



Edition 5

14th July 2016

FRIENDS of WARMINSTER MALTINGS

SUMMERTIME

It's summer at the maltings, and the words of Flanders and Swan from their "Song of Weather" are ringing in our ears: "June just rains and never stops. Thirty days and spoils the crops". It also spoiled our first '**Teas in the Garden**' event in June which had to be cancelled.

It nearly spoiled our second attempt, yesterday - following a beautiful morning, the rain dumped itself all over Warminster at 1 0'clock, although it did actually dry up by 2.00pm. But the afternoon epitomised the next verse of the song - "In July the sun is hot. Is it shining? No it's not!"



Despite this, 16 people braved the elements, all first time visitors I believe, and they appeared to thoroughly enjoy the home-made scones and cakes, not to mention the garden looking resplendent with its July floral patterns.

So we will persevere, surely it can only get better for our next attempts...

Wednesday 10th August -2.00 to 4.00pm.
Wednesday 14th September – 2.00 to 4.00pm.

TRIO OF LUNCH PARTIES

On the 7th – 9th June Warminster Maltings hosted three consecutive lunch parties all arranged by special invitation. A marquee was erected in the garden for these events, and hospitality included 6 cask ales supplied by customers of Warminster Malt.



Day 1 welcomed a party of 33 farmers from north Norfolk, on a four day tour of farms and related businesses across the southern counties. Day 2 entertained a History Group from Hampshire, and Day 3 catered for Brewers and Distillers from across the country, all visiting the maltings for the very first time.

Comments from all, afterwards, ranged from “we did not realize just how special is the process of ‘floor made’ malt” to “a truly magical place!” And the 6 casks of ale were all gratifyingly drained.

NEW LORRY

We have just taken delivery of a new lorry for our driver Ian Sainsbury. This lorry becomes Ian’s home from Monday to Friday every week, delivering malt right across the country. He returns to the yard a couple of times each week, only to reload, and drive straight off again. I’ve witnessed him, more than often, depart at 9 o’clock in the evening, heading north, with his first delivery in Yorkshire at 7.00am the next morning.



The lorry does provide a few creature comforts in return for this commitment, a comfortable bed, fridge, microwave oven, and even a coffee maker! Plus, of course, all the IT/communication facilities necessary to provide a transparent and efficient service to our customers.

So if you meet our lorry on the road, give Ian a cheery wave. You will always get a cheery wave back, because, despite some of the challenges he has to face, I rarely see him otherwise!

MARIS OTTER **‘The Most famous Barley in the World’**

A new feature in our garden is the Otter Fountain constructed to commemorate 50 years of commercial production of the barley variety Maris Otter, first introduced to British farmers, maltsters and brewers in 1965.



The survival of this venerable variety of barley can largely be attributed to me and my being in the right place at the right time.

Back in 1990, after 25 years of commercial production, market forces had overtaken Maris Otter barley and UK farmers were no longer enthusiastic about continuing to grow it. But a large West Midlands brewer was keen to go on brewing with ‘Otter’ - they considered the modern varieties were nothing like as good. This brewery asked me if I could come up with a scheme to maintain farm production, which I did, and before very long, this initiative caught the attention of a whole raft of other brewers who supported the opinion that if Maris Otter barley required a premium priced producer contract to maintain production, it was well worth it! So the premium ‘Maris Otter Barley’ contract for farmers which I had come up with flourished, and expanded right across the country. And the rest is history, as they say.

Today, brewers all round the world insist on Maris Otter barley malt, based on its unique flavour profile and the ease with which they find they can brew with it. Warminster Maltings contributes to this global market, but the scale of demand today involves every other UK maltster, with an annual turnover well in excess of 50,000 tonnes of barley every harvest.

Our Otter Fountain, intended as a simple water feature, has already taken on another dimension. Someone tossed a coin into the water trough on day 1, and now the bed of the trough is littered with coins, presumably on the back of a whole host of personal “wishes”. At the end of the summer we will attempt to retrieve this money and, of course, donate it to a local charity. I will be adding to this contribution in a minute, and there is no secret to my wish - now that harvest (and, for some, the summer holidays) is just around the corner, “may we please have a sustained period free of rain”.

Robin Appel

