

Barley, Hops, and Toil: Ingredients to Southwick Brewhouse's Success

Intro: Welcome to Hampshire HistBites. Join us as we delve into the past and go on a journey to discover some of the county's best and occasionally unknown history. We'll be speaking to experts as well as enthusiasts, asking them to reveal some of our hidden heritage, as well as share with you a few fascinating untold stories.

Julian: Welcome to Hampshire HistBites. I'm Julian Gerry, your podcast hosts for today. I'm in the wonderful village of Southwick, in the south of the county. And specifically I'm at Southwick Brewhouse and I'm joined today by Martin Bazeley, who's the tenant of the brewhouse and Matt Hallett the manager of the brewhouse shop.

So perhaps I could start, Martin, by asking you about the origins of brewing in Southwick, how far back does it go?

Martin: Well, as far as we're aware, Julian, the brew house was built in 1840 and that's where we're currently sitting. So we know that brewing took place commercially since 1840 in this very, in this very spot.

Prior to that, we believe that the monks in the priory of Southwick would have been brewing beer because they tended to do that sort of thing didn't they? For their own consumption, I guess, to keep them entertained and the priory dated from 1150, of course it was dissolved by Henry VIII, and parts of the priory fabric can be seen around the village.

Julian: And the brew house that we're sitting in today, is an amazing time warp, I've not visited before and I'm blown away by what you have here. It was built in 1840?

Martin: They believe it was built in 1840, it wasn't recorded. It would it have been built by the then Squire of Southwick estate so that there was a brewing facility in the village. And, from that date on, it provided beer that was supplied to the village pub that's adjacent to the brew house, which is the Golden Lion, which remains today a free-house so it stocks beer from independent breweries, including, of course, Suthwyk Ales, which is the local beer that's produced from barley grown on Portsdown Hill. We've got a little bit more knowledge of the brewing that took place here, by Dick Olding now, he was the last master brewer to be employed here. He was employed, I think, by Hunt's Brewery that had the tenancy, the lease of the building but he was the master brewer here from 1906 to 1957, which is quite a long stretch. He was 81 when he retired, which is quite incredible when you do a tour of the equipment, particularly upstairs in this brewery and see the amount of heavy lifting that was required when one was brewing beer in here, quite a lot of manual work.

Julian: Indeed. There is a truly wonderful Pathe Newsreel showing Dick Olding at work, which our listeners can find on the brew house's own website. We'll add the link to that, to the show notes for this episode as well. So, you mentioned that the beer was drunk next door at the Golden Lion. Did it go further afield as well?

Martin: It did. I'm not quite clear on that, but I think there were a couple of outlets for it, but no, no more than that. And Dick was not brewing every day in here. A few times a fortnight, according to the Pathe newsreel.

I'm not quite sure the accuracy of that. It might've been a couple of times a week, but there are two fermentation vessels that one can see that had a capacity of, of seven brewers barrels and a brewers barrel is four Firkins. The Firkin is the barrel that you always see outside a pub where they stack up the empties. A Firkin being, nowadays, we talk about 40 litres or 72 pints, nine gallons. So, there were 28 Firkins worth of beer in one brew, seven brewers barrels, two vessels. Now each brew would be fermenting for about seven days. So that would suggest that if you needed two vessels, that he would have two brews going on in a week to provide continuity.

And most of that beer, I think, would have been drunk by the, by the local inhabitants in the village pub. And it sounds like a lot of beer, but when you think that the whole of the village of Southwick is privately owned, was then occupied by employees of Southwick estate, these would be farm workers, forestry workers, maintenance men, carpenters, brick layers, plumbers, all living in these little cottages, tied cottages, that went with their job. And back in the day that Dick Olding was brewing here, really up until 1957. there wasn't really - we're not in an area where there's a cider drinking culture.

