



Edition 11

11th July 2017

FRIENDS *of* **WARMINSTER MALTINGS**

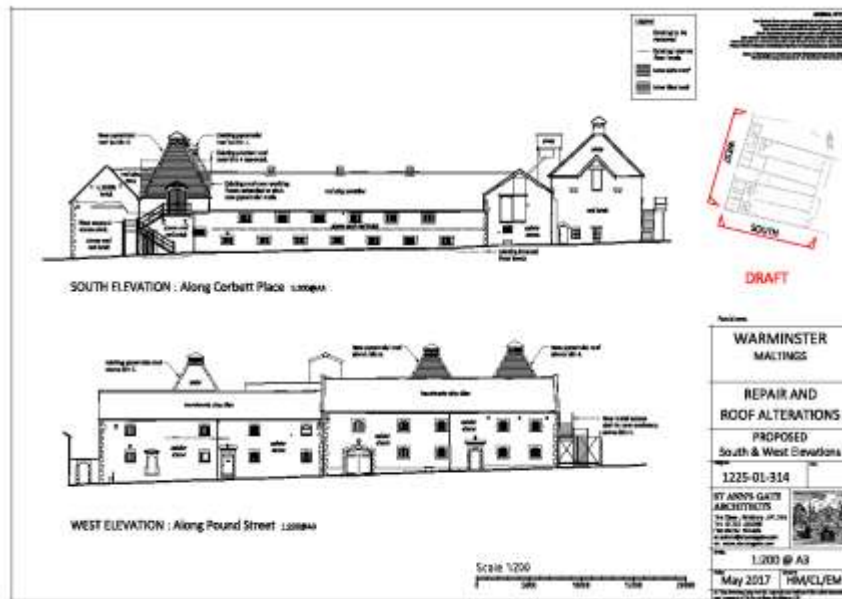
PARTY WITH A PURPOSE

Nearly 100 people attended our Drinks Reception in the marquee on the maltings' lawn on the evening of June 28th. The beers proved popular, the wines were well chilled, and the canapés, courtesy of Nobles Catering, were truly amazing.



Guests included many 'Friends' as well as the Deputy Mayor of Warminster, many of his fellow Councillors, and others representing services and trades across the town.

In my brief welcome address, I highlighted the final phase of our restoration programme for which we are in the process of seeking Planning Permission. Our plans, which were on display, include re-creating the 'pyramid' roofs on kilns 3 and 4 (see below), at the same time as establishing useful workspaces beneath them, both currently empty due to restricted access.



The point I made about the ‘pyramid’ kiln roofs is that they are the signature structures of an authentic Victorian floor maltings. These two kilns were sadly destroyed in a fire in 1924, and the then new technology advocated a pitched roof with a vent on the ridge, supplemented with wall mounted extractor fans. A distinctive change from the original!

My view is, what better way to show off Britain’s “Oldest Working Maltings” and its “most famous”, than to have the instantly recognisable original architecture on the corner of Pound Street and Cobbett Place, where everyone passing can see it, and hopefully appreciate it. Watch this space.

CRAFT BEER UNDER THREAT

The rise and rise of Craft Beer has caught the attention and admiration of almost everyone, but perhaps not the admiration of the ‘establishment’ brewers, whose brewing shortcomings have now cost them market share, as well as showing up some of their products as distinctly dull and uninteresting.

Some of these larger brewers have responded by buying up Craft Breweries (and at hugely inflated prices!). For others, consolidation appears to be the strategy, and the news last month that another old established family business, the brewery that brews Bombadier, Charles Wells of Bedford, has sold out to join the Marston’s portfolio, is full of foreboding.

For Marston’s, Bombadier, along with McEwans and Young’s brands, all owned by Charles Wells, now join Pedigree and other Burton beers, as well as Bank’s, Brakspear, Jennings, Ringwood, Thwaites and Wychwood. Alongside this grouping, Greene King, another member of the ‘establishment’, which brews its own range of beers including IPA and Abbott Ale, also owns Belhaven, Hardys and Hansons, Morland, Ridley and Ruddles, while Molson Coors, which purchased Craft Brewer Sharp’s in Cornwall a few years ago, has turned Doombar into Britains biggest selling cask ale at 200,000 barrels-a-year with all the consequences that this sort of scale tends to deliver. The output of these three companies together (companies whose brewing ethos many would question) Marston’s (350,000 barrels), Greene King (300,000 barrels) and Molson Coors (250,000 barrels), add up to approaching 40% of the cask beer market!

The worrying consequence of all this is that between these breweries they represent sufficient muscle to “persuade” both pub chains and supermarkets to award them disproportionate shelf space, and thus begin to undermine our choice! We need to fight back!

We need to, whenever we can, make sure we only support the genuine Craft Brewer, preferably the one from just down the road, whose provenance and success we can measure month by month. Otherwise, like the corner shop, our new brewing talent could eventually be squeezed out, and, for those who can remember the 1970's beer landscape, we shall be all the poorer for that!

HARVEST HAS BEGUN

It started in Suffolk, before the end of June, and by the beginning of this month combine harvesters right across the countryside were wading into the so called 'winter barley' crop, with a 7-day window of good weather to encourage progress.



This includes our much revered Maris Otter barley, and the first samples are extremely promising. Yields are good, as is quality, with low protein (ideal for ale), fine skin, and particularly high density grain which is good for 'extract' (the number of pints of beer you can produce from a tonne of barley). So beers brewed from Maris Otter barley are looking safe for the next 12 months at least, look for the variety on the label.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robin Appel." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Robin Appel