

YD.2009

a.1743

RUM

FROM THE CANE TO THE CONSUMER

in the hands of



United Rum Merchants Ltd.

40, Eastcheap, London, E.C.3.

by Arthur Woolley

Supplement to the Accounts of
Booker Brothers, McConnell & Co., Limited

1951

P.663.5

MINISTRY OF
LIBRARY
GREAT BRITAIN



Plate 1



Plate 2

BY DICTIONARY DEFINITION the word RUM can mean spirit produced from sugar, or its by-product molasses, wherever the sugar cane is grown. By common usage, however, RUM refers to the spirit produced from sugar cane in the West Indies.

United Rum Merchants confine their activities to rums produced in Jamaica and British Guiana (Demerara), and it is from these that their various Brands, principally Lemon Hart, Lamb's Navy, Light Hart, Red Heart, White Heart, Black Heart and Booker's Fruit Cured and Navy Rums are distilled.

There is no printer's error in the spelling of "Hart" as in "Lemon Hart" and "Heart" as in "Red Heart". The former springs from the surname of Mr. Lemon Hart, the original founder of the firm Lemon Hart and Son, whilst the latter describe the Trade Marks chosen for their Brands by Messrs. Henry White and Co., the former owners.



M.O.F. LIBRARY

Acc. No.

Class No. P.633.5

Date. 17/9/53



Plate 3

As constituted today, United Rum Merchants Ltd. comprises four main subsidiary companies—Lemon Hart and Son Ltd., Alfred Lamb and Son Ltd., White Keeling (Rum) Ltd., and Bookers Rum Co., Ltd. Of these, the first three are registered in Great Britain, where they trade in the Home market and whence they operate their respective Export markets. The fourth, Bookers Rum Company, is to be found in British Guiana, where, in addition to its local and Export trade, it undertakes invaluable service as our Agent. It is, in this respect, the link between the Booker Sugar Estates and their principal Rum customer—United Rum Merchants.

The usefulness of a Subsidiary to its Parent is often dual. Its primary function must, of course, be to earn revenue on its own account—its secondary function to support by close co-operation its sister Subsidiaries. As we have said, United Rum Merchants purchase and in turn dispose of the principal part of the output of the Booker distilleries,

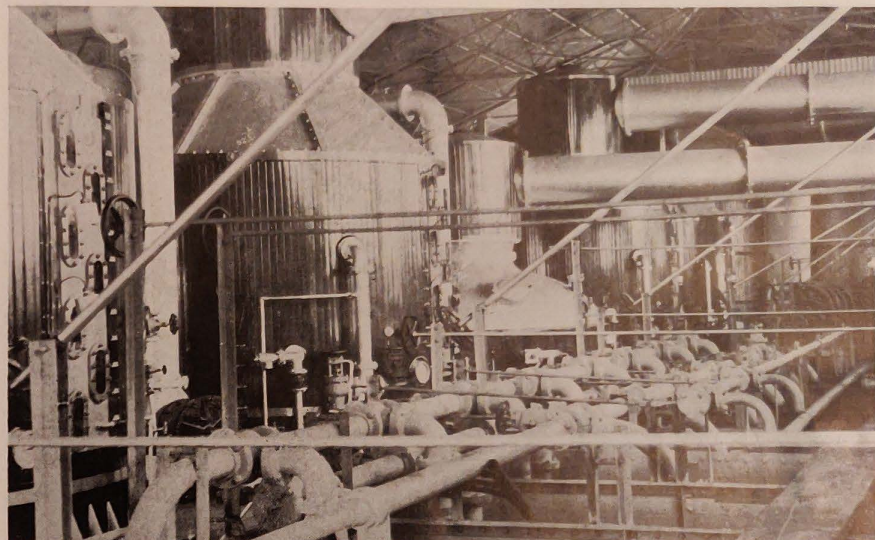


Plate 4

a large part of which output, moreover, is shipped from British Guiana to Liverpool in the ships of the Booker Line Ltd.—the only line affording a regular direct service from the Colony to the United Kingdom.

Bookers Shipping, Transport & Wharves Ltd., Bookers Shipping & Trading Co. Ltd., and the British Guiana Lighterage Co. Ltd., all play their parts in the handling of our rums in cask at some stage or other of the long journey from the estates to their final destinations.

