

## Section 12.24

### The Myllet Arms public house, Western Avenue, Perivale, London Borough of Ealing, UB6 8TE

**Date:** 1935-36  
**Architect:** E. B. Musman  
**Brewery:** Benskin's Watford Brewery

#### History and Context

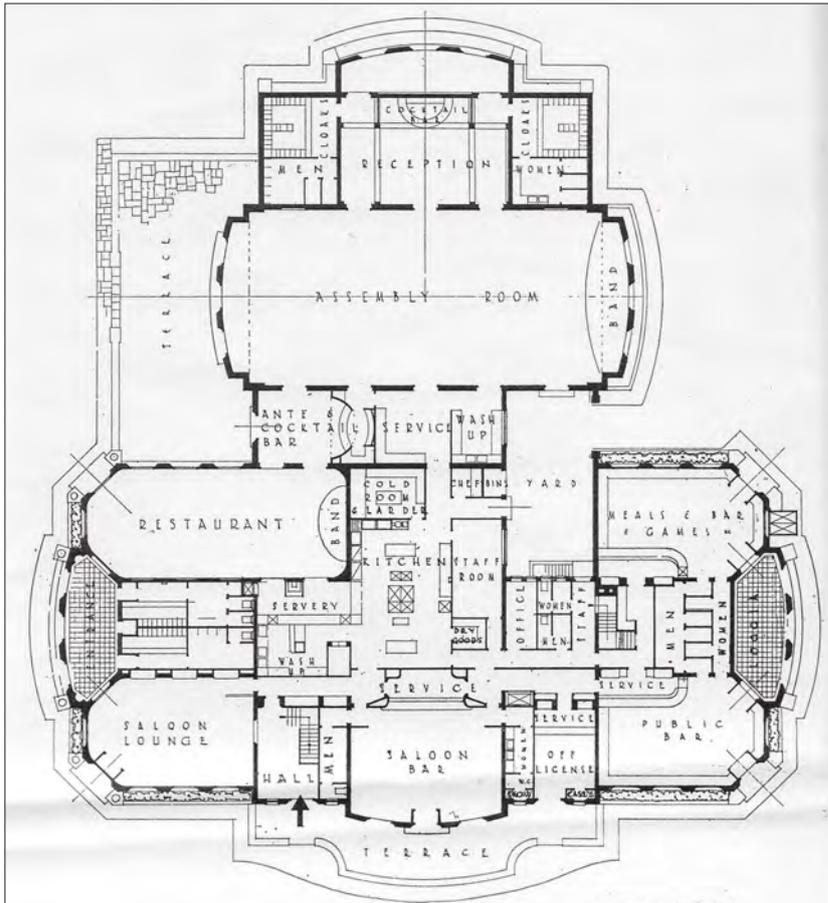
The Myllet Arms – named after the Myllet family, lords of the manor in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries – is a substantial, detached public house on the south side of Western Avenue (Fig. 12.24.1, and see Fig. 5.1). This thoroughfare, a major route into and out of London, opened in 1927 and is now a six-lane highway. Western Avenue was lined with a mixture of houses and factories. Of the latter, the best known is the Hoover Factory (1931-35, by Wallis, Gilbert and Partners; listed grade II\*); this is located just to the north-east of the Myllet Arms, on the other side of Western Avenue. The surrounding housing dates mainly from the first half of the 1930s.

The Myllet Arms was an ambitious, expensive and significant project: the building tender came to £60,000, a huge amount, making it – according to David Gutzke's findings – the second most costly pub of the inter-war period.<sup>1</sup> It was undertaken by a large and



**12.24.1** *The Myllet Arms seen from the north-west. The glazed conservatory is a modern addition, as is the signage, but the exterior of the pub otherwise survives largely unaltered. (© Historic England, Emily Cole)*

<sup>1</sup> David W. Gutzke, *Pubs and Progressives: Reinventing the Public House in England, 1896-1960* (DeKalb, Illinois, 2006), p. 249. More expensive even than the Myllet Arms was the Windsor Castle, Victoria, London, now demolished (building tender £74,818). An article of 1936 proves that the ultimate cost of the Myllet Arms was £60,000: *The Caterer and Hotel Keeper*, 30 October 1936, p. 16



**12.24.2** The ground-floor plan of the Myllet Arms as published in the *Architect and Building News* in 1936, with its range of different rooms, catering for customers of different types and classes. The extension to the rear of the pub, containing the assembly room and associated spaces, was never built. North is to the bottom of the plan.

