The Brewery

A brewery operated on this site between 1881 and 2003. It was run by Eldridge Pope & Co. and brewed ales such as Huntsman's Ales, Royal Oak and Thomas Hardy's Ale.

Dorchester had a long tradition of fine brewing. In *Dorsetshire,* published in 1720, Thomas Cox wrote that 'Since by the French Wars the coming of French wine is prohibited, the people here have learned to brew the finest malt liquors in the kingdom, so delicately clean and well tasted that the best judges not only prefer it to the ales most in vogue as Hull, Derby and Burton, but look upon it to be little inferior to common wine.'

The brewery was founded by Charles and Sarah Eldridge at the Green Dragon tavern in Durngate Street. Sarah ran the brewery while Charles was a wine and spirit merchant. Sarah was a shrewd businesswoman who continued to run the business after Charles' death.

After Sarah's death and the retirement of her business partner Alfred Mason, the brewery was bought by the Popes, a local family of landowners and lawyers.

Eldridge, Pope & Co. grew from one of several small Dorchester breweries to be one of the town's largest employers.

The brewery site is being developed as Brewery Square with housing, leisure and shops. Dorchester has always had imaginative architecture, although it hasn't always preserved it. The photograph shows the fantastic art deco building that was Thurman's shop in South Street. The frontage was tiled in blue and black, with an electrically lit globe and flagpost on the roof. It was built in 1932 and demolished after World War II.

Find out more...

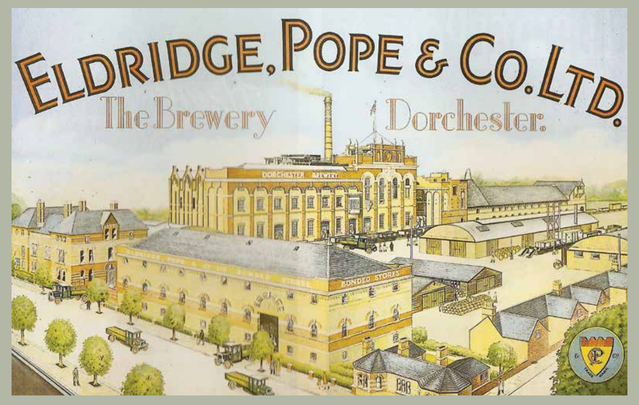
Visit Dorset Museum and see the model of the Eldridge Pope brewery.

Read *Thomas Hardy's Brewer; the Story of Eldridge, Pope & Co.*, by John Seekings.

Discover other Dorset beers in local pubs.

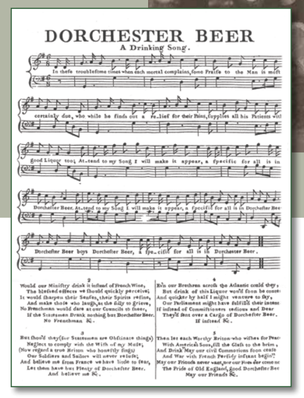
Find the carved stone with the date of the building. It is high up. What letters are on the shield below it?

The Dorchester Dormouse trail



The brewery in about 1912, showing the bonded stores and company offices at the front and the maltings to the right of the main brewhouse. A railway siding led directly into the site to make deliveries and distribution efficient.

At work in the bottling hall, 1933. The school leaving age was then 14, and some of the workers do not look much older than that.



DORCHESTER BEER
A Drinking Song.

Dorchester Beer, a nineteenth century ballad.

'The Lads of Dorset' photographed in the Rose and Crown, Bradford Abbas, 1934. Their ages totalled 434 years! They would obviously have agreed with Thomas Hardy when he described Dorchester beer in the Trumpet Major:

'It was of 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 of taste; but, finally, rather heady. The masses worshipped it, the minor gentry loved it more than wine, and by the most illustrious county families it was not despised.'

Interactive Dorchester

Scan the code for more features!

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