So much for the Company and its place as a member of the Booker Group; let us now turn to the product, starting with the production of rum in British Guiana.

As we have said, rum as we know it is produced from sugar cane grown in the West Indies. The operation can be said to start with the harvesting of the mature cane—an operation carried out by hand. Plates 1 and 2 show a sugar estate and the actual cutting operation in progress.

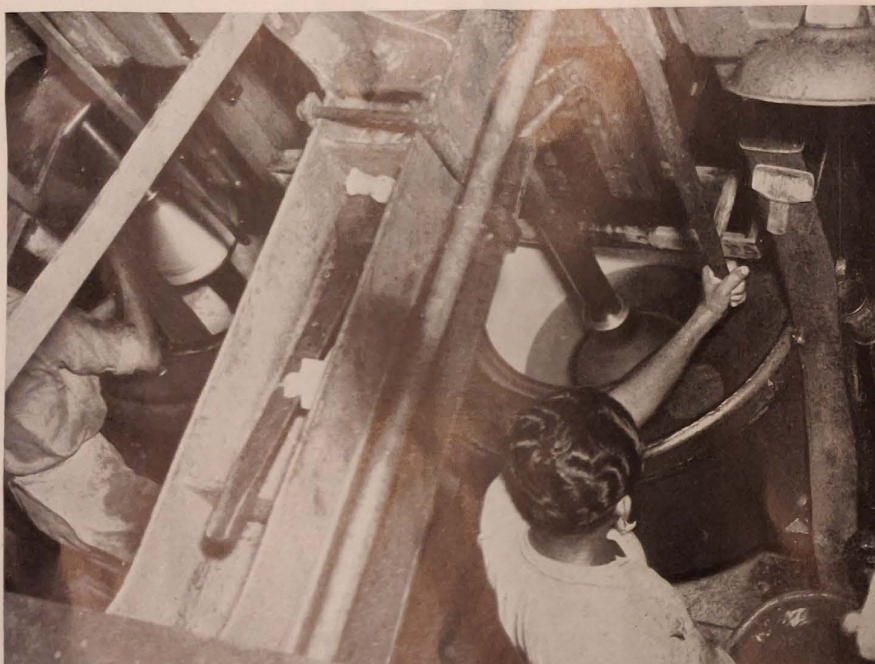


Plate 5

Plate No. 3, of a typical sugar factory, is of more than passing interest. The cultivated area in British Guiana is largely alluvial and lies below sea level. Abundant fresh water flows down from the hinterland, which is densely covered with rain forests, and so makes possible the water-borne transportation which is a feature of the country. In the foreground you will see punts which take the cane directly from field to factory. They are drawn by magnificent Texan mules whose capacity for hard work in a tropical climate seems inexhaustible.

In the factory, conveyors carry the cane to crushers, operated by massive machinery, which press the juice from the cane, leaving the residue, the fibre known as "bagasse", to be used as a fuel for the factory's furnaces—a most useful economy in a country which has no coal workings and to which fuel oil must be brought by sea.

The cane juice is clarified and then boiled in massive vacuum pans such as those shown in Plate No. 4, until the required degree of crystallisation is achieved. The result of



Plate 6

this boiling is a thick, dark-brown mixture of sugar crystals and viscous, non-crystalline molasses. These are separated, the one from the other, by means of centrifugals, such as the one shown in Plate No. 5, fast rotating drums with perforated sides, the perforations being so sized as to permit the through passage of the molasses but not of the sugar crystals.

The molasses is now pumped into the adjacent distillery, and so departs from the hands of the Factory Manager into the hands of the Distiller—a chemist specialising in alcohol chemistry, and thus starts upon its translation into rum.

Mixed with water, the molasses, now known as "wash", is pumped into fermenting vessels in the wash loft. Within a few hours natural yeast spores begin their action and fermentation starts. Plate No. 6 shows a group of fermenting vessels with their contents at various stages of ferment development.