important brewery, Benskin's, which had its origins in Watford in the late seventeenth century and was run by the Benskin family from the 1870s. By the time of the company's acquisition by Ind Coope in 1957, it was the largest brewery in Hertfordshire, and also had property in London, the South East and the East of England. For the Myllet Arms, Benskin's commissioned the architect E. B. Musman (1888-1972), the premier pub designer of the inter-war years. Musman had already worked with Benskin's on projects including the Bull and Butcher, Whetstone, London (c. 1929), the Greyhound, Wembley, London (1930), and the Berkeley Arms Hotel, Cranford, London (1931-32; see Fig. 3.13 and section 12.4). Musman's best-known and most admired pubs – the Comet, Hatfield, Hertfordshire (1933; see Fig. 5.14), and the Nag's Head, Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire (1936; see Fig. 5.15), both listed grade II – were also carried out for Benskin's.

Benskin's acquired a triangular piece of land on the south side of Western Avenue in 1933.<sup>2</sup> Two years later, the design of the Myllet Arms was exhibited at the Royal Academy<sup>3</sup> – a comparatively rare occurrence for public house design at the time – and following its completion and opening in October 1936, the building attracted considerable attention in the architectural press. Indeed, the Myllet Arms was probably the most written about of all inter-war pubs, being covered in articles in *A Monthly Bulletin* (1935), the *Architect and Building News* (1936), *Architecture Illustrated* (1936), *The Brick Builder* (1936) and the *Architects' Journal*

2 Clement Shaw, 'The Myllet Arms, Perivale', *The Pennant*, Christmas 1936, p. 5

3 'The Modern Public House (new series):V: Some Public Houses designed for Benskins Watford Brewery Ltd, by Mr E. B. Musman', *A Monthly Bulletin*, December 1935, vol. 5, no. 12, plate 4. See also: *The Builder*, 10 May 1935, p. 859

(1938), as well as pieces in *The Caterer and Hotel Keeper* and *The Pennant*, the Benskin's in-house magazine (both of 1936).<sup>4</sup> All of these articles include early photographs, and most feature the pub's ground plan (Fig. 12.24.2, and see Fig. 11.1), with the first floor plan included in one instance.<sup>5</sup> That the building was altered shortly after completion is shown by the ground plans and exterior photograph published following the Second World War, in Basil Oliver's *The Renaissance of the English Public House* (1947) and Francis Yorke's *The Planning and Equipment of Public Houses* (1949) (see below).<sup>6</sup> This work must have been carried out between 1936 and 1939, though it is not shown in a photograph published in November 1938.<sup>7</sup>

All copies of the ground-floor plan show a large assembly room extension on the building's south side. Articles of 1935-36 make clear that this was intended – its planning was partly a result of expansion carried out at the Berkeley Arms Hotel following the building's initial completion (see section 12.4)<sup>8</sup> – and it was evidently the subject of further thought following the building's opening: the plans in Oliver and Yorke's books show a assembly room (named 'banqueting hall') of a different plan and arrangement (see below). Seemingly, it was never built; certainly, such a structure does not appear on the Ordnance Survey map of 1957, which is the first to include the Myllet Arms, the preceding map having been published in 1935 before the pub was complete. No copies of the original plans and associated drawings of the Myllet Arms are known to survive – for instance, there are none in the local archives or among the Benskin's papers in Hertfordshire Record Office.

In an article in *The Monthly Bulletin* in December 1935, 'a correspondent' wrote about the Myllet Arms, which was 'now being built'. This he described as 'one of Messrs Benskin's most ambitious ventures', continuing: 'Planned to cope with an entirely new demand which has arisen in this district, it will meet every need with large bars, a restaurant, hotel accommodation and, later, an Assembly Hall'; he noted that it had a large garden and ample parking.<sup>9</sup> As this comment makes clear, the Myllet Arms was seen at the time as being more than an ordinary public house; in 1936, it was termed a 'combined inn, roadhouse and hotel', while another journal named it an 'inn-cum-roadhouse-cum-hotel'.<sup>10</sup> Like Musman's Comet

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4 'The Modern Public House (new series):V: Some Public Houses designed for Benskins Watford Brewery Ltd, by Mr E. B. Musman', *A Monthly Bulletin*, December 1935, vol. 5, no. 12, p. 189; *Architect and Building News*, vol. 148, October 1936, pp. 108-110; *Architecture Illustrated*, November 1936, pp. 142-147; 'The Redemption of the English Hostel', *The Brick Builder*, December 1936, pp. 19-20; *Architects' Journal*, vol. 88, 24 November 1938, p. 854; *The Caterer and Hotel Keeper*, 30 October 1936, p. 16; *The Pennant*, Christmas 1936, pp. 3-7. A short account was also published in the *Middlesex County Times*, 10 October 1936.

