630), no pagination.

²⁶³ Peter Clark, *The English Alehouse: A Social History, 1200-1830* (New York: Longman Group Limited, 1983), 97.

use of hops not only allowed for the improvement of technology that set the foundation for industrial growth within brewing, but it also helped London become the center of European brewing by the end of the sixteenth century.

English ale brewers found themselves in a difficult position by the sixteenth century; beer brewing was an established business in London and its customer base was continuously growing larger. By the 1560s, the majority of London guilds drank beer instead of ale at their annual banquets and meals, and beer had become the preferred drink of the gentry and nobility.²⁶⁴ The high demand for brewed beverages was a constant in England since the outbreak of plague in the mid-fourteenth century, but ale brewers simply could not meet the demand as beer brewers could. The volatile state of ale made it unable to travel far, restricting the overall ability of ale brewers to export their goods. The inability of ale brewers to produce quantities of ale on the same level as beer brewers caused the ale market to fall behind.²⁶⁵ These challenges provided an advantage to beer brewers who could produce beer at a level that met the demand from the English market. William Harrison discussed the preference English nobles had for beer in his *Description of England* written in 1577; Harrison states, “The beer that is used at noblemen’s tables in their fixed and standing houses is commonly a year old... Our drink, whose force and continuance is partly touched already, is made of barley, water, and hops, sodden and mingled together, by the industry of our brewers in a certain exact proportion.”²⁶⁶ Beer

²⁶⁴ Judith Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters in England: Women’s Work in a Changing World, 1300-1600* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 29; Richard W. Unger, *Beer in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 81.

²⁶⁵ Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters*, 85.

²⁶⁶ Harrison quoted in Frank A. King, *Beer Has a History* (New York: Hutchinson’s Scientific and Technical Publications, 1957), 65.

could satisfy not only the thirsty inhabitants of London, but men and women across England, which helped the hopped beverage gain a level of favor that allowed it to supplant English ale.

The lower levels of output only aided to the difficulties and expenses of ale brewing, and it served as a convincing factor for brewers and consumers of beer's superiority. In brewing ale, one bushel of malt typically produced around eight gallons of ale, but in brewing beer, one bushel of malt resulted in around eighteen or twenty gallons of beer.²⁶⁷ A survey of the food supply in London taken in 1574 showed the greater amounts of beer brewers could produce. The inquiry states:

More since [M]ichaelmas last bought and provided by the brewers 62,548 quarters of all sorts of gryane, whereof spent in brewings synce Michaelmas last in malt 52,000 quarters, more in wheate to brewe stronge beere 5,200 quarters, remayning in there garneres of malt 1,681 quarters, wheat remayning in there garneres to brewe the said stronge beere 148 quarters.²⁶⁸

This survey showed that beer brewers were capable of brewing about four times as much beer as ale brewers could make ale in a week. Despite the added cost beer brewing carried through more equipment and the extra cost of hops, the overall cost of production remained lower for beer brewers due to the greater level of output. These circumstances allowed brewers to keep their prices considerably cheaper. In 1418, ale supplied to the English army while they fought in France cost 30 s. per tun, but when the army began to receive beer, the cost was 13 s. 6 d. per tun. As the demand for beer increased, beer brewers steadily began to raise their prices, and by the mid-sixteenth century, ale and beer prices were roughly the same. This increased the overall profit beer brewers

²⁶⁷ Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters*, 85-86.

²⁶⁸ King, *Beer Has a History*, 65.

received, for the cost of beer production did not change, and ale brewers continued to pay higher prices to brew.²⁶⁹

While the cost of brewing was generally higher for ale brewers, beer brewers did have to pay for extra equipment and supplies, and that made ale brewers hesitant to take up brewing with hops. The use of hops presented an extra cost that ale brewers did not have to pay. Reginald Scot states in his sixteenth-century guide to growing hops that “three poundes of these hopes will largely serve for the bruing of one quarter of mault. One hundreth poundes of these hopes, are commonly worth xxvi s. viii d.”²⁷⁰ Unless grown by the brewer, hops had to be bought, and they were not cheap. In spite of this factor, the cost of the overall production of beer brewing offset the cost of additional supplies. Judith Bennett provides the example of Marion Harrison, wife of William Harrison, and the prices she paid to brew beer. For the malt, Marion paid 10s., for spices 2d., for wood 4s., and for the hops she paid 20d. Bennett estimates that the extra cost incurred by brewing specifically beer was an extra 2s. and 20d. for the wood and the hops, but in brewing beer, Marion produced more than double what she might in brewing ale, averaging around twenty gallons per bushel of malt.²⁷¹

These extra costs served as a deterrent for ale brewers who hesitated to invest extra money in an unfamiliar trade. Moving from the ale trade to the beer trade required the brewer to buy extra tools, more vats and holding containers for the beer while it sat in

²⁶⁹ Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters*, 85-86.

