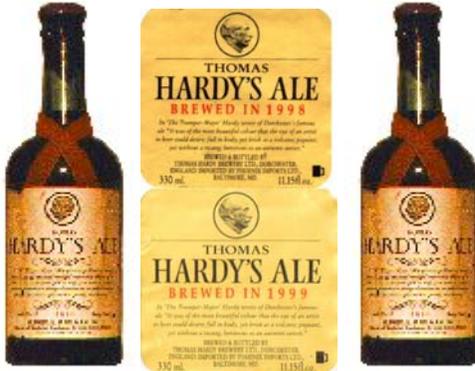


Eldridge Pope  Thomas Hardy's Ale
Vintage Beer Tasting

November 19, 2005



- Eldridge Pope Christmas Ale 1953*
- Thomas Hardy Ale 'A' 1968*
- Thomas Hardy Ale 'B' 1968*
- Thomas Hardy Ale 'C' 1968*
- Thomas Hardy Ale 'D' 1974*
- Thomas Hardy Ale 'E' 1975*
- Eldridge Pope Coronation Brew 1977*
- Thomas Hardy Ale 'F' 1977*
- Eldridge Pope Sherbourne Abbey Ale 1978*
- Thomas Hardy Ale 'G' 1978*
- Thomas Hardy Ale 'H' 1979*
- Thomas Hardy Ale 'J' 1979*
- Thomas Hardy Ale 'K' 1980*
- Thomas Hardy Ale 'L' 1982*
- Thomas Hardy Ale 'M' 1984*
- Thomas Hardy Ale 'N' 1986*
- Thomas Hardy 150th Anniversary 1987*
- Thomas Hardy Ale 'P' 1987*
- Thomas Hardy Ale 'Q' 1988*
- Thomas Hardy Ale 'R' 1990*
- Thomas Hardy Ale 'S' 1991*
- Thomas Hardy Ale 'T' 1992*
- Thomas Hardy 'U' 1993*
- Thomas Hardy Ale 1994*
- Thomas Hardy Ale 1995*
- Thomas Hardy Ale 1996*
- Thomas Hardy Ale 1997*
- Thomas Hardy Ale 1998*
- Thomas Hardy Ale 1999*
- Thomas Hardy Ale 2003*
- Thomas Hardy Ale 2004*



In the 1800s Dorchester became a lively market town, famous for the Eldridge Pope Brewery, the largest employer in the town.



Eldridge Pope Brewery

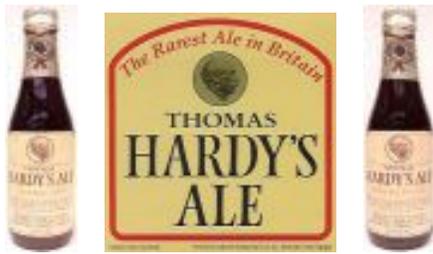
Eldridge Pope & Co. PLC
 Weymouth Road
 Dorchester DT1 1QT

Opened in 1837 and moved to the above site in 1880. Split into a brewing and pub owning company in 1997 with the brewery being transferred to Thomas Hardy Brewery Limited.

Thomas Hardy Burtonwood Brewery
 Weymouth Road
 Dorchester DT1 1QT

Following the decision of Eldridge Pope to get out of brewing in March 1997, a management buyout of the brewery took place. They formed joint venture with Burtonwood in 1999, and the brewery closed July 2003.

<http://www.quaffale.org.uk/php/brewery/54>



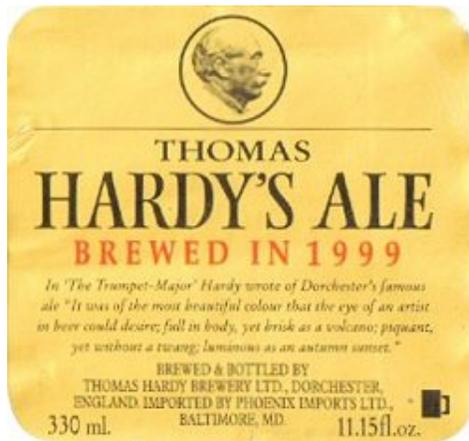
Barley Wine: Mt. Everest of Ales

The History of the Style, April, 1998

By Dick Eantwell and Fal Allen

In 1968 the Eldridge Pope brewery in Dorchester, England began producing Thomas Hardy Ale in commemoration of the fortieth anniversary of the author's death. Brewed entirely of pale malt to a gravity of approximately 1.125, the beer is aged for 6 months after fermentation and vintage dated. The label, replete with a quote from Hardy's "The Trumpet Major," boasts that the beer will age effectively for 25 years or more. At about 12 per cent alcohol by volume, the beer was reckoned by the Guinness Book of World Records the strongest beer on earth in 1973; though in subsequent years the distinction has variously passed into other hands. The Hardy Ale, with its vinous flavors and russet hues, conjures to many more the qualities of a classic old ale, but in name it is usually reckoned a barley wine. All this despite the fact that it is brewed with a lager yeast at ale fermentation temperatures. These days it is the beer that keeps its down-at-heel parent brewery afloat financially, a facility renamed the Thomas Hardy Brewery, which sadly devotes much of its energies to producing and packaging alcoholic fruit drinks.