5 The ground-floor plan appears in the *Architect and Building News* (p. 108, with the first-floor plan also), *Architecture Illustrated* (p. 143), and the *Architects' Journal* (p. 854). There are also various photographs of the building's exterior and interior within the Historic England Archive, image numbers 3248-077 to 3248-101.

6 Basil Oliver, *The Renaissance of the English Public House* (London, 1947), p. 38, with external view opposite p. 37; Francis W. B. Yorke, *The Planning and Equipment of Public Houses* (London, 1949), p. 108

7 *Architects' Journal*, 24 November 1938, p. 853. This photograph shows the pub from the north-west, and it can be clearly seen that the loggia is still in its original, unglazed form.

8 *The Pennant*, Christmas 1936, p. 7

9 'The Modern Public House (new series):V: Some Public Houses designed for Benskins Watford Brewery Ltd, by Mr E. B. Musman', *A Monthly Bulletin*, December 1935, vol. 5, no. 12, p. 189

10 *The Caterer and Hotel Keeper*, 30 October 1936, p. 16; *Middlesex County Times*, 10 October 1936. In the same year, *The Times* described the Myllet Arms, citing it as an example of 'the inn-cum-roadhouse – no one has yet invented an appropriate name for it – offering the advantages of a communal centre; with

Hotel in Hatfield, it was designed with the needs of passing motorists in mind,<sup>11</sup> as much as those of the local population and also of local factory workers and managers (the Myllet Arms was the first licensed house to open in the parish of Perivale, then 'a large and rapidly growing district').<sup>12</sup> The first-floor plan published in the *Architect and Building News* shows that there were eight bedrooms for guests at that level, along with a private dining room and private sitting room (see below).<sup>13</sup> These people were clearly discerning: Basil Oliver wrote that Musman's Berkeley Arms (see section 12.4), Comet and Myllet Arms all provided 'meals (cooked by a French chef) for a rather special clientele for whose requirements these houses were primarily built'.<sup>14</sup> The first landlord of the Myllet Arms was a Mr Albert Widmer, who had previously been assistant manager of the Ritz-run Carlton Hotel in Pall Mall, London.<sup>15</sup>

Reflecting the level of change carried out to the interior of the Myllet Arms, the pub is not included in CAMRA's inventory. It does not form part of a conservation area, and is not included on the local list maintained by Ealing Council.

## Description

### Exterior

The Myllet Arms stands on the west side of a triangular site, bordered by Western Avenue (on the north), Perivale Lane (on the south) and Horsenden Lane South (on the west). Its aspects to north and south contrast enormously: on the former are the busy lanes of Western Avenue, while on the latter is the medieval parish church of Perivale, a golf course and semi-rural landscape. The pub is built of brick with some steel framing and has roofs of 'warm toned classic' Italian tiles<sup>16</sup> – the bricks, of 'light brown and umber', were specially made by Messrs Proctor and Lavender of Solihull, Warwickshire, and set within buff-coloured mortar.<sup>17</sup> The building has two storeys, with some single-storey blocks. It is plain – even austere – Neo-Georgian in style, though with something of a nod to Continental villas (especially in the design of the tiled roof). An article of 1936 noted that 'The general scheme, both externally and internally, is based on a restrained but contemporary rendering of traditional *motifs*'.<sup>18</sup> The building has a long rectangular plan with canted corners, and features sash windows, rectangular at first-floor level and arch-headed below.

Surviving photographs (see above) show all of the building's elevations, though the south (most utilitarian) side in least detail. The main entrance front was originally on the

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assembly hall and dance floor; luncheon and dining rooms, terraces and outdoor games, and bedrooms for guests': *The Times*, 10 October 1936, p. 9. See also: *The Pennant*, Christmas 1936, p. 6

11 The Myllet Arms is mentioned in the section on roadhouses in: Kathryn A. Morrison and John Minnis, *Carscapes: The Motor Car, Architecture and Landscape in England* (New Haven and London, 2012), p. 300

12 *The Caterer and Hotel Keeper*, 30 October 1936, p. 16; *The Pennant*, Christmas 1936, pp. 3-4

13 An account of the pub's opening, however, mentions 'twelve bedrooms for visitors': *Middlesex County Times*, 10 October 1936

14 Oliver, *The Renaissance of the English Public House*, pp. 37-38

15 *The Caterer and Hotel Keeper*, 30 October 1936, p. 16; *Middlesex County Times*, 10 October 1936

16 *Architects' Journal*, 24 November 1938, p. 854; *Architecture Illustrated*, November 1936, p. 144