Back in those days, there wasn't a lot of fine French wine flowing across the channel into village pubs like this, most of what they were drinking was beer that came out of the brew house. And so they would have been quaffing it in reasonable quantity, probably most nights of the week, if they could get away with that. Hence, hence they would consume most of the output from the small, micro brewery as we'd call it now.

Julian: What about the ingredients that came into the brewhouse to make the beer? Would they mostly have come from the estate?

Martin: Quite possibly. Again, we don't have records of that. And the only records we have incidentally of Dick Olding's recipes are some sort of faint pencil marks on, on the back of the door upstairs. Which probably were his records of the two different brews that he did, the two different strengths and the amount of malt that he would have used, the hops that he would have used in each one, but it's pretty scant. I think it was all in his head, and probably there was a fair degree of, variation between one brew and another, but, yeah, there would have been, it would have been barley grown for malting on Portsdown Hill for, for many, many years.

In fact, it was mentioned by William Cobbett in Rural Rides that Portsdown Hill was the best barley growing land in the country. Yeah. [laughter] What about that? So, you know, the Norfolk malting

barley growers would contest that maybe Cobbett didn't ride far enough into Norfolk to establish that fact [laughter]. We're quite proud of that, whether that includes the fields right on top of the hill where we now grow malting barley, I don't know. But the chalk land is, is a pretty good producer of high quality malting barley; very rarely fails to produce a good sample.

So yes, I think there was probably malting barley being grown locally. And of course, lots of villages had a maltings that it would be taken to, to be malted. Certainly I know there's one in Droxford, because there's a house called The Maltings and what the part of the building of the house is used for now, where they malted barley once upon a time, it may have been a sort of outhouse or an extension on the back of the house, but lots of local maltings existed.

Julian: Presumably the local water had a part to play in the quality of the beer as well.

Martin: Well, it would, yes. And the water comes, to this day from Offwell Farm, which is just on the edge of Portsdown Hill. It's where an artesian spring emerges and produces a very, very consistent quality and quantity of water. And actually that was recognized by the monks who established the Priory in 1150 as the most reliable source of water from Portsdown Hill. They used it. It was probably why the Priory was established there and it still flows down a six inch pipe to the village to this day. and, and, if you turn on the tap in any of the cottages in the village here, the water came out of the ground just up at Offwell, not long before that. I don't know how long it takes to get here, probably 10 minutes or a quarter of an hour or something, down the pipe. And it's very pure water. It's straight out of the chalk. It's very hard water, of course, so, you know, you've got a job to get a lather up with a bar of soap, unlike in granite areas like Cornwall, where you can't get the soap off your hands. There's different types of water.

Julian: And the hops that we used in the process would they've come from Kent or closer to home?

Martin: Probably closer to home. There was quite a lot of hop growing in Hampshire in the Alton area, Selborne. Hops are very, very sensitive to soil type. So the, there are pockets of the, the right type of green sand soil in the Alton area. And into Surrey, Topsham. Think of Hogs Back brewery, I think, have a link with a hop farm there. Sadly of course, a lot of - I don't think there are any commercially grown hops in Hampshire any more, fewer and fewer in Kent. Most of our hops now come from Hereford and Worcestershire, or are imported. But yes, they I, I imagine that they wouldn't have wanted to haul hops further than they had to, so maybe the closest would be, would have been around the Alton area.

Julian: So when all the ingredients came together in this amazing building, so the beer could be produced, there was quite a complicated sequence of events that happened in the various pieces of machinery around the building. Could you give us sort of a high level view of what happened in the building at the time that Dick Olding, say the end of the 20th century, was brewing here?

Martin: I'll have a go. Yeah. So he would have been buying a whole grain malt. That's malted barley. So grains of barley, which had to be, not to a fine powder, but just to, coarse kibble - a lovely word, isn't it a coarse kibble.

Julian: Wonderful.

Martin: So cracked barley with a little bit of flour about it and having done that, then when it was added to the hot water in the mash tun, the hot water could extract the enzymes and the starch from that cracked grain. And the water carrying the enzyme and the starch, known as wort - these are terms that are still used in brewing now, of course, because the process is identical, the wort would then be boiled in the copper and it's picked up the enzymes and the starch from the malted grain, mostly barley, could be wheat, could have some oats, other variations available.