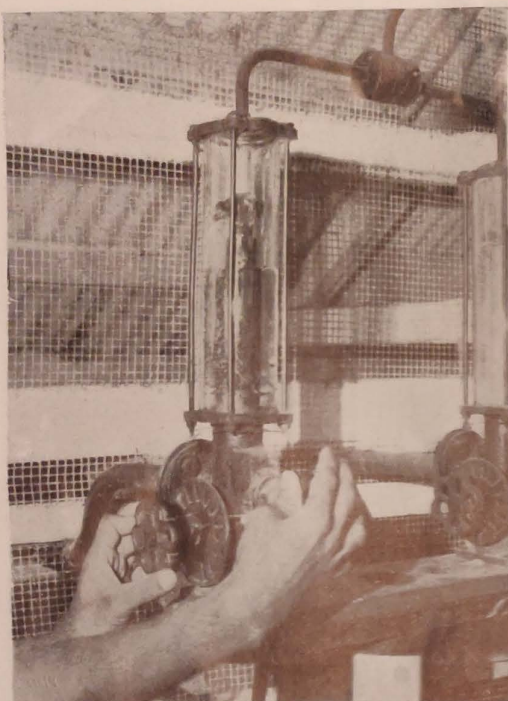


Plate 7

The fermented wash has but to be distilled to produce the basic spirit, rum.

Distillation is, however, a complicated process, consisting in its essence of raising the temperature of a fermented liquor to the point where the alcohol content is given off in vapour before the vaporisation of the accompanying water and impurities, which are accordingly left behind. This produces pure alcohol, neutral, flavourless and without character, regardless of the source of the fermentation, be it sugar, grape, or grain. All potable spirits, such as rum, brandy, whisky, etc., derive their identifiable characteristics from the particular impurities which the distiller in fact permits to pass over his still with the alcohol vapour.

Distillation can be carried out either in the traditional so-called "Pot-Still" or in the "Continuous" still. Whilst both methods are employed in British Guiana, the Pot-Still is in general use in Jamaica, accounting in some measure for the great difference in flavour to be found between Demerara (British Guiana) rums and those from Jamaica.



Plate 8

The distiller, then, controls the speed and the operation of his still so as to produce the type and style of rum required.

Plate No. 7 shows newly made rum passing through an inspection case after distillation.

To aid him in his task, he has at his back the resources of the Laboratory of Bookers Sugar Estates Ltd., shown in Plate No. 8, and its staff of qualified

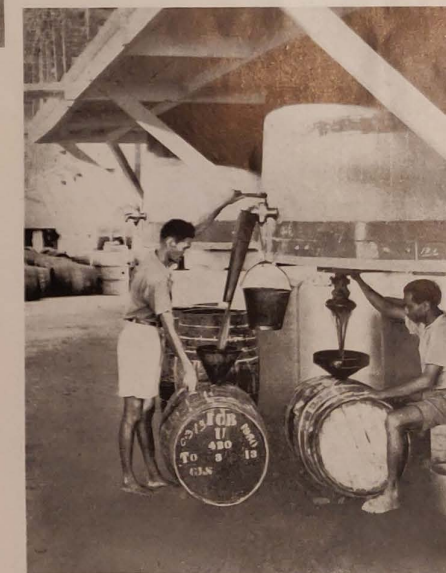


Plate 9



Plate 10

chemists. It is one of the most modern and completely equipped laboratories in the West Indies and is comparable to any to be found in Europe or America.

These, then, are the single mark rums, the products of individual distilleries, immature and as yet far from ready for the consumer. Once made, they are filled into casks, as may be seen in Plate No. 9, and consigned to the purchaser. The casks for Demerara rum are assembled in the Cooperage operated by Bookers Rum Co. Ltd., many being made entirely by hand from American white oak staves.

Plate No. 10 shows the Booker Line's s.s. "Amakura" which, with her sister ship the "Arakaka," brings our Demerara rums to Britain.