17 *The Brick Builder*, December 1936, p. 19

18 *Architect and Building News*, vol. 148, October 1936, p. 109



**12.24.3** The pub's west elevation, which remains almost exactly as completed in the 1930s. (© Historic England, Emily Cole)

building's north side, facing directly onto Western Avenue (see Figs 5.1 and 12.24.1). A free-standing sign – designed by Musman and carved by the artist Gertrude Hermes – stood on the north-west of the pub, bearing the arms of the Myllet family.<sup>19</sup> The main access for cars was at the east end of this front, and the whole north area seems to have functioned as a car park and turning point. The north façade is a mixed composition, although it is symmetrical. The central area, with a single-storey bowed projection at ground-floor level, is framed by two towers or pavilions, each topped by a pyramidal tiled roof. Originally, both pavilions bore finials with flags, and both contained doorways at ground-floor level:<sup>20</sup> that on the right (west) led to the off sales department, and that on the left (east) provided access to the guest rooms on the first floor. The entrance at the centre of the bowed section, providing access to the saloon bar, was approached by shallow steps bounded by brickwork. The area on the roof of this single-storey projection was used as a balcony, while there were also balconies on each pavilion, beneath the first-floor windows.<sup>21</sup>

On the east, the façade was again symmetrical. The central section had a bowed projection at ground-floor level, containing three arched openings, and was recessed above, the areas to either side forming pavilions, with canted roofs. In each of the central arched openings were doors, leading into a spacious entrance vestibule, with access to the restaurant (on the south) and the saloon lounge (on the north). The equivalent façade on the west side of the building was more-or-less identical (Fig. 12.24.3), though, as built, the arched openings at the centre were unglazed, forming a loggia. This led to the public bar (at the north-west corner of the building) and, on the south-west, to a room marked 'meals & bar & games' on the plan published in the *Architect and Building News*.<sup>22</sup> As has been noted, shortly after completion, the Myllet Arms was slightly

19 For the sign, see: *Architect and Building News*, vol. 148, October 1936, p. 109, and *Architecture Illustrated*, November 1936, p. 144

20 Of the finials, the *Architect and Building News* noted that 'the twin towers are surmounted by copper and lead finials supporting pennants which are based in design on the trade mark of the brewery': *Architect and Building News*, vol. 148, October 1936, p. 109

21 Perhaps the best illustration of this area of the pub is that published in: Oliver, *The Renaissance of the English Public House*, plate 9

22 *Architect and Building News*, vol. 148, October 1936, p. 108

reworked: this seems to have focused on the west end of the pub. A comparison of plans published before and after the Second World War shows that the arches of loggia on the west were glazed in, and that the public bar was extended to fill the entire west end of the pub (see below).

The façade on the south can be glimpsed in a photograph of 1936, taken from the south-east of the pub.<sup>23</sup> This shows that there was certainly no assembly room in existence at that time. The exact arrangement is difficult to assess, since the published plans all show the assembly room and associated spaces as if they had been built (i.e. they are the full proposed plans, rather than the plans of the pub as completed in 1936). Seemingly, the façade had the five arched openings of the restaurant/lounge at ground-floor level on the right (east), and the three arched openings of the corner pavilion on the left (west). Judging by the photograph of 1936, the remainder seems to have been formed by a blank wall; this formed the rear part of an open yard and service rooms (larder, cold room). The open yard in this area is shown on the Ordnance Survey plans of 1957 and 1970. Also (more confusingly) shown on these maps are various extensions on this side of the pub – to the east of the yard. The function of these spaces is unknown, though one of the structures may have been an entrance porch (such a feature can currently be found in the comparable location; see below). The reorientation of the pub from north to south must have been desirable by this time, following the abandonment of the plans for a south extension and the increasing pace and development of Western Avenue.

On the whole, the exterior of the Myllet Arms survives surprisingly well, with original glazing and doorways, and the quality and cost of the workmanship is reflected by the very fine brickwork and detailing. The north (main) elevation has perhaps suffered the most, and is covered with modern signage: here, the central bowed section has been removed and replaced with a projecting conservatory/glazed area (probably in the 1990s) (see Fig. 12.24.1). However, the rest of the front survives – even the pavilion's balconies and finials. The west elevation remains unchanged since the phase of alteration was undertaken in the late 1930s. The quality and nature of the work here proves that this phase of alteration must have been carried out very soon after the building's initial completion: the form of the windows is, for instance, exactly the same as others in the pub, even though this area is shown as an open loggia in photographs of 1936. The wall lamps do not survive, though their former location can readily be traced by the holes in the wall. The matching façade on the east also survives as built, though with more modern signage. The south front, as has been noted, was never completed as intended and was of a haphazard design as built. This remains the case: the central section consists of a modern, plain single-storey wall with tiled coping, projecting south from the main building, and a modern tiled entrance has been formed in a canted projection to the east. As in 1936, this wall has the purpose of masking the service areas beyond. On the west side of this façade, some of the windows have been covered and painted over.