Yeah. But in the copper, during the boil, then the hops are added and the hops come in multiple different varieties, that all have their own characteristics. They could be added at the beginning of the brew so that a beer becomes very heavily hopped or the end of the brew so it's lightly hopped. Hops have different characteristics that they pass onto the beer, like the aroma and the bitterness. So many, many variations of, of beers can be produced by using different malts, dark malts, light malts and different hops and adding the hops at different times. So that's why it is true, actually, that every beer is different, because they can all have those, those variations. After the copper and the boil, which is for about three quarters of an hour or an hour, the beer would be cooled, strained through the hopback, which is yet another vessel, all still existing and surviving upstairs in the old brew house here and open to view. But the hopback is where the cooling process starts and it filters out the, the hop leaves. Further cooling on the cooling tray, to spread the beer out and lose as much heat as possible before it flows through a pipe into one of the two fermentation vessels. So yeast could have been added in the fermentation vessel to start the fermenting process, or it's quite possible in a building like this with lots of timber, that wild yeast would have been sufficient, that was available in the atmosphere and just sort of living in this, in the structure, the fabric of the building, and that may well have been enough to start the fermentation process, which would take about a week, depending on the strength of the beer that Dick was producing.

Stronger beer is typically fermented for a little bit longer and he would take samples of the beer in the fermentation vessel to track its progress over the days, cooling it with the cooling ring. This is like an immersion heater element that would have cold water running through it to stop the fermentation going off the roof, and, and too quickly. So that gave him an element of control of the speed of fermentation, but he would, he would take samples of the beer and test the strength with his hydrometer from time to time. And when it had reached the strength that he wanted, then he would cool it down quite rapidly to stop that fermentation process. And then the beer would be ready to, to fill barrels downstairs, roll them out of the brew house and down the path and into the cellar of the Golden Lion.

Julian: Perfect.

Martin: Ready for consumption.

Julian: Dick Olding was clearly quite a craftsman managing all that on his own. And I should mention that, the, the hot water in the process and the power that drives the various machines involved, it

was all coming from a steam boiler and engine, which are located in the ground floor of the brewhouse we're sitting in.

Martin: Yes, indeed. So yeah, the boiler actually is the heart of the whole building. Without the, without the steam boiler, nothing could have happened. It provided the heat to heat the water as mentioned, the steam to heat the water, but also the motive power, and everything in here was belt driven, the belts are still in place, the shafts are still in place and it still rumbles around if you were able to run the steam engine. It's all intact and has survived since Dick Olding retired in 1957, which was the last time that this building had any sort of commercial brewing function, for sure.

And it's probably worth mentioning that that's the reason that this Southwick brew house is an ancient monument and your listeners will probably be aware of the difference, but, lots of buildings, as we know, houses are listed, a lot of them Grade Two listed, some with a star, Grade One listing is pretty special, but above that there are Scheduled Monuments and the brew house was designated as a Scheduled Monument by English Heritage. And in the description of it, it describes it as a Victorian steam brewery that is unique in that it is complete in every respect. We could, we could discuss and theorize about why it's complete and why it's remained complete ...

Julian: Yes.

Martin: ... in every respect and I've got some ideas about that, but whether you want to go into that today or not, I don't know.

Julian: It is clearly a very special, very precious and unique place. And, you told us earlier that brewing finished when Dick Olding finished, in 1957. So we've got what, 60 years or so between then and now can you sort of take us through what's happened to this building in the intervening years?

