

The Real Ale Revival

The last quarter of the 20th century has seen a revival of interest in real ale. The formation of the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA) and publication of The Good Beer Guide prompted many new micro-breweries to emerge, some with substantial success.

Robert Wallace (1648 Brewing Company, Kings Head, East Hoathly)

I actually used to do a bit of home brewing as a lot of people do. Over a conversation with a friend of mine, David (Seebrook), we decided we could make use of the stable block, which is adjacent to the Kings Head, from when it was a coaching inn. The stable block was used by the boys when they were younger and they used to have the hay loft as their camp. And, as they grew older, they stopped using it, and it became redundant, so we decided to turn it into a small brewery. It's ideal, if you've got a hay loft, then you can use that for your barley store above and then drop straight through the hopper into the mash tun, which is a traditional way of doing it, so that's what we did. The barley goes straight into the hay loft when it arrives.

Mark Tranter (Head Brewer, Dark Star, 1996 - 2013)

Rob Jones and Martin Kemp ran an off-licence and home brew supply in Hoxton and they made a dark beer, which one of their friends, or customers, suggested they called Dark Star. It went on to win Champion Beer of Britain, and then their partnership dissolved and Rob went off to do other things and was brewing in Lancing and delivering beer to the Evening Star (in Brighton), which was then owned by Peter Skinner and Peter Halliday, who were interested in putting a brewery into one of their pubs, because at the time they owned the Gardner's Arms in Lewes as well. So, Rob designed this sort of crazy little brewery that fitted in the cellar of the Evening Star. I mean it's absolutely tiny, and he decided to brew some beers himself as well. He had kept the name Dark Star, so he thought it would be a good name to call the brewery and so they started in '94 and I joined in February '96. I was, at the time, putting on punk bands and working as a chef. Rob tried some of my beers, and was kind enough to offer me a job on the basis he thought they were fairly good for home brew, because, you know, home brew back then wasn't quite as advanced as it is now.