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FRIENDS of WARMINSTER MALTINGS

May I begin this first Newsletter of 2018 by wishing all our Friends a Very Happy, Healthy and Prosperous New Year.

There is not a lot to report from the maltings this month, there rarely is in January. I cannot even report any success from our spontaneous and hastily put together “Children in Need” Auction in the last Newsletter. We were wrong to expect any, so we have sent off a donation of our own.

It is invariably a bit quiet at the beginning of the year, the result of over indulgence by many of our customers in November and December! We are told the food and drinks sector, for the most part, performed well over Christmas, but the impression is that much of the growth in sales has been due to customers “trading up” as opposed to any real growth in volumes. So, perhaps, any brewers who may have been hoping for an upsurge in beer sales over the festive period, are now having to come to terms with a surplus of stock. Despite this, the outlook for malt sales looks promising.

GLOBAL MALT

Every year, for the last ten years, at the beginning of December, my grain company, Robin Appel Ltd, has organised a malting barley conference, latterly held at the Norton Park Country House Hotel in Hampshire. Warminster Maltings Ltd is a joint sponsor.

Last month’s event invited Francois Sonnevile, Global Beer Analyst for Dutch based Rabobank, to address the 130 delegates on the outlook for global demand of English malting barley and malt. The UK market was quickly dispatched, as beer volumes continue to decline, and pubs continue to close. The only consolation is that UK consumers are ‘trading up’, expressing a widespread willingness to pay more for a better experience. We are talking about taste!

As for the rest of the world, the message was very upbeat. The craft beer market in North America continues to expand fuelling continuous growth in the demand for English malt. At the same time, Latin America, Africa and Asia (China) are all about to come on board. It seems that across the globe the English beer styles have become almost as iconic as the Belgian brands, and brewers all across the world are dead set on truly authentic replication by brewing with English barley malt.



‘Emerging Markets’

Probably the most sought after of our English beer styles is India Pale Ale (IPA). Originally brewed in Burton-on-Trent and London to meet a demand from East India Company traders, this is a well hopped beer of 5-8% ABV. Today, amongst others, even Indian brewers now want to brew it, and brew it at home!

The outcome of all this, according to Francois Sonneville, is that the global brands (e.g. Budweiser, Heineken, Miller Lite etc.) will have to raise their game in order to defend market share. The most obvious way they can do this is to raise their usage of malt, instead of trying to get away with cheaper substitutes (maize, rice etc). We are talking about taste, again. Whether the global capacity for malt production is able to meet this potential upsurge in demand is very much open to question!

Regardless, what you need to know is, at Warminster Maltings, we are already on to all this. We are already dispatching containers of malt to most of these new markets, although not yet Africa. It's both fortuitous, and very attractive for us, because, at the moment, these new customers are happy to pay the prices we need to achieve for hand-made Warminster Malt. At the same time, within our domestic market, at the moment, we find it increasingly more difficult to achieve the prices we need all the time the UK market for beer remains under pressure. But, of course, nothing is forever!

MUSEUM PIECE

The history and heritage of our maltings is such a feature of our business, it has always been our desire to create a semblance of a museum at Pound Street. Made up of old photographs, documents, instruments and tools, our modest collection continues to grow, and it is particularly gratifying when we gain another item donated by someone keen to support our tiny contribution to history.

Our first donation, more than 10 years ago, came from a neighbour's garden shed. It is a wooden pronged malt fork, like the one depicted in the 1950 photograph below of then foreman Bill Baker turning 'green malt' on the germination floor.



'Bill Baker throwing malt on the germination floor, 1950.'

"It's probably yours!" claimed our neighbour, and it continues to stand centre stage of our display: 'Maltster's Former Hand Tools'.

Then, a few years later, in the post, from Bristol, we received a set of steel sack needles, and a quantity of twine, for repairing hessian sacks, the sacks in which all barley and malt was conveyed up until the 1960's.

Five or six years ago we were delighted to be given another Maltster's Sample Tin, common place more than 100 years ago for conveying samples of malt to prospective brewer customers. It came from a very old brewery in Lincolnshire, and we were advised it had been sitting on a top shelf in the

office “forever”, probably ever since the malt salesman presented it. It is the product of H.B.Walmsley & Sons Ltd, maltsters in London, who sold their business in 1932. This sample tin is different from any others we have, in that it is still full, of crystal malt! Amazingly, when presented to us, the malt sample was “as sweet as a nut”, and still is, and it sits in our display cabinet.

Most recently, just before Christmas, a good friend and previous donor to our museum, from Hadleigh, Suffolk, came up with some more interesting documents. These included the 1934 Sales Catalogue of Alfred R Tattersall & Co from London, suppliers of “Accessories for Factories, Mills, Granaries & Wharves”. Within it’s pages they offer their latest model of the ‘Universal Sack Truck’, of which we have an identical example standing in our reception hall.



‘Worth the Money’

I’m afraid I get quite excited when two separate items come together like this. I do not remember what I paid for the sack truck when I rescued it from an Antiques shop in Warminster about 10 years ago, but I do now know exactly what it cost new in 1934 – 36s 0d (thirty six shillings) !

More news in March, I hope.

Robin Appel