Nothing is known about the layout of the grounds of the Myllet Arms, aside from the areas immediately surrounding the pub, which were laid to gravel and are shown in surviving photographs.<sup>24</sup> One contemporary article notes that the pub had 'a large

23 *The Brick Builder*, December 1936, p. 20; *Architecture Illustrated*, November 1936, p. 142

24 One article notes that 'A car park and drive surround the whole building': *The Caterer and Hotel Keeper*, 30 October 1936, p. 16

garden', though more detailed accounts have not been found.<sup>25</sup> It is likely, however, that the large open area to the east – forming the other side of the triangular site on which the pub was built – served as a garden area for the use of customers. The Ordnance Survey map of 1957 certainly shows this east area as containing trees, as does the Royal Academy design of 1935 (see above). Today, a modern hotel block occupies this site.

### *Interior*

The interiors of the Myllet Arms were, at the time of completion in 1936, pioneering in design: for instance, every room was fitted with a wireless (except the kitchens) and the whole building was air conditioned.<sup>26</sup> The ground floor included five main rooms – meals/games room (at the south-west), public bar (north-west), saloon bar (north), saloon lounge (north-east) and restaurant (south-east) – plus off licence or off sales department (between saloon and public bars) and service areas (see Fig. 12.24.2). This was a generous provision, and reflected the pub's ambitions and the size and nature of its intended clientele.

Also intended was an extension on the south. Originally, this was to be narrower than the main structure but of considerable depth, its main feature being an assembly room, arranged west-east. This – capable of holding 600 people<sup>27</sup> – was to be joined to the restaurant by an anteroom/cocktail bar, and was to have lavatories and a reception area (with a second cocktail bar) on its south side, with a bowed front; it was probably to be of a single storey. It was noted at the time that the hall was to "be used either in connection with the hotel or let privately as a complete unit with its own entrance foyer, cloakrooms, lavatories and service".<sup>28</sup> After the Second World War, these plans were revised, the extension being made wider along its east-west axis – as wide as the rest of the pub – and less deep. The plan published by Basil Oliver shows this area – marked 'future extension' – as featuring a banqueting hall, again arranged east-west, with a foyer on its east and a garage and children's room on the west. As before, it was to be joined to the restaurant by an anteroom and cocktail bar, but now seems to have risen to an upper floor, at least at its east end, where staircases are shown as ascending to cloakrooms. As has been noted, this part of the pub seems never to have been executed.

The largest of the pub's various rooms was the restaurant, at the south-east, capable of seating one hundred people.<sup>29</sup> This had a semicircular platform for a band at its west end, a maple floor, a 'vaulted ceiling with intercepting vaults to windows' – similar to that in Musman's club room at the Berkeley Arms Hotel (see section 12.4) – and plain painted walls, with a mural painting on the west, executed by Cosmo Clark and depicting 'a pleasant landscape';<sup>30</sup> service was provided via 'in and out' doors on the room's north-

25 'The Modern Public House (new series):V: Some Public Houses designed for Benskins Watford Brewery Ltd, by Mr E. B. Musman', *A Monthly Bulletin*, December 1935, vol. 5, no. 12, p. 189

26 *The Caterer and Hotel Keeper*, 30 October 1936, p. 16

27 *Ibid*

28 *Architect and Building News*, vol. 148, October 1936, p. 109

29 *The Caterer and Hotel Keeper*, 30 October 1936, p. 16

30 *Architects' Journal*, 24 November 1938, p. 854; *Architect and Building News*, vol. 148, October 1936, p. 110; *The Caterer and Hotel Keeper*, 30 October 1936, p. 16; *The Pennant*, Christmas 1936, p. 6. The two last mentioned articles include views of the interior of the restaurant, with the mural visible. A similar photograph, with an image of the main front of the Myllet Arms, appears in: *The Times*, 10 October 1936, p. 16



**12.24.4** The elegant interior of the pub's saloon lounge, in a photograph taken shortly after its completion. The room had a vaulted ceiling and was panelled in teak. Drinks served here included tea and cocktails. (Reproduced by permission of Historic England)