<http://www.beernotes.com/midwest/articles/000296.html>



The passing of Eldridge Pope

By Roger Protz, October 2004

Eldridge Pope brewed magnificent beers: fine bitters, a memorable porter and the world-renowned Thomas Hardy's Ale, a 12.5% bottle-fermented beer that improves with age like a fine wine. I could scarcely believe it when chairman Christopher Pope announced the company was quitting brewing because he had once taken a small group of beer writers through a tasting of several

vintages of Thomas Hardy's Ale. I had been struck by his remarkable palate, his ability to conjure forth brilliant descriptions of the beers' aromas and flavours - "fresh tobacco and old leather books" sticks in the memory - and his evident passion for the subject.

We will never know why Christopher Pope decided to turn his back on the noble traditions of brewing in Dorchester because he has since died. Fortunately, Thomas Hardy's Ale continues, now brewed by O'Hanlon's Brewery in Devon. The beer is named after the Wessex writer, who once described the beer of Dorchester as "the most beautiful colour that the eye of an artist in beer could desire; full in body, yet brisk as a volcano; piquant, yet without a twang; luminous as an autumn sunset; free from streakiness in taste; but, finally, rather heavy."

http://www.beer-pages.com/protz/features/eldridge_pope.htm



Thomas Hardy lives

Famous vintage beer expected to return to America in July

Feb 17, 2003 - Thomas Hardy's Ale, arguably the world's most famous vintage beer, has risen from the ashes — and will be brought back to the United States, appropriately enough, by Phoenix Imports.

"We were devastated, as were legions of Hardy's fans, when the brewery ceased production of this one-of-a-kind beer in 1999" said George Saxon, President of Phoenix Imports. "After much discussion with Eldridge Pope on options to resurrect the brand, we reached an agreement with them last September to purchase it, along with Royal Oak Pale Ale and Thomas Hardy Country Bitter."

Saxon began working on plans to save the beer shortly after the Thomas Hardy Brewery, formerly Eldridge Pope & Co., discontinued production. The brewery's origins date back to the 1830s and it was run by the Pope family for more than 100 years before they sold it to focus on their growing pub chain.

The former Pope beers will be brewed by O'Hanlon's Brewing Co. in Devon, not far from Dorchester (home of both Hardy and the former Pope Brewery) in the south of England.

Reintroduction plans for Phoenix's brands have not yet been finalized for all countries, but Hardy's will be the first to return to the U.S., probably in August. Royal Oak and Thomas Hardy Country Bitter will follow. Initial brews of Hardy's are underway at O'Hanlon's, true to the original recipe and ingredients.

"Fortunately, finding a top-notch brewer to brew the beers for us proved much easier than purchasing the brands," Saxon said. Coincidentally, we had just signed an agreement to import three award-winning, bottle conditioned beers from O'Hanlon's."

Packaging will vary by country, but plans for America are focused on a 25cl (8.5 oz.) bottles. Labeling will hark back to the traditional style originally introduced to America by Phoenix in 1986, updated for the 21st century.

Hardy's Ale was first brewed in 1968 at the request of the Thomas Hardy Society to mark the 40th anniversary of the author's death.

Each vintage was blended from as many as six different brews and underwent three fermentations. Collector's have been known to pay outrageous amounts for bottles from the 1960s and in the hundreds of dollars for those from the 1980s.

The O'Hanlon's beers are expected to be available to U.S. drinkers in the spring. They are Original Ruby Stout, Double Champion Wheat Beer and Original Rye Beer.

<http://www.realbeer.com/news/articles/news-001842.php>



Roger Protz's description of Thomas Hardy's Ale in his "European Beer Almanac"

Alcohol by Volume: 12%

Degrees Plato: 31

Original Gravity: 1125

Ingredients: Maris Otter pale ale malt and crystal malt.
Fuggles, Goldings, and Styrian hops. 60-70 units of bitterness.
Bottom fermenting yeast.

Tasting Notes:

Nose:

'Brisk as a volcano.' (Quote from Hardy's "The Mayor of Casterbridge.")

Palate:

'Full in body; piquant, yet without a twang; free from streakiness.'

