

Maltings Harvest Festival

Warminster Maltings held a Victorian style Harvest Festival and Supper at the end of September, to celebrate the launch of their book “The Malt-stars of Warminster – the Remarkable Survival of Britain’s Oldest Working Maltings”. The event, staged in a large marquee set in the maltings garden, entertained 140 brewers and guests to traditional fare served at two long tables washed down with 8 different casks of ale.

Following a welcome speech from Chris Garratt, Managing Director, the evening began with a harvest review from Jonathan Arnold, malting barley director at Robin Appel Ltd, barley merchants and maintainers of Maris Otter barley in particular. Mr Arnold highlighted the fact that this year most of the malting barley across England had been safely harvested by mid August when the fine weather broke. Barley nitrogens across the East Anglian crop were high, but across the southern crop they were predominantly at the preferred 1.50% level sought by cask ale brewers. In particular, the barley corns were much heavier than previous years which offered the promise of good extract levels. But Mr Arnold was at pains to point out that the rollercoaster ride that farmers were experiencing with barley prices was a threat to supplies going forward. Two years ago the price spike had been followed by a spectacular crash and very low premiums, and although the unforeseen recovery in prices this year might suggest a regeneration of confidence by farmers, the now fragile supply/demand balance of the UK wheat crop was going to be an ongoing threat to spring barley plantings. Brewers needed to be aware of this.

The Rev Godfrey Broster, of Rectory Ales, then conducted a brief Harvest Festival and blessing before guests sat down to a sumptuous feast of roast meats at the traditionally decorated candle lit tables.

Following supper, the guest of honour Roger Protz, who has written the foreword to “The Malt-stars of Warminster” then got up and delivered his archetypal robust message in support of cask ale and the progressive expansion of the independent brewing sector. A significant part of this success had been born out of the achievements, against the odds, of Warminster Maltings, in particular its very bespoke service to brewers right across the UK.

Robin Appel, chairman of Warminster Maltings then rounded off with a few words about the book which he has compiled and written himself in order to formally record 155 years of continuous malt production at the Pound Street maltings.

The evening was concluded with music from some local traditional minstrels and some vigorous book signing by Roger and Robin. The following morning 65 guests returned for a tour of the maltings and ‘brunch’ in freshly laid out marquee.

Notes to Editors: Warminster Maltings Ltd supplies a complete range of malts designed to meet the requirements of the independent brewing sector, including a bespoke service of ‘local’ barley for ‘local’ ales. “The Malt-stars of Warminster – the Remarkable Survival of Britain’s Oldest Working Maltings” can be purchased direct from the maltings (Tel: 01985 212014) price £14.99 plus £4.00 postage & packaging. All proceeds from the book have been pledged to the charity ‘The Countryside Restoration Trust’.



Caption for photo enclosed:

"Chris Garratt, managing director of Warminster Maltings with his wife Mel, and the Rev. Godfrey Broster of Rectory Ales who conducted the Harvest Festival thanksgiving."