²⁷⁰ Reginald Scot, *A Perfite Platform of a Hoppe Garden* (London: 1574), 5.

²⁷¹ Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters*, 86. Bennett explains that about twenty five percent of the total cost Marion paid for her materials were solely for boiling water, which is necessary in both ale and beer brewing, as well as for seething the hops in the wort. The extra cost for fuel was necessary for lengthier burning time for seething the hops, and the other supplies were necessary whether Marion brewed ale or beer.

storage, as well as hops and servants, since beer brewing was more labor intensive. This greater investment might appear unappealing to an ale brewer accustomed to brewing and obtaining profits in the short term. Beer brewers had to wait up to, if not longer than, a month before they could sell their product, whereas ale brewers could begin selling their brew in a matter of days. Ale brewers were also unfamiliar with brewing on such a large scale as beer brewers, and many did not want to risk ruining a large batch of beer and wasting the expense.²⁷² These factors possibly contributed to the extended dominance of the London beer trade by aliens throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The overall process of beer brewing was more complicated despite the minor difference in ingredients. William Harrison explained the process in the late sixteenth century as requiring eight bushels of malt, half a bushel of wheat-meal, and half a bushel of ground oats. The brewer mixed the grain with eighty gallons of water, and after straining the first wort, boiled the wort with about two pounds of hops for two hours.²⁷³ The brewer then repeated the process three times and mixed the three worts together. Harrison estimated the cost of such a production at 20s. for 200 gallons, illustrating how the initial costs were offset by the resulting profit made off the higher yields.²⁷⁴ As Reginald Scot said, “[S]o long as you meane to receyue the uttermost commoditie of your garden, alluring your selfe that the more paynes you take, and the more cost you bestowe rightly hereupon, the more you due double your profite, and nearer you resemble the trade of the Flemming.”²⁷⁵

²⁷² Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters*, 87.

²⁷³ Reginal Scot recommended three pounds of hops for one quarter of malt, the same as eight bushels of grain; *A Perfite Platform*, 5.

²⁷⁴ Clark, *English Alehouse*, 101.

²⁷⁵ Scot, *A Perfite Platform*, 6-7.

The ability of brewers to produce larger amounts of beer led to changes in the technology used by brewers, establishing the foundations for industrialized brewing. The evolution of brewing technology began in the fourteenth century on the European continent; the first long-term change developed with brewing in a kettle set upon an iron grate that rested over a furnace. Brick walls and platforms next to the kettle allowed brewers to stand over the kettle and stir the wort. This simple set-up slowly improved and the kettles used became larger over time. By the beginning of the 1600s, elaborate brewing systems were in place in almost every urban European brewery; large kettles sat over brick ovens, and a plumbing system moved the water and wort to and from the kettles throughout the brewing process. According to Richard Unger, “The most noticeable sign of process innovation, of larger-scale production, was the growing size of the brew kettle... from the fifteenth through the seventeenth century.”²⁷⁶ London brewers began to take on more equipment, as well as use more elaborate tools in the brewing process. A will made by a London brewer in 1335 illustrated the state of brewing equipment at the time, as the will left a brew house, two lead vessels, a lead cistern, a tap-trough, and vats for the mash, unwanted residue, and the finished ale. By 1486, an inventory of a brewery showed it contained all of the equipment featured in the fourteenth-century will, as well as twenty tubs of yeast, and a wooden frame with small openings that sat in the mash tun, intended to filter the wort from the solid matter.²⁷⁷

Larger kettles led to permanent breweries that could produce beer at a rate ale brewers never found possible. The beer brewers of London established England’s capital as the leading producer of beer by the end of the sixteenth century; an impressive feat

²⁷⁶ Unger, *Beer in the Middle Ages*, 146, 171.