Martin: Yeah, but it's interesting, isn't it? Yeah, 1957, Dick Olding, 81, and you know, I was, I was born on Southwick estate. My mum grew up on the Southwick estate and, her father was a tenant farmer. She remembers Dick Olding, riding his old bike around the village and, and everybody in the village knew when Dick was brewing because the smell would permeate out of the brew house. There's a very effective heat extraction process, which your facility, if you like, which is the, the louvres and the cupola on the top, louvered all the way around to extract heat and obviously extract those lovely, those lovely smells. So Mum, Mum remembers him quite well. And that was 1957. So we can only imagine that in 1957, there was very little interest in, for example, re-purposing the steam engine and removing it from here to go to a sawmills or a pumping station or a pump house or something like this. It's quite a small engine anyway, but had he retired, had brewing finished here, ceased here, a decade, or even only a decade earlier, maybe that would have been removed and taken elsewhere. 1957 nobody had any great interest in it. Also it's worth remembering that in 1957, there wasn't the interest in craft beers or micro breweries that there, that there is now and has grown up over the last couple of decades. So there were large brewers that dominated the whole supply in the country. And we were all - I say, we, I wasn't old enough - but, you know, people then were subjected to pretty bland, few, a few number of pretty bland beers, you know. The first

one that I can remember, that was particularly bad was Whatley Starlight and, you know, so, but that's what we had.

And so there was no interest in continuing to brew here. So when Dick retired, you very much get the impression in this place that he just walked out and the door was locked. His tools are still hanging out by the steam engine, ready to adjust the, the various tensions on the leather belts that drive everything. And it's all still there. So, very much as if he just walked away from it, had enough, well he was 81, so it's not surprising. Nothing happened in here other than some restoration. So there was no commercial activity in here until we opened it as the beer shop in 2005.

Julian: So the restoration was sometime in the eighties?

Martin: Restoration was sometime in the eighties, by the Southampton University Industrial Archaeology Society, I think I've got that right, not quite sure. Somebody will jump on that and correct it. And the Hampshire Buildings Preservation Trust. So you can see quite clearly in here that they replaced the, the floor upstairs, which must have been quite a task because there's a lot of kit up there. So that was obviously rotting beyond repair, but the equipment they managed preserve, and they actually got it running again. So they must have got a ticket for the steam boiler, because that is a pressure vessel, just like modern steam boilers, boilers need a pressure certificate every 14 months, I think. And having done that and restored the vessels, the various vessels, which when you look around now, you can see there are other typical metal rings that you see on wooden barrels, these big fermentation vessels and they've, they've slipped. Of course, the reason they've slipped is because the wood has dried and shrunk.

Julian: Yes.

Martin: So that had happened before the restoration in the eighties. And in order to hold liquid again, they all had to be moistened gradually, that timber. So I guess they were spraying it, probably had water sprays playing on these vessels to, to make them watertight again and to plim up, get those rings back in place.

Julian: So there was a one-off brew here in 1985 which by all accounts wasn't that good?

Martin: Well, yeah, well, yeah, anecdotally, but there is one gentleman who actually came in again recently and he came to our opening. And when I said that the brew that the restoration guys had managed to put through the, the, the equipment in 1985, by all accounts was undrinkable. He took great offence to that, it was perfectly good beer. So I stood corrected by him, and yeah, he happened in the other day actually when I was here and I reminded him of that conversation, he didn't even need reminding, I think it stuck with him. But it was bottled, there was a brewer at, Gale's Ales, which a lot of your listeners will remember was the brewery at Horndean, sadly closed a little while ago. Ted Argyle was his name and, and they, they've managed to enlist the services of Ted Argyle to help them put a brew through the equipment here. Yes. And the resulting liquid was put into some sort of containers and taken up to Gail's Ales and bottled. And we have various

examples of that beer in the bottle now. I dread to think about what it would be like now if you pop the top off.

