



Edition 2

11<sup>th</sup> January 2016

## **FRIENDS** of WARMINSTER MALTINGS **FUNDRAISER**



Our last Maltings Tour of 2015 took place on Thursday evening 10<sup>th</sup> December, when we entertained 25 supporters of the Warminster Branch of **Cancer Research UK**. A very jolly party overcame all the challenges of the weather, the dark, and all the other 'Risks' of walking round our authentic Victorian maltings. Following supper, the evening ended with a very generous raffle, and close to £1,000 was raised for one of the best of the Good Causes. So a high note on which to end our hospitality of 2015.

### **BOSTON STEAM PUDDING!**

We start the New Year at the maltings with a spring in our step. Just before Christmas we renewed our contract to supply breweries across North America, and with an increased tonnage!

Interestingly, immediately following on from this, on Radio 4's 'Womans Hour' on the 22<sup>nd</sup> December, Jane Peyton, a leading, very articulate beer sommelier and "booze historian", was invited to represent beer in a challenge that pitted wine against beer - which was the better to accompany Christmas pudding? Jane's first choice was from Massachusetts - Sam Adams Boston Steam Brewery,

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their **Vienna Lager**. Sam Adams is probably Warminster Maltings biggest single customer in North America, the brewery takes a whole container (20 tonnes) at a time of our precious Maris Otter malt. So well done Jane for that selection...and for winning the challenge (judged by the listeners to 'Womans Hour', courtesy of Twitter).

## **VIKING INVASION**

In January we are entertaining brewers from Norway and another party another day from Holland. It seems they are not really wanting to buy our malt, instead, they each tell us they want to build a floor maltings of their own! We do not know whether to be flattered by this, or feel threatened. I do not think we should feel threatened because it will not be easy, and it will be very expensive. Just consider our kiln, for starters, it is all bespoke engineering, which comes at a huge price. We know, because we have just ordered a new one!

Hopefully, we will be able to impress our visitors from across the sea that what we have at Warminster is very special, and, of course, not remotely easy to replicate. Add to that all the heritage elements we can bring to the supply chain, and, who knows, perhaps they will buy our malt after all.

## **CRAFT ALE to the FORE**

The world's biggest brewers are just getting bigger and bigger. AB InBev's takeover of SABMiller would make the former the biggest global brewer by far, with almost total domination of beer sales across the African continent, for example. But AB InBev's appetite is not just for the biggest fishes in the sea, they are also focused on some of the smallest. Their acquisition, just before Christmas, of the tiny Camden Town Brewery, in London, made for a news item on Radio 4's 'Today' programme. The brewery was only recently built, in 2010, situated in the Victorian railway arches, just north of Camden High Street. Its particular claim to fame is it brews very good quality lagers. We should not assume that the quality of 'Camden's beers is what really attracted the attention of the 'Today' programme researchers. No, it was the purchase price paid by AB InBev that raised everyone's eyebrows - according to The Guardian newspaper, a handsome £85m! Not surprisingly the 'Camden' shareholders are reported to be "ecstatic".

Camden Town Brewery is a good example of the new generation of craft breweries which have sprung up over the last fifteen years, and which (although not including Camden Town Brewery) form the backbone of Warminster Maltings customers. So what is happening here, a question that echoes that of the 'Today' programme's presenters. Does a development of this sort represent a threat or an opportunity for craft beer?

Those behind this blockbuster deal are quite clear it is the latter. New investment will be forthcoming to allow Camden Town Brewery to build a second, bigger brewery. This will allow their excellent lagers and beers to reach an even wider market. But, of course, some will respond, that is for now.

What is more likely is that this is a recognition by the major brewers that the new market for beers has completely got away from them, and within their conglomerates it would take a decade or more to change the 'mindset' and management structures necessary to catch up? If this is the case, probably the best alternative is acquisition, and, besides, what is £85m to a company focused on creating a global behemoth worth £70 bn?

Either way, it is unlikely that AB InBev is throwing its money about with gay abandon. It is more likely it is accepting the future, nay present, market for beer is a lot more about 'local', premium quality, exciting products, from both visible and accessible breweries (brewery tours/brewery tap) all supported by continuous interaction between the brewery staff and customers courtesy of social media. Certainly these are the features that have made Camden Town Brewery a success, and many other small independent breweries supplied by Warminster Maltings.

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So this should be all very good news for us, because it further underpins our belief that the market place in which we are widely engaged has an even more exciting future than anything we have seen so far. And it is really good news for lovers of Real Ale when an industrial steamroller of a company such as AB InBev has to acknowledge that when it comes to food and drink, not all consumers, by a long way, are driven by price!

**A Happy, Healthy and Prosperous New Year to all our Friends.**

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robin Appel." The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'R' and a period at the end.

Robin Appel