



Produced in Kent brews successful visitor trail with *Hops 'n' Downs* re-launch

Produced in Kent has brewed the perfect reason for beer lovers, walkers and visitors to pay a visit to the Garden of England this Autumn with the re-launch of its delightful and free trail guide entitled *Hops 'n' Downs*.

Launched in time to coincide September beer festivals and hop garden events across the county this month, the four colour, A5 guide is available FOC from Tourist Information Centres across Kent and can also be downloaded by visitors in search of the 'perfect pint' and country walk, direct from the Produced in Kent website (www.producedinkent.co.uk).

Hops 'n' Downs charts the rich history of the county's hop-growing and beer making tradition and includes a fascinating guide listing the different hop varieties and flavours, where to find the best real-ale in Kent and details of outstanding pubs selling locally produced food. An idyllic ramble in the High Weald takes visitors through hop gardens, orchards and a vineyard on a delightful 4.7 mile circular walk starting in Sandhurst.

Dave Hughes, author of *Hops 'n' Downs*, spent many months meticulously researching the guide and is excited by the revitalisation of Kent's beer brewing industry, driven by the significant growth in microbreweries. As Dave Hughes said, "With the slow decline in hop growing in Kent hastened by competition from hop growers around the world and changing tastes in alcohol, it would be easy to assume that beer brewing is a dying art in Kent. However this couldn't be further from the truth with an encouraging and notable body of innovative new microbreweries putting Kent very clearly on the beer map of Great Britain."

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Kent has long been associated with the growing of hops, while oast-houses have become symbolic of the county. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, thousands of acres of Kent's countryside were devoted to growing hops, with up to 80,000 people involved in the annual harvest at hop-picking time in September.

Alongside its hop growing tradition, the county also has a rich brewing heritage. Shepherd Neame, based in Faversham, is Britain's oldest independent brewery and while many other breweries have disappeared over time, a good number of micro-breweries have sprung-up in Kent in recent years including the likes of award-winning Ramsgate Brewery, Nelson Brewing Company, Royal Tunbridge Wells Brewing Co and Whitstable Brewery, as well as Hopdaemon Brewery Company, Old Dairy Brewery and Tonbridge Brewery to name but a few.

Although the county's hop acreage has now reduced to around 1000 acres, surviving hop gardens continue to form a distinctive and cherished feature of Kent's landscape. Wye Hops (formerly at Wye College) has also been at the forefront of research into hop cultivation, with the recent development and introduction of dwarf varieties changing the traditional appearance of some hop gardens.

To download a copy of the beer trail visit www.producedinkent.co.uk

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