Julian: We won't try it. So from 1985, the building kind of, stood still again

Martin: yeah, it did. The landlord of the Golden Lion used to keep his spuds in here in sacks because it's nice and cool. That was about the only use, but, you know, visitors will quite quickly appreciate that actually, it would be quite difficult to turn it into any other use. Particularly so once English Heritage had, had put their heavy protection on it, making it a Scheduled Monument. So when we approached them in 2005, we wanted, we needed planning consent for change of use to turn it into a retail shop downstairs. They agreed to that because actually having the public visiting a building like this is probably the best way to conserve it. But that's conservation and preservation that English Heritage were interested in meant that we couldn't do anything, particularly upstairs, at all, including lime washing the walls because the white paint is limewash. But they said they wanted it left exactly as it was with the peeling paint and all, looking, obviously a bit sort of scruffy, which is our perfect excuse, not to have to repaint it all the time. Or for Matt not to have to clean it up too much. [laughter] So, so it does sit as in testament to what it was like when Dick retired, really. Which is marvellous. And you, you can see that it would be impossible - we can't imagine any other uses for it. When you bear in mind all that equipment has to stay exactly as it is. It couldn't become a restaurant, right? It couldn't become a cafe. It couldn't be turned into offices as so many of the old buildings on the estate have now as is pretty typical, you know, timber frame barns become quite nice offices. The old laundry, in fact, at the bottom of the village of Southwick that did the laundry, for the, for the big house, when Southwick House was a private residence. Yeah. that's, that's got an accountant, his business in there, but it hasn't got all the old equipment this is got.

Julian: It would be a great shame to change this building into office use. So since 2005, the building has been pretty much as it is now where the majority of the equipment that you've described is upstairs, other than the steam engine and boiler. And on the ground floor, there's a rather wonderful brewhouse shop, a mecca, I would think for anyone in the local area who's interested in, in beer or brewing of any sort.

Martin, I know that having lived in the village for many years now, you've accumulated quite a wide knowledge of the village and the surrounding area. And Southwick is quite an interesting village and estate in itself. Can you tell us a bit about the relationship between the two?

Martin: Yeah. Sure. Well, Southwick estate is, it runs to 8,000 acres, stretching from Purbrook really, pretty well the old A3, as you would know it, that ran up from Purbrook to Waterlooville. In the east to the A32 and just the other side of the A32, which is the Fareham Wickham road to the, to the west. And there is some land that runs up to Knole village that some listeners might be familiar with. To the South, the boundary is pretty well the top of Portsdown Hill, when you get to the top of Portsdown Hill it gets pretty steep over the other side. So there wasn't much agriculture over there. So that's the Southern boundary and to the north up towards Newtown and Denmead. So it's a block of land of varying quality from nice light, chalk land to quite heavy clay when you come off Portsdown Hill, but it's all owned by the Squire, as we know him, the current Squire is Mark

Thistlewaite – it's Thistlethwayte, they drop the second 'th' so Thistlewaite is the pronunciation. Prior to Mark his father, Robin Thistlethwayte was the Squire from 1988. It went from the village being occupied by estate workers and farm workers to cottages that have been let to - a lot of the time to local families, families that have a connection with Southwick. They are let on a commercial basis now, which means they're much better able to be maintained and repaired. So the village actually looks, looks pretty wonderful.

The land on Southwick estate, as I mentioned, it varies in quality and, and types from heavy ground to light ground, which means that there's a lot of diverse agriculture. There's crop growing, malting barley on the light land of Portsdown Hill, wheat, and other combine-able crops like that.

Julian: Late in the second world war in 1944 the big house here, Southwick House played a very significant role in what was happening around that time. Could, can you give us a little more background on that?

