

Decision Over Cutting Long-Serving Horsemen's Jobs Difficult, Says Wadworth



Monty with Barry Petherick and Prince with Vince Minty lead the horses into the paddock for a well-earned holiday in Poulshot. Both men have now been made redundant

Wadworth said the decision to cut the jobs of long-serving horsemen Vince Minty and Barry Petherick had been a difficult one.

Mr Minty had been a horseman at Wadworth for ten years. He is now driving milk tankers. Mr Petherick had been a horseman at Wadworth for 26 years and for many years was head horseman, although for the last few years had stepped back from that role and Martin Whittle became head horseman.



Martin and his son Callum are the remaining horsemen. [left]

Asked why Wadworth did not announce the departure of Prince, Paul Sullivan [below right], sales and marketing director at Wadworth, said: "With the horse going and changes in the stables structure with the men, we didn't want the staff leaving appear less important than the horse."



"Barry and Vince had a very long service with us and we are incredibly grateful for everything they have done."

Mr Sullivan said Wadworth had failed to find replacement shires over the years.

He said: "We have tried to get back up to four horses but it's very difficult to find stock."

Now There Are Two As Brewer Wadworth Cuts Down On Shire Horses - And Staff



The Shires on their Summer Vacation at Poulshot

Iconic shire horses will continue to delivering beer in Devizes, say Wadworth Brewery bosses, despite taking a decision to reduce their number to two.

The Devizes brewery dispensed with the services of shire horse Prince at the end of January, leaving only Max and Monty remaining.

As a result of Prince leaving Wadworth long-serving horsemen Barry Petherick and Vince Minty were made redundant.

Wadworth used to have four shire horses which worked in pairs pulling two drays delivering beer, wines and spirits to pubs within a two-mile radius of the brewery.

In February 2011 the shires went down to three when Percy, with Wadworth for nine months, failed to make the grade and left. Despite searching for a replacement a suitable shire horse was not found. The shire horses remained when Wadworth outsourced its distribution function to KNDL's depot in Thatcham, Berkshire, in November 2012.

Charles Bartholomew, managing director of Wadworth, said as a result of outsourcing distribution there was less work for the shire horses to do and that Prince was the least healthy of the three shire horses and was ageing.

Mr Bartholomew said: "It was a sort of downsize. We were going to have to upscale to four shire horses or drop down to two.

"We were delivering quite a lot in the town using the shire horses but when we contracted out the distribution we now deliver less in the town."

Prince, 11, had worked at Wadworth for seven years. The brewery took a gamble when they recruited him as he was younger than they normally like as there was a shortage of shire horses available. He has gone to Westons Cider in Much Marcle, Herefordshire, does not have to undertake daily deliveries and will mainly have grass underfoot.



Mr Bartholomew said: "If shire horses are working on the road all the time you have to be careful of their legs. Prince was the one out of the three of them that looked as if there could be problems there.

"We were thrilled that Westons could take him. It couldn't have worked better for him."

The Wadworth shires are hugely popular in the county and every year hundreds of well-wishers turn out to watch the horses enjoy the start of their summer holiday in fields at Poulshot.

Town mayor Pete Smith said he was very sad to hear the town was to lose another shire horse.

He said: "It is a great loss. The horses are such an attraction – I sometimes think they are more important than the brewery.

"I know motorists do cuss when they get stuck behind them, but they are such an asset. If I win the Lottery, I will buy another two shire horses for the town."

Duke Reined Over Devizes Dray Horses In History Which Spans The Decades



The shire horses were reintroduced at Wadworth in 1974 by then managing director Major John Cairns Bartholomew, father of Charles Bartholomew. Initially there were two shire horses but the brewery increased them to four in about 1979. In May 2004 Prince Philip visited Devizes and drove one of the Wadworth drays in the town centre. He visited the brewery to mark the 30th anniversary of the return of shire horses to the brewery. The four shire horses then were Barron, Buscot, Tom and Royal.

Charles Bartholomew said: "It's nice to see the shire horses out delivering beer and we want that to continue.

"They are also a very important part of our Visitor Centre tours and they are doing more on the PR side for visiting pubs. I think it's not likely at the moment that we will go back to having three shires."

Max, who is 11 this year, has been at Wadworth for eight years while ten-year-old Monty has been there since September 2009. With the existing shires at a similar age to Prince, the Gazette asked if they would be replaced when they retire.

Mr Bartholomew said: "Oh yes, definitely. We definitely want to keep horses here in Devizes. It's an important part of the whole business and the town." Wadworth is planning to sell off its other site opposite the Assize Courts where the shire horses are stabled and where its wine warehouse and sign workshop is and for them to relocate to the main brewery building in Northgate Street, although there is no timescale for this. Mr Bartholomew said new stables would be built for the shire horses, probably at the rear yard overlooking the canal. He said: "I think we would want to build stables for three horses, if not four, because if we have horses on trial we need somewhere to put them."



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