

AN OTTER'S TALE

ISSUE 1 SPRING 2010

Welcome to the first edition of An Otter's Tale.

In 'The Tale', we'd like to be able to share some news, views, and hopefully some fun with our readers. There is so much going on in the drinks industry as a whole and we hear news from all angles - so spinning some of this out will hopefully make a good and amusing read.

I'll try to get Mum and Dad to write a regular slot about brewery life and brewing (respectively - I hope!) I'd like to invite landlords and customers also to have their say and we'll hopefully have some amusing anecdotes and competitions to boot. So if there are any things that you'd like to write about, please do jump on 'The Tale' and we'll try and get it included in the next issue.



Patrick McCaig

Inside 'The Tale'

The Green Shed

Our plans to build an eco-friendly 'Pavilion' for Brewery trips and a wide range of other events.

There's an Otter in Hants

Read how Fred McCaig is now selling Otter beers in Hampshire - very near his Mother-in-law!

Mulled beer!

Not as weird as you might think.

Precious water

David McCaig explains why the water we use in our beer is so important



Pictured to the right is our latest pride and joy. After too long in the construction phase to recall, our fantastic new cellar became operational last April.

First of all we should pay tribute to architect David Highet and East Devon District Council for creating and approving such a 'Grand Design'. The brief was to create a building that was contemporary in structure and design. It needed to blend into the hillside and also harness the ground's core temperature which remains at a constant 12°C. Temperature control has raised a few challenges on the way - in particular the raising and lowering of barrels into the cellar via a state of the art lift. This is necessary as cool air is now a valuable commodity for us. If we were to open the cellar doors when loading trucks we would only transfer outside temperature inwards - not good - so the only way is up.

Anyway - all sorted, all cool and the Otter crew are happy. Just to note that Mary Ann (through fear of our cellar boys turning into moles underground) took it upon herself to install six large solar tubes that help deliver natural light to the depths!

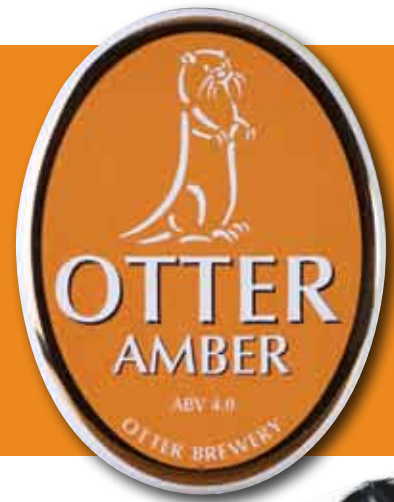


We are thrilled to say that the brewery has won top honours at the latest Devon Environmental Business Initiative Awards recognising not only our great tasting beer, but also our environmentally friendly approach to producing it.



Our new jewel is shining bright

After a careful introduction to the market 'Amber' has had an Otterly amazing start. Amber bridges the strength gap between Ale and Bitter - but also delivers a modern tasting beer as well. Amber has a mix of hops including some American and Slovenian varieties like Willamette and Styrian Goldings. These hops deliver an amazing hint of soft tropical fruit and just a smidge of ginger and biscuit - the sort of bold flavours that can come out of the quality European lagers. It does also meet the mid gravity requirement that everyone's after - so, if you haven't had it, do give it a go.



Otter Bitter bounces back!



As well as Amber shining bright, sales of Otter Bitter this year have risen dramatically. I think this is the case with many quality session beers. Financially they represent good value on the bar and in times of the 'squeeze' become more attractive. I have to say though, there aren't many out there that pack such flavour in the pint and yet remain so balanced. Still my favourite - although I like to flirt with Amber.

