

Loweswater Brewery, Cumbria

Tim Holt

The Kirkstile Inn is situated between Loweswater and Crummock Water, at the northern foot of the 509 metre high Mellbreak fell. It probably dates back to the 16th century and, together with the church, forms the heart of the village of Loweswater, in reality a disparate collection of farmhouses. In the summer of 2003, after an absence of 180 years, the inn began to brew its own beer again.

During the October of the previous year the inn's owner, Roger Humphreys, and head brewer, Matt Webster, oversaw the purchase of brewing equipment from fellow Cumbrian brewery, Tirrel. The three barrel plant produced its first beer, MB1, on the 1st June 2003 and this was to be the forerunner of Melbreak Bitter (ABV 3.7). Over the next two years three other beers were added to the range, Grasmoor Dark Ale (ABV 4.3), Rannerdale (ABV 4.0) and Kirkstile Gold (ABV 4.3).

The malt is sourced from Fawcetts of Castleford and is primarily Maris Otter with some crystal malt and Progress and Challenger are the primary hop varieties used. The water is Burtonized and, despite coming from the mains, originates just over Loweswater Fell in Ennerdale. After attending Brewlab's microbiology workshop Matt began managing his own yeast. The institute also provided him, as it has many of Britain's new brewers, with the necessary knowledge to make this such a successful venture. To cope with demand an additional conditioning tank was acquired in 2004 to allow regular brewing twice a week. A subsequent small extension allowed the introduction of a bottling plant and further room for conditioning.

The following photographs, by David Abbott, were taken in the summer of 2006, before the brewery was expanded.



The north-western Lake District with Mellbreak on the left. Taken from Grasmoor.



The Loweswater brewery, Kirkstile Inn.



Brewery interior showing the copper.



Brewery interior showing the copper, heat exchanger, hot liquor tank and mash tun.



Brewery interior showing the hop back in the foreground.