Comments: Thomas Hardy wrote with evident enthusiasm about the beer of 'Casterbridge' (Dorchester) in his Wessex novels. El-drige Pope have repaid the compliment with their classic bottle-conditioned beer named in his honor. It was brewed first in 1968 to mark the 40th anniversary of the writer's death but interest and demand has meant that it is now brewed on a regular basis. It is dry-hopped and warm-conditioned for 3 months and is pitched 3 times with yeast, twice during fermentation and then during conditioning. It continues to condition in the small nip bottle and the brewery recommends that it is laid down for 5 years. A new vintage is brewed annually and each bottle is individually numbered. When opened there is a rich sherry or Madeira note beneath the intense peppery hop aroma. It is a remarkable example of British craft brewing.

Michael Jackson states that some vintages have been aged in sherry wood. He gives the beer 4 stars.

<http://pages.ripco.net/~mws/ale2.txt>



Thomas Hardy's Ale *The Legendary Vintage Ale of Dorset*

Scarce, subtle and complex, Thomas Hardy's Ale is the beer enthusiast's equivalent of rare cognac. Bottle-conditioned to mature in the bottle like fine wine, this old ale/barley wine will improve with age for at least 26 years (and we're still counting!). Not for the faint of palate, especially when young and brash, maturity brings an elegance of flavors unmatched by any other beer—if you have the patience to cellar it for at least a decade.

Consider these vintage tasting notes from a 1994 Malt Advocate tasting. "It [the 1974 vintage] doesn't taste like a beer at all, and I would be elated if a case were in my cellar, offered one taster. Lightly sharp up front and somewhat vinous, the flavor slowly revealed toasted malt, walnuts and almonds, burnt wood, and a hint of anise." On the original 1968 vintage, "We were all convinced it had many additional years to mature. It was like no beer I have ever tasted. Nor do I expect to taste one like this anytime soon. Creamy butterscotch notes flood the taste buds, laced with subtle complex fruit...and a subtle suggestion of vintage port. Elegant and seamless, this beer was a waltz on the palate. Truly sophisticated."

Best stored and served at cellar temperature—about 55°F—in a snifter. Sip it after dinner with a rich cigar.

<http://www.mythbirdbeer.com/thomashardysale.shtml>





Inside the old Eldridge Pope brewery.

<http://www.beertravelers.com/lists/britain-walk.html>

Old Ales

By Terry Foster, September, 2004

A change in this approach came from Eldridge, Pope, a small brewery in Dorset, when in 1968 they introduced Thomas Hardy Ale, commemorating the writer's death sixty years earlier. Although produced only from pale malts, its high OG of 1.125 resulted in it being a dark amber color, and it was stored at the brewery for a year or so before release. It was originally intended as a one-off, but was successful enough that the company decided to continue it. It was produced as a bottle-conditioned beer, and vintage-dated, with the early bottles recommending on the label that it could be kept for as much as 25 years before drinking! The important point about this is that Hardy Ale was presented as a beer of distinction, as a result of which it gradually achieved cult status among England's beer-drinkers. Eldridge, Pope hived off their brewing operation in the 1990's, and this beer continued to be produced by the now aptly-named Thomas Hardy company, who finally gave up their namesake ale in 2003. It is now brewed by the micro O'Hanlon's, largely for the American market.

<http://byo.com/feature/1217.html>



Thomas Hardy.



Thomas Hardy

The novelist and poet Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) spent most of his life in Dorset. He was born in a cottage at Higher Bockhampton near Dorchester and left school at the age of 16 to become apprenticed to a Dorchester architect. Hardy moved to London in 1862 to work for Arthur Blomfield, architect and church restorer, but returned to Dorset in 1867. His first success as a novelist came when he published *Under the Greenwood Tree* in 1872, and the following year he became a full time novelist. In 1874 Hardy married his first wife, Emma Gifford. Unhappily, their union became increasingly loveless over the years and intent on his writing, Hardy neglected his wife. His later novels shocked Emma, who had become fiercely religious.

Hardy published a huge number of novels and poems, including such famous works as *Far From the Madding Crowd*, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*. The stories they tell were largely set in the south west of England in a fictional area Hardy called Wessex.

<http://www.dorsetcountymuseum.org/thomashardy.htm>

Thomas Hardy's Detailed Biography

http://www.absoluteastronomy.com/encyclopedia/t/th/thomas_hardy.htm

Site devoted to the life and works of Thomas Hardy

<http://pages.ripco.net/~mws/hardy.html>

"Happy good-night air".

From The Darkling Thrush dated 31 December 1900.

We want to thank Joe Carroll of Spuyten Duyvil for hosting this special vintage tasting event.