Andy turns to the dark side



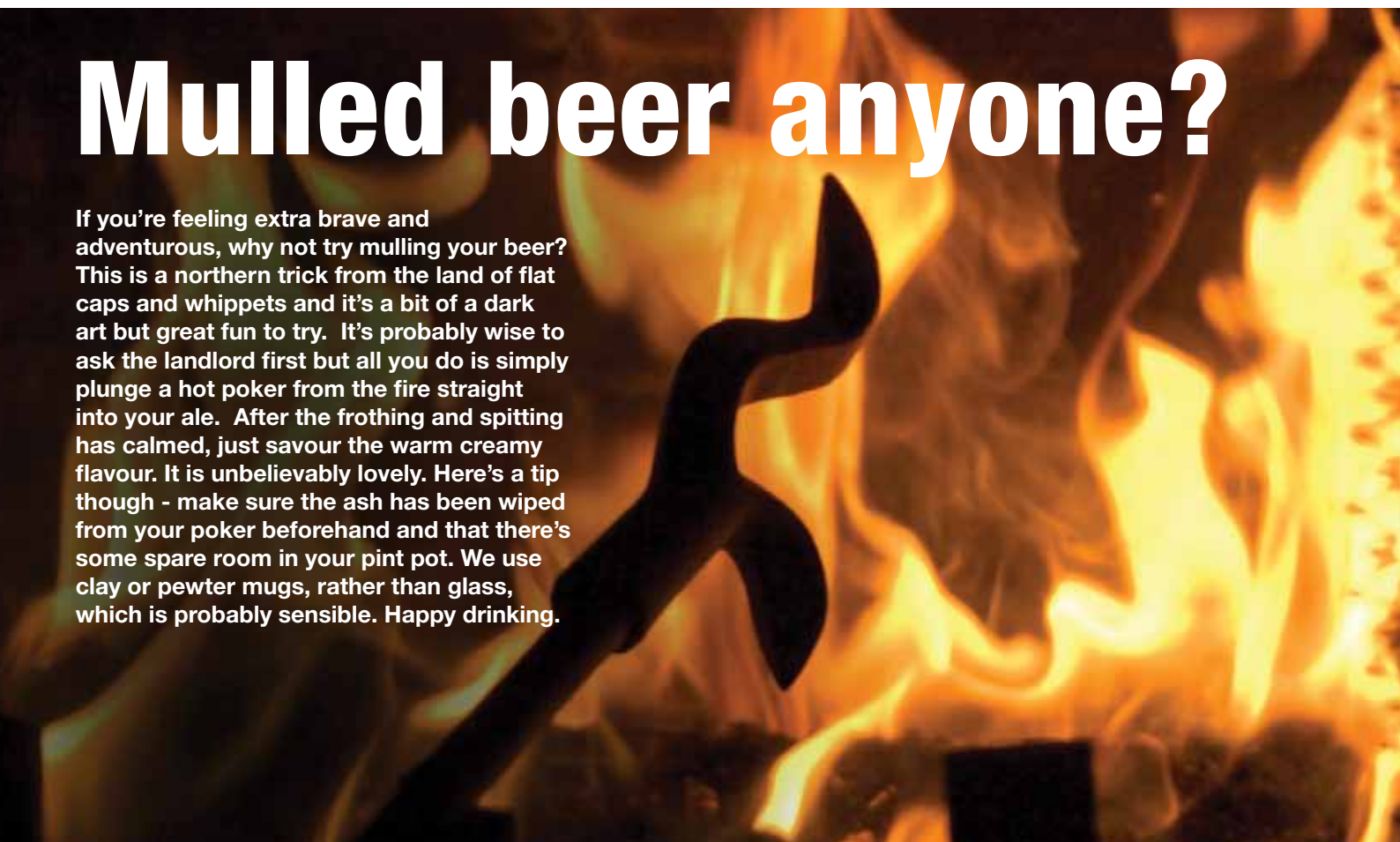
Just when he was getting good - we'd like to announce that Andy our handsome windblown drayman is going underground.

Like a cabinet re-shuffle (except we do it with purpose) the drivers have shed one and gained another. We would like to welcome Aidan, his replacement. Andy is definitely a hard act to follow and we are sure there will be landladies all over the country weeping tears into their beers.

Good luck Aidan and Andy in your new roles.

Mulled beer anyone?

If you're feeling extra brave and adventurous, why not try mulling your beer? This is a northern trick from the land of flat caps and whippets and it's a bit of a dark art but great fun to try. It's probably wise to ask the landlord first but all you do is simply plunge a hot poker from the fire straight into your ale. After the frothing and spitting has calmed, just savour the warm creamy flavour. It is unbelievably lovely. Here's a tip though - make sure the ash has been wiped from your poker beforehand and that there's some spare room in your pint pot. We use clay or pewter mugs, rather than glass, which is probably sensible. Happy drinking.