²⁷⁷ Unger, *Beer in the Middle Ages*, 146-147.

considering hopped beer arrived only around two hundred years before that point. In 1574, London beer brewers produced 312,000 barrels of beer, and by 1585 that had increased to 648,690 barrels. This stood in addition to the beer produced for local consumption, which made up the bulk of the brewers' business. By comparison, major beer producers on the continent did not manage to keep up with the beer industry in London, despite the lengthier presence of beer brewing in those countries. Around the end of the sixteenth century, Ghent in Flanders exported around 58,705 beer barrels; Munich exported around 47,698 in 1600, while Antwerp exported around 330,215 in the 1580s.²⁷⁸ This shows the remarkable level the London beer brewers reached by the seventeenth century; it also shows how strong the industry was in comparison to ale brewing, which struggled to continue in the face of the complete dominance of beer brewing.

The meteoric rise of beer brewing in London led to a number of complaints from the ale brewers. As previously discussed, the ale brewers were quick to vocalize their contempt of beer brewers and the threat beer presented to the ale business. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the ale brewers presented their complaints about beer brewing forcing them out of business. The ale brewers argued that the laws favored the richer brewers who were gaining greater control over the business, leading to a decrease of profit for the ale brewers.²⁷⁹ The Case of the Common Brewers, mentioned in chapter five, also emphasized the damage done to ale brewing by the beer industry. By the end of

²⁷⁸ Unger, *Beer in the Middle Ages*, 117-119. Beer barrels held 36 gallons, whereas ale barrels held 32 gallons.

²⁷⁹ W.T. Mitchell, ed., *Registrum Cancellarii, 1498-1506* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 103.

the seventeenth century, beer brewing had firm roots in London, a factor that ale brewers could not ignore. The petition demands:

That the Remedy which seems to be proposed by the said Bill (*viz.*) to make the Barrels of beer and Ale equal, and the Allowances the same, will be the Ruine of most Beer-Brewers in the Country: 1. For that thereby they must be forc't to Cut and Alter all their Vessels. 2. They must Lose their Customers, Gentlemen and Inn-keepers still expecting the same Measure and Price... and if the Measure and Prices be alter'd, most private Families will return to Brewing, which will much prejudice the Excise. 3. That the Allowances to be the same, will be very unjust, because the Waste and Leakage of Beer and Ale are very unequal, for which reason the former Acts made the Difference in Allowances.²⁸⁰

Beer brewing remained an industry of aliens, as many brewers hired servants from their home countries in preference to hiring native English. This also raised complaints from London ale brewers who denounced the practice in 1607. The Brewers' Company addressed this issue at the end of the sixteenth century, and to appease the ale brewers in the company they announced a restriction on admitting "Flemings and strangers" into the gild.²⁸¹

As mentioned in chapter three, London brewers began to export beer to Calais, primarily to supply the English military while it occupied the area, but London brewers began to export beer to other international markets during the sixteenth century as well. A primary recipient of English beer was Antwerp; London brewers established a small trade with Antwerp during the latter half of the fifteenth century, but the trade steadily grew over the course of the sixteenth century, and Antwerp began to import more English beer than German brews. The convenient location of beer breweries on the Thames allowed for easy import and export, and the strong presence of Flemish and Dutch brewers in

²⁸⁰ Anon., *The Case of the Common Brewers* (London: 1700).

²⁸¹ Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters*, 82.

England helped establish a natural trade connection with the Low Countries.²⁸² By the late sixteenth century, London had twenty-six large beer breweries, each producing around 167 barrels of beer a week, and part of this supply went to the Spanish and Dutch armies as they fought to suppress a revolt in the Netherlands. After the fighting ceased, the trade continued, and in the early seventeenth century, merchants from Holland traveled to London to trade grain for English beer.²⁸³

As beer brewing gained a strong foothold in the international market, the English developed a reputation for producing high quality, strong beer. The preference of the customer market shifted almost completely to beer, especially in urban centers such as London, and ale brewing became a commodity of the countryside. John Grove's *Wine, Beere, Ale, and Tobacco Contending for Superiority* reinforced this aspect of ale as the character Water admonishes Wine, Beer, and Ale for fighting and states, "You Ale I remit to the Countrie as more fit to liue where you were bred... and if you come into the Citie, you may be drunke with pleasure, but neuer come into the fashion;" whereas Beer "shall bee in most grace with the Citizens, as being a more stayed Liquor... I bound you not with the Citie, though it bee the common entertainment, you may bee in credit with Gentlemens Cellars, and carry reputation before you from March to Christmas."²⁸⁴ Beer gained a reputation of being a drink of the city, while ale was a drink of the country; due to this shift in perspective, ale became an old fashioned and simple drink brewed for

²⁸² Unger, *Beer in the Middle Ages*, 192-193.

²⁸³ Clarke, *English Alehouse*, 106.

