

THE DONNINGTON BREWERY: A PHOTO ESSAY

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The Donnington brewery was founded in 1865 by Richard Iles Arkell to complement his farm near Cheltenham in the Cotswolds. His family were already involved in brewing as his brother John had earlier opened Arkell's brewery in Swindon in 1843. The brewery was built in a building that had previously been used as a mill, first as a cloth mill and later as a corn mill. Parts of the building date from 1291. In the 16th century a millrace was built to provide fast flowing water for waterwheels and the brewery still has two in use, one of which is still used routinely with the other acting as backup. They are used to power pumping, lifting and mashing in.

A maltings was also built and was used to malt the brewery's own barley up until the mid 1960s. The malting buildings are currently used for storage. Malt now comes from Crisps, and Maris otter is used for the pale malt.

Founder Richard Arkell left the brewery to his two sons, and Herbert Arkell bought out his brother and assumed full ownership. He had two sons and two daughters, but it was his son, Laurence Claude Arkell, commonly known as Claude, who took over the reins in 1951 after serving as an RAF officer. He ran the brewery until his death at the age of 89 in 2007. Not having any children he left the brewery to his brewing cousins in the Swindon branch of the family who now run it.

The brewery is a tower brewery design spread over four floors, though it's built on a slope so from the front only three are visible. The copper, hot liquor tank and mill are on the top floor, with the mash tun on the floor below. Water comes from a spring and is not treated for brewing. Wort runs from the mash tun to an underback below and is pumped up to the copper using water power.

The copper where the wort is boiled is an open vessel made of copper that still sits above where coal fires used to be built, though it is now heated by steam. From the copper the wort runs back down into a hop back where more hop pellets are added. The slotted base filters out particles and the wort flows down another floor to a heat exchanger where it is cooled. A dropping fermentation systems is used and 24 hours after the yeast is pitched the beer is moved into round open fermenting vessels. The yeast comes from nearby Hook Norton brewery.

The brew length is 18 barrels and the beer is sold in casks and bottles. Bottling used to be on site but is now carried out at Arkell's. The brewery owns 17 tenanted pubs which can be linked in a walk called the Donnington Way.



