Otter now in Hampshire

Son number 2, Fred McCaig, has recently moved in the direction of his wife's family to Petersfield in Hampshire and what better job to do than flog a few barrels of Otter in the area. He has set up a small depot from which he can deliver direct into the region. The good news is that it's a bit like an extension of our family in the South East which will of course make sure that those Otter values are duplicated over the border! If you know a Pub that is just waiting for a call from Fred or if you need to contact him he can be reached on 07870 556056 or by e-mail on fred@otterbrewery.com.



So, should beer be a balance of taste and aroma with no outstanding characteristics? Or, should the flavours stand out like the foam moustache that was left on HRH's top lip?

The Green Shed

Over the last couple of years we have once again started to have pubs visiting the brewery in the early evening for a BBQ, followed by a good amount of chat, beer and generally putting the world to rights.

To make this a little more weather and season friendly, we have decided to build a small pavilion called the 'Green Shed' in which we can host such events. In addition to this, we plan to use the shed as a facility for all sorts of groups – LVA, police training, school visits, educational talks on social responsibility of drinking and the production of alcohol, Chamber of Commerce meetings and so on.

We have been lucky enough to receive a grant for the building through Local Plus Funding which is tremendous. We would like to thank all those who have helped us achieve the grant and for their understanding of the education that we will be able to provide with a particular emphasis on social responsibility and environmental best practice.

Fruit Beers. Right or wrong?

Experiencing the 'wow' factor when you take that first bite out a pint of beer can be one of the many compelling reasons for drinking the stuff. Especially when it's one of those hybrid 'flavoured beers' that makes you feel like you are trapped in a fruit cage.

A couple of years ago we remember watching Prince Charles taking a large slurp off the top of a pint of Otter Head. With bated breath we waited for his reaction. OK, he was unlikely to give us the full 'wow' but we did catch the deep intake of breath followed by a pleasing Royal sigh.

So, should beer be a balance of taste and aroma with no outstanding characteristics? Or, should the flavours stand out like the foam moustache that was left on HRH's top lip?



We think there are two schools of thought. Firstly, if you are into winning awards and want your beers to be talk of the town, then chuck half a ton of elderflower into the mashtun and you're sure to deliver a winner – this really delivers the essence and excitement of drinking 'fruit beer'.

On the other hand, as a brewer, if you want to make a beer that glides across your drinker's palate, leaving a balanced trail of flavour, you may not receive rapturous applause but you will sell more. This is because the novelty of maverick flavours is good for the first pint but as you reach gamely for your second or third, the same flavours are equally likely to do your head in.

So in our opinion, we should thank the Belgians, for their raft of fruit flavours and the influence they have had on some of the UK's truly mouth watering equivalents. But call us boring, we still prefer our old friend 'Bitter'. Once again this represents the wonderful diversity of British cask ale – something for everyone (even our future King).

OTTER TAKES ASPALLS INTO THE FREE TRADE



For the last few years we have been distributing cider on behalf of the Chevallier Family into the South West - mainly into Heavitree Brewery's group of pubs.

Premium brand Aspalls has only ever been made with the fresh pressed juice of whole apples. So whilst others have introduced concentrated products in order to stretch fermentation, the Chevallier's philosophy has

remained steadfast for 8 generations – resulting in a quality product and brand. Now we are able to offer this brand into the free trade – so if you're after a premium cider as an alternative, please do give us a shout. It is available with all the usual POS and support from us.

Otter Head

Still tasting great!

For the second year running, Otter Head has been awarded a Gold Star for its balance and flavour in this year's Great Taste Awards.

We were delighted to receive this accolade which came from a panel of 'esteemed' judges including Chris Evans!



Proud to support and raise a glass to Sidmouth Cricket Club

Sidmouth Cricket Club was founded in 1823 and is one of Devon's best known clubs. We are delighted to have been their sponsor for the last two years and plan to continue supporting the club. We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all the teams for last year's results, in particular the First XI under the helm of Will Murray who have, for the second year running, won the Premier Division Championship and are worthy holders of the Devon Senior Cup. Congratulations also to the Second XI for holding onto their title for the second year running as well.



Hiawotter. The new face at Exeter Chiefs

This year we have been delighted to become involved with the Exeter Chiefs. We have transformed their outside bar which has become known as the 'Wigwam' into Hiawotter's den of iniquity with some inspiring takes on Derek (The Otter) doing his 'chieftain stuff'.