²⁸⁴ Grove, *Wine, Beere, Ale, and Tobacco*, no pagination.

country bumpkins, while beer retained a higher level of sophistication as a beverage enjoyed by the urban elite, and produced by a growing industry.²⁸⁵

The introduction of hops into brewing signaled a permanent change in the brewing trade of London. Before hopped beer, traditional ale brewing featured a loose confederation of brewers who primarily produced ale for local consumption. The basic qualities of ale restricted the growth of the trade, as it transported poorly and spoiled quickly. The preserving quality of hops enabled beer to keep for months, allowing brewers greater opportunities for further trade. Initial resistance to the alien brew could not prevent the rise of beer brewing in London, for the English palate adjusted to the bitter flavor and stronger alcoholic content. Once beer brewers became the primary suppliers to the English army, the decline of ale brewing became particularly clear, even inevitable. The cheaper cost of beer brewing allowed greater output, on a scale that ale brewers could never achieve, and provided beer brewers higher profits that they used to invest in larger equipment. The use of hops in brewing established the foundation for the rise of industrial brewing by the end of the seventeenth century, and at that point ale brewing fell out of favor and primarily continued to exist in the English countryside. While ale brewers attempted to contest beer brewing as late as the start of the eighteenth century, their attempts were futile in nature, since beer brewing had firmly established itself as the dominant brew in London.

²⁸⁵ Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters*, 139.

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VITA

Kristen Denise Burton

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Thesis: FROM ALE TO BEER: THE IMPACT OF HOPS ON THE BREWING
TRADE IN LONDON, 1200-1700.

Major Field: History

Conference Presentations:

“Ale, Bonny Ale: the Misconception of Male and Female Brewers in Medieval
England,” presented at the 52nd annual Missouri Valley History Conference in
Omaha, Nebraska, March 5-7, 2009.

“Drunk as a Monk: Problems with Ecclesiastical Drinking in Medieval
England,” presented at the 31st annual Mid-America Conference on History in
Norman, Oklahoma, October 1-3, 2009.

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts in History at Oklahoma
State University, Stillwater, OK in May, 2008.

Completed the requirements for the Master of Arts in History at Oklahoma State
University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, 2010.

Experience:

2008-2010 Teaching Assistant, Department of History, Oklahoma State
University

Professional Memberships:

2007 inducted to Golden Key Honor Society

2008 inducted to Phi Alpha Theta

2009 inducted to Phi Kappa Phi

Name: Kristen D. Burton

Date of Degree: May, 2010

Institution: Oklahoma State University

Location: Stillwater, Oklahoma

Title of Study: THE CITIE CALLS FOR BEERE: INTRODUCTION OF HOPS AND
THE FOUNDATION OF INDUSTRIAL BREWING IN LONDON,
1200-1700.

Pages in Study: 101

Candidate for the Degree of Master Arts

Major Field: History

Scope and Method of Study:

This paper examines the impact of hopped beer on the brewing trade in London between the years 1200-1700. Prior to the arrival of hopped beer, traditional, un-hopped ale reigned as the most popular drink throughout England for centuries, pre-dating the Roman invasion of Britannia. This brew, though widely consumed, was an unstable commodity, as it spoiled quickly and brewers could only produce a limited amount of ale per batch. These factors caused ale brewing to remain a domestic industry for centuries leading to the outbreak of plague in 1348. Following the Black Death, ale brewing experienced a limited amount of commercialization, but the marketing of ale remained highly localized. The addition of hops into brewing resulted in a more resilient product that lasted for months instead of weeks. The longer lifespan allowed brewers to export beer to an international market, resulting in a rapid growth of commercialization against which ale could not compete. The more stable brew allowed for improvements in brewing technology and laid the foundations for industrial brewing. Sources used include the *Letter Books* from the City of London, which document the city's legal history. Written reactions from ale brewers regarding beer and foreign beer brewers, drinking songs, morality plays, books regarding health and nutrition, and military records also contributed to this study.

Findings and Conclusions:

Though the ale brewers of London resisted the arrival of hopped beer, their product could not compete against the commercial advantages offered by beer. Once accepted by English drinkers, beer became a staple supply to the English army, and London became the primary exporter of beer on the international market. These factors resulted in the greater commercialization of beer in London, paving the way for the rise of industrial brewing in the eighteenth century. The durability of hopped beer forced brewers to take up the new practice of brewing with hops and pushed the brewing of ale into the English countryside by the end of the seventeenth century.

ADVISER'S APPROVAL: Dr. Kristen Burkholder
