

## **Rhymney Brewery announces plans for new brewery and visitor centre**

After 7 years of brewing in Merthyr Tydfil, Rhymney Brewery has announced its plans to re-locate to Blaenavon to open a new 15,000 square foot, purpose built brewery and visitor centre, the first of its kind in Wales.

The £950,000 brewery and visitor centre plans to open its doors in October 2011 providing at least three additional jobs and expecting to attract approximately 20-30,000 visitors to the region each year.

The new brewery will be twice the size of the old site enabling it to increase production and branch out into new product lines. The company is currently producing 1 million bottles of ale each year and hopes to increase production by 15% when the new brewery opens.

In addition to providing an insight into the processes of brewing and distilling real ale, the new centre will offer visitors the chance to sample some of the brewery's most popular ales including its well known Hobby Horse and Rhymney Dark.

Designed and constructed by Penybryn Engineering, Hengoed, the new build will incorporate a raised platform on the upstairs mezzanine floor allowing visitors to view the brewery from above. It will also house a shop selling the brewery's produce and other quality Welsh food products.

The interior of the centre will be designed by specialists in interactive technology, Paragon Creative, whose recent projects include exhibitions in The Tower of London and Cardiff Castle. Cutting edge visual displays will attract children and adults to learn about the heritage of the area which also boasts Big Pit and Pontypool and Blaenavon Railway.

Steve Evans, CEO of Rhymney Brewery said: "The move to Blaenavon isn't simply to increase production; the purpose is to tell the story of real ale in a modern, interactive environment which will attract tourists to the area. These days, people know very little about the brewing process, the culture of the Working Men's Clubs, and how real ale was an essential part of people's diets at a time when water wasn't sterile and therefore couldn't be consumed.

“My father often spoke of the annual brewery trips arranged by the Working Men’s Clubs. Local breweries were an integral part of community life then and the new visitor centre at Rhymney Brewery will ensure that future generations can appreciate the history of real ale in south Wales, as well as learn about the processes behind creating the increasingly popular alternative to lager.”

Real Ale is continuing to increase in popularity. Results from The Cask Report 2010-2011 showed that, ‘despite declining total beer sales and continuing pub closures, cask ale last year outperformed the beer market, increased its share of on-trade beer for the third successive year and grew its drinker base by 1.4%.’ The study also showed that ‘regional and local cask ale brewers recorded volume increases of 1% and 5% respectively, though the multinational brewers saw their cask volumes fall by 11%.’ \*

Rhymney Brewery’s range of beers currently includes six regular beers and a number of specialist beers. Each beer uses live yeast and only natural ingredients with no additives. The family run business is currently based in Merthyr Tydfil and employs 23 staff.

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