The Chiefs continue to perform well and we look forward to their promotion to the premiership next season - now that's a positive message. So, if you're down at Sandy Park, pop into the Wigwam for a 'Hiawotter'.



Trading as usual - you must be joking. Your thoughts needed.

What are your thoughts about the beer tie and minimum pricing? Also, does it bug you that the managers of the supermarkets don't get hauled over the coals for the cheap beer they sell to...well anyone? Please do drop me a line about these issues as we are really trying to focus in on them with our regional press. The more views we can put together to help curb these issues the louder noise we can make. Please do send comments, ideas and views to patrick@otterbrewery.com



Bernard & Kitty's Drinks Company

Here's something to raise your spirits! Joe and Angus – the two youngest sons of the McCaig tribe have formulated a rather splendid range of iced natural vodkas in a traffic light formation (Apple, Caramel and Cherry). These bottles are available from us and POS support is available if required.



H₂Otter



David McCaig explains why having the right water is crucial to the quality of beer.

A human being, they say, is 60% water. Therefore it is not surprising that beer is 90% water. Obviously the quality of the water used in brewing is very important.

In the past, towns grew where there was a good water supply and successful breweries grew in those towns where water was good for brewery purposes. Certain types of water were found to be particularly suitable for certain types of beer e.g. Burton-on-Trent for pale ales, Dublin for stouts or dark lagers and London for mild ales and porters or stouts.

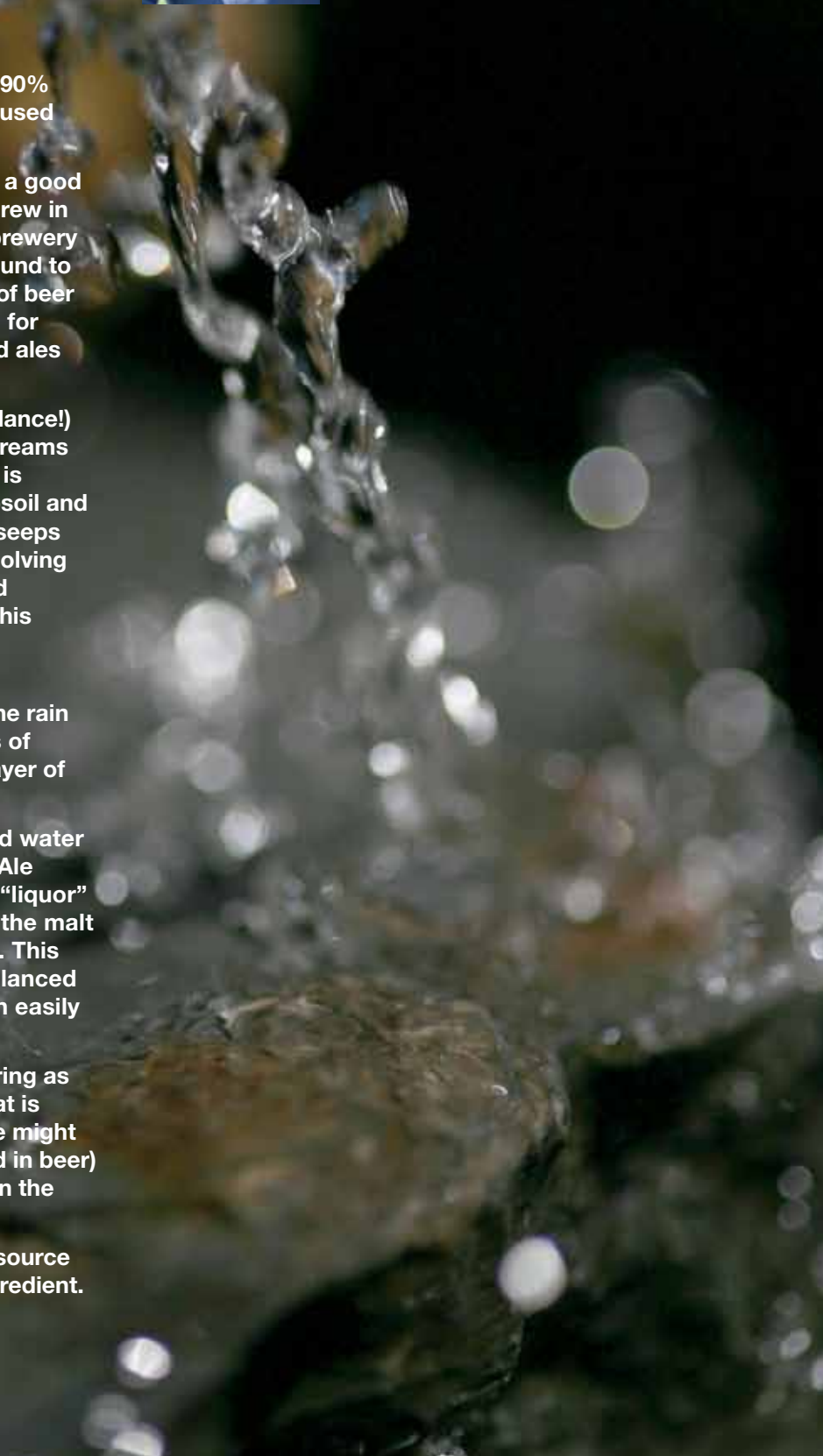
Rain, hail, sleet or snow arrives (in abundance!) and permeates the soil or runs off into streams and rivers. The composition of the water is dependent upon the make up of soil, subsoil and rock. Rain falls off the Peak District and seeps through gypsum and limestone rock dissolving mineral salts and arrives via underground aquifers at Burton some 40 years later! This makes the water very hard.