All rums marketed by the British subsidiaries of United Rum Merchants finally arrive at the Port of London where they lie in vast underground vaults, vaults far removed from the vibration of passing traffic and in which the temperature varies less than two or three degrees throughout the year. Here they slowly mature for a period of time which may not

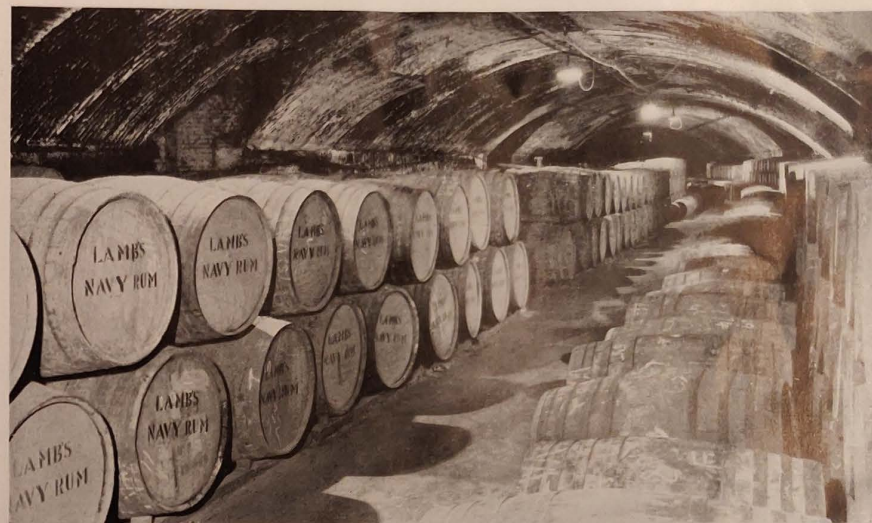


Plate 11

be less than three years in the case of rums to be sold on the British market—and is often much more, particularly in the case of the heavier types. It is here, too, that they come under the supervision of the Commissioners of Customs and Excise—a supervision which continues until the rums are released from Bond on payment of the statutory duty.

To sustain their trade, United Rum Merchants maintain a stock of over 34,000 casks or, 2,500,000 proof gallons of rum in the Port of London Bonds—a small section is shown in Plate No. 11.

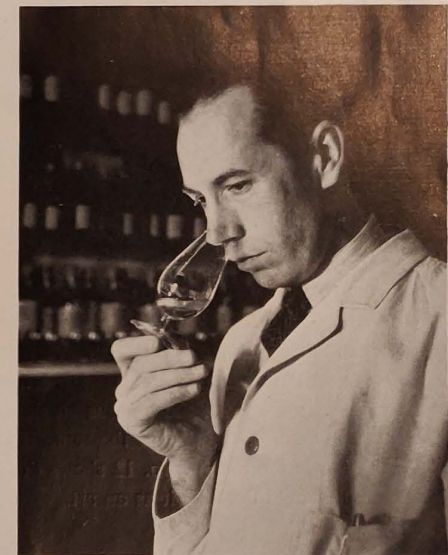


Plate 12



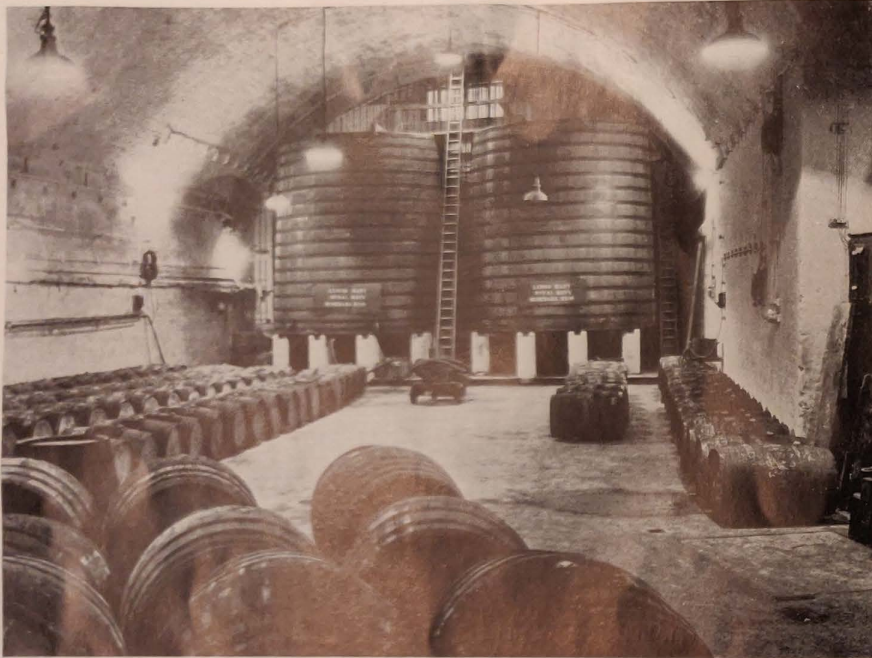


Plate 13

Their long period of rest over, samples drawn from the individual casks come under the scrutiny of the Company's Blender.