**12.24.5** The interior of the meals/games room, shown here in a photograph of 1936, was plain and utilitarian. It had tiled walls up to three-quarter height and a panelled counter front. (Reproduced by permission of Historic England)

west. The restaurant – also known as the lounge – was entered via the east front and its large central vestibule.<sup>31</sup> On the west of this were substantial cloakrooms and toilets, while on the north a doorway led to the saloon lounge, which had a counter at its south-west corner.<sup>32</sup> Like the restaurant, it had a vaulted ceiling, and was panelled in teak; here, teas were served, and there was also a cocktail bar (Fig. 12.24.4).<sup>33</sup> There was apparently no interconnection between this east end of the pub and the other rooms, though a service passage connected the saloon lounge to the adjacent entrance hall and the main service areas.<sup>34</sup> The saloon bar on the north of the building was entirely self-contained, being entered from the main north front, having a counter on its south and toilets to either side (west and east); it was panelled in ‘wood veneered with blistered mahogany’.<sup>35</sup>

On the west, beyond the off licence, the suite of rooms was self-contained, as on the east. The main room here was the public bar, at the pub’s north-west corner; this was lined with oak panelling and had a floor of red quarry tiles.<sup>36</sup> Originally, the loggia formed a passage through to the meals/games room (Fig. 12.24.5) – with tiled walls up to 7 feet<sup>37</sup> – on the south-west, the two rooms being divided by lavatories. Clearly, the arrangement proved inconvenient and perhaps not sufficiently spacious, for in the late 1930s the loggia was glazed in and an area of three rooms was created, all labelled ‘public bar’ on the plan published by Oliver. A counter was created in the central area, joining the two already in existence, and toilets were inserted on the east side of the former meals/games room.

In the centre of the plan was a huge service area, including a private office, general office or staff room, a large kitchen, a chef’s office, an area for washing up, and toilets for staff. On the first floor, above the meals/games room, accessed by a stair from the service area, were dormitories for male and female staff, with staff bathrooms and, on the north, two bedrooms for the pub’s tenant. Three bedrooms for guests filled the area at the centre of the north front, while on the other side of the main staircase – in the left pavilion – were further guest bedrooms, extending along the east front. Here, the two pavilions included a private sitting room (at the north-east) and a private dining room (at the south-east). These were ‘used for business dinners by neighbouring firms’.<sup>38</sup>

The interior of the Myllet Arms has been greatly altered (Fig. 12.24.6), reflecting its size, its continued use and popularity (the building is now a ‘Fayre and Square’ family-friendly pub), and the original building’s inability to cater for modern needs, the inter-war plan being so broken up into different areas. Today, the main entrance, car park and garden, are on the south. Customers pass through what was originally the kitchen in order to enter the main bar area. This takes the form of an open space, without principal room divisions, covering the area formerly occupied by the saloon bar, off sales and three-room

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31 A photograph of this vestibule appears in: *Architecture Illustrated*, November 1936, p. 146

32 A photograph of the saloon lounge appears in: *The Pennant*, Christmas 1936, p. 5

33 *Architects’ Journal*, 24 November 1938, p. 854; *The Caterer and Hotel Keeper*, 30 October 1936, p. 16; *The Pennant*, Christmas 1936, p. 6

34 A photograph of the entrance hall appears in: *Architecture Illustrated*, November 1936, p. 147

35 *Architect and Building News*, vol. 148, October 1936, pp. 109-110. A photograph of this room appears in: *Architecture Illustrated*, November 1936, p. 145

36 *Architects’ Journal*, 24 November 1938, p. 854; *The Pennant*, Christmas 1936, p. 6

37 *Ibid.* There are photographs of the interior of this room in: *Architect and Building News*, vol. 148, October 1936, p. 110; A photograph of this room appears in: *Architecture Illustrated*, November 1936, p. 145

38 *The Caterer and Hotel Keeper*, 30 October 1936, p. 16



**12.24.6** *The modernised interior of the Myllet Arms, showing the area once occupied by the public bar and meals/games room. Some inter-war features survive, including ceiling decoration and the upper part of a former servery. (© Historic England, Emily Cole)*

public bar; the off sales area has been entirely removed, the counters are all modern, there is a conservatory/glazed area in place of the bowed central section which formed the entrance to the saloon, and (non-functional?) fireplaces have been inserted at various points.

However, areas of original work survive, and the pub's original arrangement has not been entirely obscured. Piers mark the location of former walls, and the counters – though not as extensive as in the original pub – are on roughly the same lines. In the east end of the building in particular, there are a number of original features, including the service stairs rising to the first floor, the toilets (in terms of location) to the east of the south public bar, and the upper part of the counter in the central public bar. Decorative features which may be of an inter-war date – they certainly pre-date 1960 – are the criss-cross ceiling in the central public bar, the cornice (egg and dart) in the central and south public bars, the octagonal feature at the centre of the south public bar, and decoration on the ceiling in the former saloon bar. The former entrance hall, on the east of the saloon bar, has been replanned, now incorporating toilets, while the east end of the Myllet Arms has been subject to an even greater level of change: this now forms a Wacky Warehouse, an area for children, and is a single open space, rising through two storeys.