Martin: Yeah, certainly. That was quite an interesting story. So this was an ancestor of Robin Thistlethwayte, was the Squire at the time, Colonel Evelyn Thistlethwayte, who was a Colonel. a veteran of the Boer war, a proper old Colonel with a big moustache. And he became quite friendly with the Commander in Chief Naval Home Command who had his base at Fort Southwick just up on top of Portsdown Hill. And he would invite him pheasant shooting. So CIC Naval Home Command was a guest on pheasant shoots with the old Colonel meant that CIC, noticed that there's rather a nice Georgian House called Southwick House, that was quite well-protected from Portsmouth. And so when they were looking for a home for the navigational school from Portsmouth, when Portsmouth was under threat of bombing, they thought of Southwick House and the old Colonel was, was booted out, and went into digs with his agent in the village, apparently he was a bachelor the Colonel, because the house was requisitioned by the MOD for the war effort. And then, in the process of planning D-Day they needed a forward command centre, if you like to call it that. And they identified Southwick House as the forward command centre. Now Admiral Ramsey already had his headquarters in Southwick House, Admiral Ramsey had been responsible previously for the evacuation of troops from Dunkirk. He was already there and, in moved Montgomery and Eisenhower, Lee Mallory from the RAF and Tedder. So all the top brass were in Southwick House in the final stages of planning D-Day, which of course, in the end was the 6th of June, 1944, delayed from the day before, thanks to the Irish weather observer, who predicted that there was a break in the weather coming.

My mother well remembers all the troops that were billeted around the village, in the orchard, outside the house that she lived in, the farmhouse, there were British troops and, they were all preparing for D-Day - not that the villagers knew what was going on of course. There was a lot of activity and word would go around that somebody had seen Monty in a jeep being transported up to Southwick House. But quite what was afoot they didn't know. But we, we do understand, we had it on good authority from an elderly lady who since passed away, but was the barmaid at the Golden Lion that Eisenhower and Montgomery did frequent the Golden Lion and have a drink there. Monty of course wouldn't have been drinking the beer because he was teetotal but Eisenhower apparently

did. And of course we could say with certainty that the beer that Eisenhower was drinking was brewed in the brew house right where we're sitting now, by Dick Olding. What a great thought!

Julian: What a wonderful story. And Matt, I'm going to bring you in for a moment, as the manager of the brewshop, how long has the brew shop been going?

Matt: The brew shop about 15 or 16 years or so, and I think I'm the longest running shopkeeper racking up nearly 10 years here behind the desk. Seeing all sorts of changes in the, in the beer world from microbreweries springing up to the way that the beer's produced, the ingredients, the way that it's marketed, having gone from a sort of very Real Ale start, bottle conditioned bottles now we're looking at cans with real fruit in, we're looking at sour beers - all sorts. There must've been, 50, 60, maybe more breweries started in the last five years alone, just springing up all over the place

Julian: Apparently there's around 40 in Hampshire. Is that right?

Matt: That's right. Yeah. Yeah. If not more, I'd be surprised if there weren't more even micro microbreweries, like Southsea Castle got a little tiny, tiny set up. They do very small batches. You'd be surprised to find it outside of Portsmouth, very - I can't actually get any bottled beer, because they go so quickly and they make so little. And so they've got a little tiny, right up to big breweries, like Irving who have been a staple in Portsmouth for many years, staggeringly good. One of the new players in the game who do fantastic, dinosaur themed beers, very Mod, very craft. So yeah, just to, just to witness that, it's been lovely down here and I've obviously I get to sample.

Julian: And how many of those local beers do you stock here?

Matt: All of them. All of them. Yeah. Yeah. If you're a local brewery, we will stock you in the brewhouse.

Julian: Yeah. And Southwick Ales I think are still brewed just up the road at Bowman's breweries.

Matt: Yeah, that's right. Yeah. Yeah. At the Bowman brewery. Fantastic brewers, good friends. Yeah, really nice, really nice beers they make so it was, it was a good move for us to go there.

Julian: I highly recommend seeing this building to any of our listeners who are interested in industrial archaeology, or the history of brewing or beer. And, I'd just like to say a huge thank you to both Martin and Matt for spending the time to sit here today and tell us all about it. So thank you very much.

Martin: You're very welcome.

Outro: We hope you enjoyed listening to today's episode. If you would like to find out a little bit more about what we've been talking about, then please visit the website,

www.winchesterheritageopendays.org, click on Hampshire HistBites, and there you'll find today's show notes as well as some links to more information.