It is essential for the well-being of a Brand that the products marketed under its labels shall be unvarying through the years. Single mark rums vary considerably from crop to crop. These variations are smoothed out by the Blender, who prescribes the proportions in which the various single marks are to be brought together to match exactly the previous blending of the same Brand. His skill is hereditary—a vital link in the chain of production. Plate No. 12 shows the Blender at his work. We say work, though most people would describe it as an art.



Plate 14

On the Blender's prescription, then, various rums are brought forward and married together in great vats, such as those shown in Plate No. 13. These rums, you will remember, are still at the strength at which they were distilled—once married, they are reduced with water to the strength at which they will be bottled and sold. The water used in reducing must be soft and entirely free from solid matter. Since the water in the Scottish lochs is ideal for the purpose, United Rum Merchants bring it down from Scotland in tankers—adhering to the principle that only the best is good enough.

The water must marry with the spirit for not less than fourteen days, after which the product is ready for bottling.



Plate 15

Today, bottling takes place on a conveyor belt system, known as a "bottling run." Such a run is shown in Plate No. 14. The clean and dry bottles are fed on to a machine and automatically filled to the required content, and thence proceed along the run where corks are inserted, labels are attached, capsules are fitted and so on.

The bottles are wiped bright and clean before being finally inspected and packed into the waiting cases. They are then ready for the market.

All United Rum Merchants' bottling is done in Bond under the vigilant eyes of the Excise men, who must satisfy themselves that both the quantity and strength of the rum in the bottles are as stated—a welcomed check upon the work in hand.

Plate No. 15 shows a stack of filled cases awaiting despatch.



Plate 16

It remains only to sell them—to the world and in competition with the merchants of the world.

It can be said without fear of contradiction that the Company's products dominate the British market. They enjoy National distribution at home and are to be found throughout the world, as far afield as Australia on the one hand and British Columbia on the other. This is the work of an active Sales Organisation, backed by advertising on a large scale. Today, sales and advertising go hand in hand, the one the indispensable complement of the other.

There can be but few indeed who have not seen some or other of the Company's advertisements in Britain or abroad.



Plate 17

Various media are chosen, principally, however, posters, the press and occasional special exhibitions.

Plate No. 16 with Tower Bridge in the background, shows a large poster in the City of London until recently known to millions of City workers. It stood on a temporary site immediately opposite the building which houses the Company Offices and Headquarters of our Parent Company. The animated electric sign shown in Plate No. 17 may be seen in Piccadilly Circus—the heart of the West End. Throughout Britain, the Company's posters are a familiar part of the advertising scene.



Plate 18

In 1952 we exhibited at the Ideal Home Exhibition—and thus made history as the first House in the Spirit Trade to have been permitted to do so. Plate No. 18 shows our Stand.

Plate No. 19 shows a specimen collection of Rummors of the period 1760—1830, the property of the Company, which in its handsome travelling cabinet is generally accepted for display by establishments which normally permit no advertising—and so serves a useful purpose.

Posters and special exhibits, however effective, cannot reach the public at large and require supplement in the daily press. The Company has recently been fortunate in enlisting the services of two distinguished artists—Mr. Ronald Searle and Miss Helen McKie. Some of their drawings which have already appeared in the press are shown in Plate No. 20.



The wording on the plaque reads
 "A Collection of Rammers of the period 1760 to 1830 owned by United
 Rum Merchants Ltd., proprietors of Lemon Hart and Lamb's Navy Rums"

Plate 19

The battle of advertising is a stern one. Great benefit can follow upon good advertising, yet there is no way in which money can be more quickly and uselessly dissipated than by advertising which, for some reason or other, does not appeal to the public at which it is directed. A continued increase in our trade and widening of our business justify us, we believe, in our confidence in the future of our Brands—those Brands which are, in more senses than one, YOUR rums.