### Significance

The Myllet Arms is perhaps most significant for being a work designed by Ernest Brander Musman (1888-1972), probably the most admired and successful of inter-war

pub architects. He was a Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects, and author of various articles on pub design; he worked not just for Benskin's, but also for Watney, Combe & Reid and Barclay Perkins. The largest and best-known of Musman's pub projects, aside from the Myllet Arms, were the Berkeley Arms Hotel, Cranford, London (1931-32; see Fig. 3.13 and section 12.4), and the Comet Hotel, Hatfield, Hertfordshire (1933; listed grade II; see Fig. 5.14). The Nag's Head in Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire (1936; grade II; see Fig. 5.15), also attracted particular attention, mainly on account of its striking Moderne design.

In addition to these four buildings, six pubs by Musman were selected for further investigation as part of this project, the others – generally small in scale and Neo-Georgian in style – being: the Gipsy Queen, Kentish Town, London (c. 1927), the Bull and Butcher, Whetstone, London (c. 1929), the Greyhound, Wembley, London (1930), the Royal Oak, Edgware, London (c. 1934), the White Horse, Edmonton, London (c. 1937), and the New Jolly Caulkers, Rotherhithe, London (pre-1937) (see Appendix 2).<sup>39</sup> All of these were found to have been altered to a large degree, especially internally, and only the Berkeley Arms and the Myllet Arms were added to the final list. It might be noted that even the Comet has been greatly altered internally, only fragments of the 1930s work remaining.

The Comet and the Nag's Head are the two Musman pubs that are currently listed. Both are particularly notable for being built in the Moderne style, a form which was not particularly common for pubs in the inter-war years. However, as will be clear from the information set out above, neither is particularly representative of Musman's work as a whole. Almost all of his other pub commissions were carried out in a Neo-Georgian style, the major exception being the Berkeley Arms, which resembles a French château.

It is no exaggeration to say that the Myllet Arms was the most important pub commission of Musman's career. It was an ambitious and incredibly costly project – it seems to be the most expensive public house of the inter-war years to survive today<sup>40</sup> – and attracted more attention in the press than any of his other works: indeed, probably more attention than any other pub built in 1918-39. The Myllet Arms was held up as an outstanding example of an improved pub. At the opening ceremony in 1936, the writer and politician A. P. Herbert stated that 'This building ... is one of the most beautiful I have ever seen', while an article of Christmas the same year commented that the Myllet Arms had 'already helped into being a realisation that the days of the sordid gin palace are over, and that the inn has returned to its old place as a thriving communal centre'.<sup>41</sup>

The Myllet Arms is especially notable for its scale and pretensions. Very few twentieth-century pubs or pub/hotels were as large as the Myllet Arms; of those that were built, even fewer remain, the prime example being Musman's Comet in Hatfield. Both

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39 Two other Musman pubs were identified but not selected for investigation, these being the King's Arms, Greenwich, London (pre-1938), and the King's Arms, Amersham, Buckinghamshire (1936), the latter being a rebuilding of an earlier pub.

40 This statement is based on the list of costs set out in David Gutzke's table of 'superpubs': Gutzke, *Pubs and Progressives*, pp. 249-251. As stated in note 1, the cost of the Myllet Arms was exceeded by only the Windsor Castle, Victoria, London (c. 1928), now demolished (building tender £74,818).

41 *Middlesex County Times*, 10 October 1936; *The Pennant*, Christmas 1936, p. 7

the Comet and the Myllet Arms were not conventional public houses; they, and the Berkeley Arms Hotel also, were considered at the time to be roadhouses (see p. 8), and there is no doubt that the customers of the Myllet Arms must have been drawn from a very wide area and social strata, a fact emphasised by the pub's planning – with different entrances for different social groups – the quality of its architecture and interior decoration, and the range and scale of its facilities. Overall, the building can be seen to conform to the description of a 'road hotel', as set out in an article by Musman in 1937, surely written with the Myllet Arms in mind. The architect stated that:

This hybrid is neither a public house nor an inn, neither a roadhouse nor a hotel, but at its present stage combines certain aspects of them all. It has the bars of the public house, the restaurant and cocktail lounge of the hotel, the tearoom, the dance hall and outside sports amenities of the roadhouse. It has a number of bedrooms available not only for the travelling public, but also for those employed in the neighbourhood who wish to make a place of this kind their headquarters.<sup>42</sup>

It was as far away from the pre-First World War public house as it was possible to get, and this was a specific intention for Musman and Benskin's, as for many other architects and breweries of the period. The Myllet Arms is therefore very much a creation of the inter-war period, and belonged to a building type which did not continue much beyond the Second World War, even though Musman had seen the road hotel as being 'the public house of the future'.<sup>43</sup> In being a representative of this type, the Myllet Arms is a very rare survival.

