

# A TRULY TRAPPIST tippie

John Porter travels to a Leicestershire monastery to try Britain's first accredited Trappist beer.

**B**ack in the times when Christianity required people to fast at certain times of the day or week, beer was quite rightly given a free pass, so even when you had to forego breakfast you were allowed a nourishing beer to see you through. As a result, monks became very skilled brewers, and none more so than the followers of the Trappist order.

However, the well-deserved reputation of Trappist beers led to other brewers, both in the Trappist beer heartland of Belgium and beyond, attempting to board the bandwagon. Twenty years ago, the monasteries came together to create the International Trappist Association to manage the use of the description on beer and other produce.

Until this summer, there were eleven active Trappist breweries worldwide, and we can now add a twelfth to the list - the Mount St Bernard monastic community in Charnwood Forest, Leicestershire has unveiled its long awaited first brew.

On a gloriously warm July day, I was privileged to join a small group at Mount St Bernard, where we were welcomed by the Abbot, Father Erik. He explained that all Trappist communities have a duty to be self-sustaining and, having taken the decision to exit dairy farming five years ago, after some debate the monks voted to have a crack at brewing.

As a result, buildings that formerly housed the monastery's kitchen, refectory and laundry now contain a 20 hectolitre brewery, kitted out with modern German brewing equipment, as well as a bottling line. Among those the monks consulted for advice were Steve Wellington, former Master Brewer at the William Worthington's Brewery in Burton-on-Trent, and Dutch master brewer Constant Keinemans, who sits on the quality commission of the International Trappist Association.

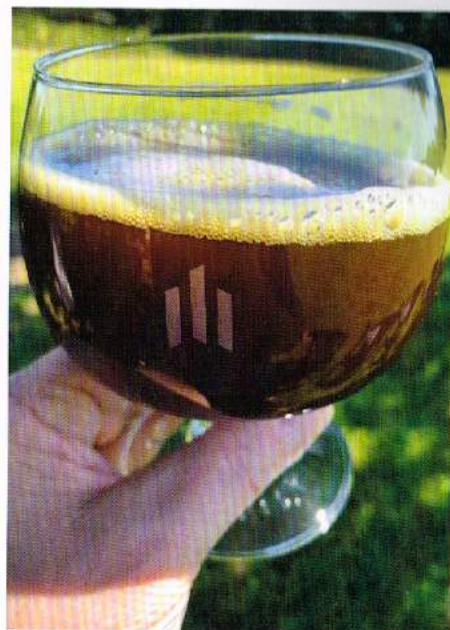
The details - not only the style and flavour



of the beer itself, but also the name and branding - had been kept a secret in advance. Before the grand unveiling of the beer itself, I had a chat with Father Michael, the head brewer, who was very clear that they had been determined all along to come up with a Trappist beer that brought something different to the party.

The new beer is called 'Tynt Meadow', named after the field on the monastery site where the monks first settled in 1835. The official tasting notes describe the beer as having aromas of dark chocolate, liquorice, and rich fruit flavours; full-bodied, and gently balancing the taste of dark chocolate, pepper, and fig. I'll go along with that - to my palate, the fruit flavours are on the dark side, with raisin and blackberry prominent. Enjoyed over lunch in Tynt Meadow itself, the beer matched beautifully with strong blue cheese and spicy gingerbread.

Just as importantly, at its heart, Tynt Meadow is a quintessentially British ale, and as such thankfully adds a welcome new dimension to the Trappist beer landscape. The beer is brewed with English barley and hops, and an English



strain of yeast. It is twice-fermented, with a second fermentation in the 330ml bottle.

James Clay, the leading craft and specialist beer distributor, is distributing the beer to the on trade. Mike Watson, head of marketing at James Clay, describes it as "a huge milestone for the UK beer scene." All proceeds from the beer will go towards the upkeep of Mount Saint Bernard Abbey and towards charitable works - when you have the opportunity, it's well worth trying.