Otter Brewery water is very soft. This is because there are no mineral rocks for the rain to penetrate and it is used within months of precipitation owing to an impermeable layer of heavy solid mud some 60 feet down.

We are very lucky to have pure, soft, acid water for brewing. In order to brew Bitter and Ale particularly we "burtonise" our brewing "liquor" (water) by adding some mineral salts to the malt at the beginning of the brewing process. This helps to ensure good fermentation, a balanced beer flavour and a beer that will brighten easily in cask.

We have no problems with scaling or furring as we would have with hard water when heat is applied. No problems with chlorine as we might have with mains supplied water (very bad in beer) and no problems with any other nasties in the water such as heavy metals.

So we are lucky in terms of a river that's source supplies both our name and a unique ingredient.





My roots in our brewery



David and I started out with a plan 20 years ago. We decided to build our brewery in a dream situation planted in the hills of Luppitt.

I am just one of those natural Mums who enjoy every job that's thrown at me. Some of those jobs are better than others, but when David asked me to brew beer, well, I could not have been happier.

I come from a long line of brewers, but as men have it, or certainly my father would have it, 'ladies' didn't brew beer - so I learnt to cook and type and nurse. Then, 20 years ago, my dream came true.

Little did Dad know that in Africa the top wife was always the brewer!

Now of course I'm using my other training as well. I look after everyone here, and take care of the garden, vegetables and willow beds which clean all our dirty water. Of course, I'm always around to help with any job that needs an extra pair of hands and I'm never short of ideas!



Picture your pint

Welcome to our new competition run in conjunction with our website www.otterbrewery.com.

We are giving away lots of Otterly fantastic goodies – and all you have to do is something we know loads of you love to do anyway.

Simply take a picture of your perfect pint (which will, of course be Otter) and upload it via our website. The picture can be of a pint of Otter on its own, a pint being enjoyed in a pub or somewhere else or perhaps a bottle of Otter being savoured in the great outdoors. The choice is yours. Then just go to our website and upload it using the form provided.

If we like the picture we will add it to our 'Picture Your Pint' gallery and each month we will draw a winner

from all the pictures featured on the site, and send out some great prizes including Bottle gift boxes and clothing.



For more details and competition rules, please visit our website at otterbrewery.com and click on Picture Your Pint.

We look forward to seeing some great pictures from you. Happy snapping!



OK – so we're not big into Facebook but Derek has gone feral! He has slunk his way onto facebook – so if you're inclined, check him out and have a chat. He goes by the name of Derek Otter.

And finally

A big thank you to all our customers and their drinkers whom we value so much. There is no way that we could have built such a popular brand without your

help and support. We wish you well over the next few months and keep our fingers crossed that all of you who work so hard, will have busy pubs and bars during 2010.



OTTER BREWERY

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