

# Belvoir Brewery Old Dalby, Leicestershire

Tim Holt

The founder of the Belvoir Brewery began his career in the brewing industry immediately after completing his degree in biochemistry and biotechnology at Bristol Polytechnic. Colin Brown's first job was working in Grand Metropolitan's brew-pubs, primarily the Orange Brewery, Pimlico. This was one of a handful of the companies micros situated in the south-east of England in reaction to the success of David Bruce's Firkin brew-pub chain. The Orange Brewery ceased brewing in the early part of 2001 and the pub closed in 2008.

From London Colin moved to T. & R. Theakston's Cumbrian outpost, the former Carlisle State Management Brewery, and then to James Shipstone & Sons Ltd. in Nottingham. He stayed here until its closure in February 1991. The following four years were spent working as a technical rep' for Savilles, a supplier of brewing process aids. It was during this period that Colin began acquiring equipment from around the country to start up his own concern.

The plant was finally assembled in a small industrial unit just south-west of Old Dalby, a village situated roughly half

way between Leicester and Nottingham. Brewing began in March 1995, the first beer being Star bitter which was based on an old Shipstone's recipe, and bottling followed three years later. The operation was extended and refitted in 2002, but such was the success of the Belvoir Brewery that within a decade plans were already being made to move the enterprise to larger premises.

Helped partially by grants from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund, Colin was able to construct a purpose built establishment which combines the brewery with a restaurant and visitors centre. Located on the eastern side of the village, on the former Old Dalby army camp, it was opened on the 29<sup>th</sup> November 2007. This contains what could be termed the third generation of plant, sourced from, among others, Bass, Crown Buckley and Wem. The most interesting piece is the mash tun which was built by the German manufacturers Moeschle Ltd. to Colin's own specifications with the help of a grant from Nottingham University (Fig.1).

The brewlength at present can be anything from 10 to 24 brls at a time with a weekly brewing capacity of 50 brls. The average brewlength is around 12 brls which is currently brewed about twice per week. Sales continue to grow in order to reach the maximum capacity of 50 brls per week.. All the ingredients are sourced from within the U.K., the most common being Progress, Bramling, Fuggles and Challenger hops and Maris

Otter malt. The yeast strain came from the former Hardy and Hansons brewery which, before its purchase and closure by Greene King, was based nearby at Kimberley, six miles outside Nottingham.

Tours are well worthwhile, not only to inspect the brewery, but also to see a large collection of brewing memorabilia which Colin has collected over many years.



*Figure 1. The mash tun designed by Colin Brown.*



*Figure 2. Fermentation tanks from Wem (left) and Crown Buckley (middle and right).*



*Figure 3. The copper and mash tun.*



*Figure 4. The mash tun and copper.*



*Figure 5. An exterior shot of Belvoir Brewery.*



*Figure 6. The copper.*