The quality of the Myllet Arms's architecture must surely be apparent to anyone who studies the building. Its brickwork is, in particular, very impressive, with handsome details around the window and door openings. For *The Brick Builder*, the pub represented 'a high achievement both in the design and in the materials used', while another contemporary article wrote more generally of Musman's work: 'Inside and out, from the whole building to the smallest detail, he gives us good taste. He is never flamboyant or vulgar'.<sup>44</sup> Although it may seem plain to us today, the building's external simplicity is very representative of the type of pubs being built in the inter-war period, especially those which aimed to meet the ideals of pub improvement (see Chapters 4 and 5).<sup>45</sup> The Myllet Arms also represents other ideals, as set out by Musman in an article published in the *Architects' Journal* in 1938. For instance, the architect recommended that 'It is better in the case of a large house to arrange your parking all round the house, as the motorist, who thinks of stopping for a drink, would prefer to park his car near the bar he wishes to enter'.<sup>46</sup> Musman especially recommended a pub which could be entered from all four

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42 E. B. Musman, 'Development of the English Inn', *Building*, no. 12 vol. 12, December 1937, p. 514

43 Ibid

44 *The Brick Builder*, December 1936, p. 19; 'The Modern Public House (new series): V: Some Public Houses designed for Benskins Watford Brewery Ltd, by Mr E. B. Musman', *A Monthly Bulletin*, December 1935, vol. 5, no. 12, p. 187

45 This very plainness was a feature of note at the time. An article stated that, 'Nowhere in the hotel, Mr Widmer [the Myllet Arms's manager] pointed out with pride, can an advertisement for any proprietary article be seen. The brewers agreed to this scheme, and even their name only appears once on the outside of the hotel': *The Caterer and Hotel Keeper*, 30 October 1936, p. 16

46 E. B. Musman, 'Public Houses: Design and Construction', *Architects' Journal*, 24 November 1938, vol.

sides, as with the Myllet Arms, though Basil Oliver commented that the opportunities for such planning were rare.<sup>47</sup> A pub should, Musman wrote, 'have an inviting aspect, a feeling of welcome and comfort, a sense of refinement and well-being. It should make a passer-by stop to wish and enter'.<sup>48</sup> In these and other ways, the Myllet Arms is an invaluable expression of Musman's approach to pub design and planning. This remains the case, even though the interiors have been so greatly altered.

The Myllet Arms is also notable for its place in the local landscape and in the history of Perivale. It was an early fixture on Western Avenue – the pub opened nine years after the initial building of the road, and just a year after the completion of the Hoover Factory (listed grade II\*); it pre-dated the Factory's canteen (1938; grade II), and was the first public house in the area. Although its context has changed – the grounds of the pub are no longer entered directly from Western Avenue – it remains a highly visible feature of the road, and can be seen from above thanks to the building of a pedestrian walkway to the pub's north-west. The Myllet Arms – one of the few buildings in Perivale mentioned in the relevant Buildings of England volume<sup>49</sup> – provides an interesting counterpoint to the exuberant mass of the Hoover Factory across the road. Also interesting is the Myllet Arms's situation between the seething traffic of Western Avenue, with 1930s housing beyond, and what remains a rural landscape to the south, with the medieval parish church of Perivale (St Mary the Virgin; listed grade I; now a music venue) and open fields.

Overall, the building's major points of interest are:

- Its role in the architectural and historical development of Perivale (in particular, Western Avenue), being the first public house in the area
- Its status as a pub designed by E. B. Musman for Benskin's Watford Brewery, and one which well represents the style and nature of his other pub work
- Its size, ambition, cost and the quality of its architecture, and the fact that it attracted so much contemporary attention and comment
- Its status as an inter-war 'road hotel' (or pub/roadhouse), and its rarity in this regard
- Its role in reflecting the ideals of pub improvement and pub planning in the inter-war years
- The comparatively high level of survival of the exterior of the building.

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88, p. 835

47 Oliver, *The Renaissance of the English Public House*, p. 40

48 E. B. Musman, 'Public Houses: Design and Construction', *Architects' Journal*, 24 November 1938, vol. 88, pp. 836-7

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