



Southwold

Southwold is successful because of its location, its distant proximity [1] to London, the conservatism of its administrators and the energy of one man and one company, who has nurtured a series of linked commercial activities creating a unique business and at the same time a *raison d'etre* for Southwold. The result is that this once sleepy east coast town has become a focus for the intelligentsia and one of the most sought after (and expensive) coastal locations in Britain.

Simon Loftus inherited his position as a director of Adnams Brewery from his father, whose family had been in partnership with the Adnams family for more than a hundred years. He decided to widen the brewery's functions and to develop along with the ale business a wine importer - following his own interests and enthusiasms. Early on he realised the potential of mail order, sending out lavishly illustrated and wonderfully evocative catalogues which the wine writer Jancis Robinson admits to having been so well written that she was once tempted sufficiently to read the conditions of sale! [2]

By selling Adnams and their products so well, Simon Loftus began inadvertently to sell Southwold too. The town had been part of East Anglia's fishing industry, which by the 70's had all but collapsed. In its wake came weekenders seeking peace and quiet. This coast had always been popular with refugees from the metropolis and after the war, Benjamin Britten [3] moved with his coterie to nearby Aldeburgh. Southwold also became a focus for artists and musicians. The opening of The Maltings Concert Hall at Snape and the annual Aldeburgh Festival brought further visitors to this part of the world. With Britten's musing providing an evocative theme for this wild and windswept coastline.

Simon Loftus



For Admans this presented an opportunity to provide a higher quality of service in their public houses and extend their brand.

Gradually the company transformed its public houses including *The Sun* and *The Crown*, both in the High Street into stylish hotels, importing the best chefs and providing tastings of Adnams wines and ales. All in all Adnams now own 87 public houses in the area, many of them now serve good food and often provide at least B&B accommodation. They also opened a cooking shop in a town centre warehouse.

Southwold is not quite like any other British resort. A simple beach hut here sold for £45,000 last year and the town along with its satellite village, Walberswick, has become a magnet for writers and actors. Emma Freud, Bill Nighy, Richard Curtis, Julie Myerson and P D James have second homes there. It has always been a focus for artists, Peter de Wint painted here in the early 19th century and he has been followed by the likes of Stanley Spencer, Sickert, Philip Wilson Steer and Royal Academician William Bowyer. However it would be difficult to prove how far the proximity of a few good hotels and the prospect of a pleasant evening meal in one of Admans restaurant must have played a part in people's decision to locate here.

With the increased attraction of real ale Admans Brewery has gone from strength to strength. In 2004 Adnams began work on a new fermentation room. The beer is brewed in the main building and then piped under the road into the fermentation tanks. Suffolk grown Marisotter barley is used in the brewing process.

Adnams has become Southwold's largest employer and one of the fastest growing beer brands in the country, selling ale to discerning drinkers well beyond the Suffolk border.

The firm has seen a massive expansion in recent years, literally doubling in size in the last five years. This has meant a lot more HGVs coming into the town, so a new environmentally friendly distribution centre has been built at nearby Reydon to take some of the pressure away from Southwold.

Like successful city fathers everywhere Simon Loftus have started looking at the social and environmental impact of their trade. In 2005 the company won a Queen's Award for Enterprise for being able to manage the impacts associated with brewing operations in terms of energy, water and materials consumption, reduced emissions associated with logistics, support for the local communities through local procurement strategies, charitable contributions to local organisations and campaigns, and working with local schools to develop enterprise education. In 2006 they completed their £14m eco-distribution centre which boasts a living roof, lime and hemp walls and rain harvesting facility.



The present MD, said;

"The building is about 15% more expensive than a traditional 'metal box' warehouse, but the additional investment is justified in the long term by significantly lower energy usage and greater efficiency."

Adnams also have an impressive set of policies and business strategies which illustrate their enlightened attitudes. The company is founded on nine values which are:

- Sustainability
- Diversity
- Fulfilment
- Quality
- Environment
- Integrity
- Commitment
- Community
- Pride

Where Adnams led, other businesses have followed. The town pier has recently been done up and now has an array of quality attractions and cafés. Southwold Pier, opened by the Duke of Gloucester, won 'Pier of the Year' award in 2002.

Adnams new distribution centre

Southwold is very close to the much poorer resorts of Lowestoft, once a great fishing port, and Great Yarmouth with its wider and sandier beach. These are both ailing towns and because of this Waveney District the local authority and Southwold still qualify for Objective 2 funding. However in Southwold the impact of these initiatives has been limited. Inactivity and innate conservatism on the part of the local council has, in this case, been Southwold's saving grace. It has suffered little structural change since the war, and is still a



← P WC

8 am - 8 pm
No loading
Mon - Sat
8 am - 7 pm
→

Summer
Theatre
Southwold

GOLD BAY INN

Two elderly people sitting on a stone bench in the foreground on the right.

delightful old fashioned resort with some of the best beach huts in the country. But behind the traditional facades the population, with its artists and writers, is far from traditional. This mix seems to have been to Southwold's benefit. For example behind an inconspicuous row of cottages in the centre of town Adnams have built their state of the art new brewery.

But the newcomers have brought with them a new growth industry - the creative Industries. Is the image of sleepy Southwold, that of a buoyant *tertiary* industrial zone of the future?

The East of England Development Agency (EEDA) has not been slow to recognise Southwold as a rather unusual focus for economic activity and funds are being expended to encourage training within the area. The following industries have been recognised as important.

- Advertising
- Architecture
- Art/Antiques Trade
- Computer Games, Software, Electronic
- Publishing
- Designer Fashion
- Film
- Music and the Visual & Performing Arts
- Publishing
- Radio & Television

Many of these industries could be described as modern cottage industries, which are able with the benefit of Broadband to survive anywhere. Southwold can also boast a thriving, if small, business park at nearby Reydon. It has become a hub for new

business. It houses Adnams new distribution centre, Young and Pure, an internet based toxin free cosmetic company, as well as a specialist geological equipment supplier.

EEDA has provided funds for improvement of the main A12 access road, which also provides the route to the nearby Sizewell B nuclear power station. (Incidentally this is likely to become the site of one of Britain's third wave of Nuclear Power Stations announced in January 2008) Objective 2 and 3 funds are also being used to champion new energy resources. There are plans for large wind power stations offshore in the North Sea. So in the future Southwold could find itself as an important focus of power generation.

[1] *Southwold is about 2½ hours drive from London and 102 miles (184km)*

[2] *Anatomy of the wine trade by Simon Loftus Preface by Jancis Robinson Sidgewick and Jackson London 1985*

[3] *Benjamin Britten - Was born in Lowestoft, Suffolk on 22nd December 1913. He died at his home in Aldeburgh, Suffolk, on 4th December 1976 and is buried in the churchyard of the Aldeburgh Parish Church.*



Adnams new town centre brewery

