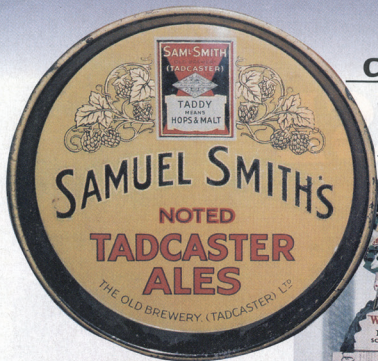


COLLECTOR'S CORNER - WITH BRIAN HOWES

HISTORY SERVED ON A TRAY



Richard Percival will travel just about anywhere to acquire a new enamel brewery tray for his collection. He lives in Buckinghamshire but would rush up to Edinburgh like a shot if a tray from Murray's Craigmillar Brewery raised its head.

Old enamel brewery trays are far from common these days and eight years have slipped by since Richard last managed to find one. "They are so scarce now, but I'm always optimistic that a new one might turn up," said the tray-crazed general manager of a Bedfordshire-based hotel supply company as we sifted through a small portion of his amazing collection of over 1,000 pre-1970

Below: Thirteen-inch round trays are the most common shape but this Burtonwood example is a rare example.



brewery trays, many of which advertise the products of long defunct breweries.

By far the biggest tray collection in Britain and possibly the world, it has taken Richard over twenty years to assemble.

It all began on a day trip to Brighton where Richard had travelled to watch his beloved Notts County football team play a game against Brighton and Hove Albion on a sunny Saturday afternoon. While indulging in a customary pre-match pint, a landlord offered his friend, who was a keen 'breweriana' buff, a drinks tray for his collection, but he

Below: You can still buy a pint of Bass today but Cheltenham Ales have long since disappeared, as have most of its trays!



turned it down as not being old enough. So Richard snapped it up.

It was the start of a collection that quickly began to mushroom and he fondly recalls his great delight after finding a nice old tray from his local Shipstone's brewery, showing the splendid grey shires that once drew their distinctive red and gold drays until the early 1970s.

Once known as waiter trays, pub trays date back to the days when it was customary to serve beer and spirits direct to tables in best rooms and smoke rooms. Brewers soon latched on to the great advertising potential of the large flat surface a waiter tray provided and they began to appear in their thousands.

To begin with, they were made of thin printed

Top Left: This splendid black-backed tray from Samuel Smith's old Tadcaster Brewery has survived in remarkably good condition for its age.

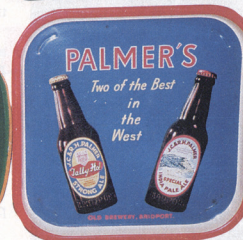
Left: Richard Percival holds two treasured brewery trays from his fabulous collection representing over 1,000 British breweries.

Below: All shapes, all colours, all ages. Richard's collection has taken over twenty years to assemble.

tin, followed by stamped out copper and brass - The Art Metal Co of Birmingham being one of the largest manufacturers of metal trays. These were superseded by circular enamelled iron trays in the years leading up to the First World War. During the inter-war years heavy steel trays, sometimes oblong in shape, replaced the enamelled iron types and Richard refers to these as 'black backs' as they always have a shiny black finish on the reverse side.

Following the Second World War, square and small round trays began to appear in a light alloy as manufacturers utilised surplus stocks of metal left over from the wartime aircraft industry.

Thin tin trays came along in the 1950s and 1960s and, although some metal trays are still produced by the larger brewers, they have largely become a thing of the past.



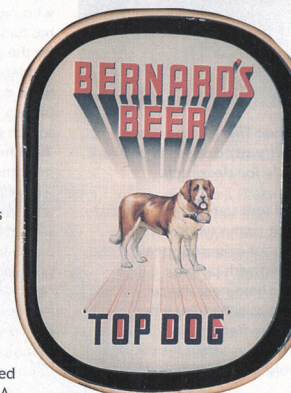
Above: The oblong John Smith's tray on the left dates from the pre-war years. The square trays such as the one advertising Palmer's ales on the right were issued after the war.

Hancock Corfield & Waller were by far Britain's biggest manufacturers of brewery trays until Reginald Corfield split away from the family business to form his own company that remained in business until 1970. Other well-known makers included Bat & Co of Smethwick, J. A. Campbell of Belfast, Causton of Nottingham and London, and Metal Box of Mansfield - who made millions of trays for the Guinness brewery.

As well as scouring car boot sales and antique fairs on a regular basis, Richard has found trays in all manner of unusual places. A lady was using a very scarce Whitworth Son & Nephew tray as a base for a large plant pot; a dealer at an antique fair had filled another scarce example from the Welcome Brewery in Oldham with old pennies, completely covering the lettering and he even found one in a hedgerow close to a canal beauty spot!

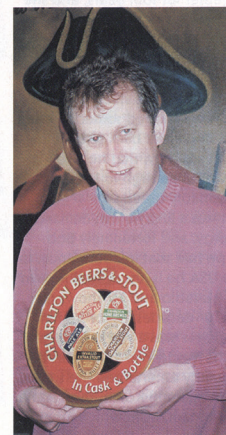
Five trays he would dearly love to find are those issued by Fussell's of Rode, Somerset; Hartley's of West Cowick; Mowbray and Co of Grantham; Dix and Co of Stoke-on-Trent; F.W. Soames & Co of Wrexham and Salt's of Burton-on-Trent. "Nobody has ever found a Salt's brewery tray yet so I'm not sure if one exists at all," said Richard.

● If you think you can help him to fill any of the missing gaps in this remarkable collection give him a call on 07715 369540.



Above: This Bernard's Top Dog example is one of Richard Percival's top trays.

Below: Richard Percival will travel anywhere to acquire a new tray for his splendid collection. Here he holds one of his personal favourites from the long defunct Charlton Brewery



TWENTY QUESTIONS

HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW BRITAIN - PAST & PRESENT?

Test your knowledge about Britain with these 20 questions. The answers are on page 67.

- Which trumpeter had two Number One hits in the 1950s?
- In which county was Catherine Cookson born?
- Which character was played by Doris Speed in Coronation Street?
- What is the RAF equivalent of the Royal Navy rank of vice-admiral?
- Name this popular presenter who had a way with animals.
- Which shipping forecast area is north of Rockall?
- Which Benjamin Britten opera was commissioned for the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II?
- Whose murder conviction was overturned after 45 years in 1998?
- In the early 1960s what was Radio 4 known as?
- What was the pen name of Eric Blair?
- How long is the Derby?
- Which actress was 'I' in The King and I?
- What was the first issued decimal coin in Britain?
- What was British No 3?
- How many records is a castaway allowed on Desert Island Discs?
- Which city does the Hallé Orchestra come from?
- Who was Detective Sergeant Andy Crawford's father-in-law?
- What does TT stand for in the Isle of Man races?
- Who made the Super Snipe?
- What was Sno-Mist?



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