

Constable's Brewery

There was originally a small brewery on Littlehampton High Street started by a James Corfe in 1816 in the former Newport School building in the High Street. By 1850 it was in the hands of a G. B Puttock, who, upon retirement was succeeded by John Constable and his brother Thomas who acquired the building in 1853.

They considerably extended it in 1871 by building a tall tower block and behind with a square chimney that was a visible landmark for miles. There is a floor plan of the Cow Inn and references to the brewery.

Thomas, who was in charge of the business, quickly established a steam brewery and grew the business, which was to become the second largest employer of labour in the town. He had new boiler houses installed which were open to the High Street, and the house in which he lived became the offices and the off-license department. When families used to bake their own bread, the youngsters were sent along to the Brewery office with a penny for yeast. In exchange for a penny, a metal token was given and, on presenting this to a workman in the brewery, a half-gallon can was filled with yeast, skimmed from the top of the vats. With this amount of yeast enough bread could be made to last a family of six a week.

When Thomas Constable died in 1885, his brother, George Sefton Constable took over, to be succeeded by his son Archie Constable. Mr. Constable was known to be very generous to the local community, and during several winters when employment was scarce, he ran a soup kitchen entirely at his own expense for the benefit of the poor.

In 1904 the company became "Limited" with a capital of £100.00.00.

Because of supply difficulties during the First World War the brewing side of the business closed down in 1917 and transferred to the Swallow Brewery in Arundel. In 1921 both the off-license in Littlehampton and the brewery in Arundel were amalgamated with Henty and Co's Westgate Brewery at Chichester to form Henty and Constable. During the Second World War the tower block lost its landmark chimney, and eventually in 1972 the whole site at Littlehampton was cleared, leaving the cobbled stone shop frontage which you can still admire today.

Under Henty and Constable mineral water was made on the old brewery premises trading under the name of Anchor Springs.

The nearby 'Anchor Springs' bus stop is so called to commemorate the special bottled tonic waters that the brewery specialised in.

A little aside regarding Henty and Constable beer

Two weeks after D-Day, on the 20 June 1944, Reuter's special correspondent working with the Allied Forces in France contacted the UK newspapers to say that all they could get from the now-liberated estaminets was some pretty watery cider. It wasn't until the 12 July when the battling troops in Normandy finally received some 'real British beer'; but even then they only received one pint per man.

However, some enterprising pilots attached to the RAF, and the USAAF, had already been privately shipping beer into Northern France, using what was known as 'flying pubs'.



Supermarine Spitfire beer run (Joy Juice).

Some of the initial efforts at bringing beer over the Channel after D-Day used jettison tanks carried by aircraft such as the Typhoon and the Spitfire. These were apparently semi-official efforts because the Air Ministry sent a photograph to the newspapers depicting a Spitfire from 332 Squadron (Norwegian) at Tangmere Airfield in Sussex having its tank filled with beer. The beer was contained within two wooden casks and had been supplied by Henty & Constable, a Chichester brewer.

The photograph above shows the pilot relaxing on the wing while the 45-gallon jettison tank was being filled.

On D-Day plus seven, the 13 June 1944, 270 gallons of beer, presumably from Henty & Constable, was flown in drop tanks beneath three Spitfire Mk IX's from Tangmere; landing at the Bény-Sur-Mer airfield in Normandy. This first known landing of beer during the invasion occurred 110 miles south of England and three miles from the sea.

Black and white photograph below of the Constable brewery building in the High Street, Littlehampton, taken by J. White.

