



NEWS

Industry remembers cider producer and writer Susanna Forbes

16 SEPTEMBER 2024

By db staff writer

The author and drinks writer Susanna Forbes, who also went on to co-found Herefordshire-based craft cider business Little Pomona, has died.



Forbes, whose long fight with cancer had been known by those close to her, had not faltered over the past few years in her dedication to the industry she loved. Speaking to *db* last year, she outlined how much she “appreciated people and cherished the perspective that treatment and its challenges had uncovered”.

Her generosity of spirit showcased by her constant reminder that “in times of hardship you recognise the people who go out of their way to really make a difference”.

Friends and colleagues have come from far and wide to pay their tributes to Forbes for her personality and kindness being at the forefront of their descriptions.

Experience

In experience terms, Forbes joined the drinks sector in the nineties working with Oddbins, also worked as assistant editor of Wine International and covered roles where she assisted in the early stages of compiling the sixth edition of the World Atlas of Wine. By 2007, Forbes joined Imbibe and a few years later launched her own website Drink Britain.

She spent around 23 years writing for the drinks sector and has also been instrumental in the organisation of countless events both for Imbibe as well as the International Cool Climate Wine Symposium and the Sommelier Wine Awards.

In 2011, Forbes joined Hilary Lumsden to form Forbes Lumsden Editorial Services which became the managing editor for Neal Martin's book, Pomerol, which won both the Chairman's Award at the 2013 Louis Roederer International Wine Writers Awards and the inaugural John Avery award at the 2012 André Simon Book Awards.

In 2015, Forbes co-founded the boutique cider producer Little Pomona with her husband James, making small batches of handcrafted still and sparkling ciders from the four varieties of cider apples in our orchard.

As part of the cause to raise the understanding and appeal of high quality cider, Forbes went on to also source from other like-minded orchards within the Three Counties and support the use a wholly natural approach, letting wild yeasts ferment each vintage's juice, to create craft ciders that reflected the terroir.

Book

In 2018 *Forbes* published her book on craft cider titled *The Cider Insider* and in 2019 went on to co-found and edit the magazine *Full Juice* which focused on the very best ciders in the sector.

Outstripping her achievements in the industry, both as a writer, cider judge and commentator as well as producer, Forbes is remembered by her friends, colleagues and peers as a force for good and a kind and generous person who was filled with enthusiasm and verve.

Eulogies

Drinks writer and author Pete Brown said:

"Susanna was so many things: a great writer, one of the modern heroes of the cider world, a ball of energy and enthusiasm, and above all a great, kind and caring friend. The void she leaves is so huge it feels like the loss of more than one person. I'm just grateful to have known her."

School of Booze founder, author and drinks educator Jane Peyton said:

“We have lost a kind, generous, supportive, gentle, loving friend and the drinks business, particularly cider & perry, has lost one of its most devoted advocates. It was a privilege to know Susanna.”

“Susanna never stopped trying to find opportunities for her friends and associates so they could excel. She was also a supremely effective connector of people and understood the power of collaboration. As the co-founder of Little Pomona Cider & Perry, along with her husband James, Susanna helped to change attitudes of what cider and perry is and was key in initiating the growing respect for artisan cider and perry. We have also lost the absolute champion writer of chatty newsletters and descriptive tasting notes. No-one comes close to Susanna.”

Beer educator Annabel Smith said:

“Susanna didn’t have a bad bone in her body, and she always saw the best in people. I feel blessed to have known her.”

PR and communications consultant Kate Hemsall said:

“Susanna was one of the kindest, sweetest souls I’ve ever known and she always talked about her love of drinks – particularly cider – so enthusiastically and passionately that you couldn’t help but be drawn in. She had a calm presence that belied her vast knowledge, was helpful and encouraging to everyone joining the drinks industry and was just the best company you could ever wish to have.”

db beer and features editor Jessica Mason said:

“Susanna was admired by everyone. She was so kind and friendly. I can’t imagine her not being here to encourage us all to see the best in things we imbibe. She had a way about her that immediately put you at ease. She was a friend and a mentor as well as a true advocate for businesses and people who put care and attention into what they created. I will miss her very much.”

Cath Potter and Dick Withecombe, Manchester Cider Club said:

“Susanna was a dear friend and an inspiration. We will miss her terribly. There is a massive void in our hearts where she should be. Without her, Manchester wouldn’t have the cider culture that we are proud of today. She was the guiding light of the new Cider renaissance and the rise of aspirational cider. James Forbes is a genius in the art and science of cider making.”

“Susanna and he launched Little Pomona in 2015 which has since become one of the most exciting and important cider producer in the world. Susanna was always so generous with her time and expertise, offering help and support with projects large and small with her relentless energy, cheerful voice and positivity. A lasting legacy is seen in Cider Women – a beacon for inclusivity within cider and the wider drinks industry. We will miss her leadership and guidance but she leaves a great legacy and Cider Women will continue to grow and live up to her vision.”

Drinks writer Chris Losh said:

“Susanna was, quite simply, probably the nicest person I’ve ever worked with. She was calm, funny, diligent and almost comically thorough. Her folders, spread-sheets and multiple colours of ink were the stuff of legend. On Wine Magazine, Imbibe and the Sommelier Wine Awards, she bore everyone else’s disorganisation with superhuman tolerance, and while there must have been times she felt like screaming with frustration I can’t remember her ever having a bad word to say to or about anyone.

“She was no doormat though. She could very sweetly let you know if she thought you were being an idiot. Her English drinks website was years ahead of its time and Little Pomona has helped to reinvigorate an entire category. Her ability to see opportunities then bring them to fruition showed there was real steel and determination beneath the smile.

“Genuinely, I don’t think a person exists who could have anything bad – or even vaguely non-positive to say about Susanna, which in a world of egos, opinions and supercharged achievement is a truly astonishing achievement. So long Susanna. Taken from us too soon, you’ll be much missed. By everyone.”

Ciderologist Gabe Cook said:

“The Ciderologist and the wider craft cider scene wouldn’t exist without Susanna. Her unfailing dedication to progressing the interests of the fermented apple were second to none.

“She used her wit, guile, extensive network and strategic nous to breathe new life into our old fashioned industry. We worked side by side on many projects – always fun, always progressive, always aspirational. Cider will sorely miss her. But not as much as her mates. Wassail, Susanna. Wassail.”

Felix Nash, founder, Fine Cider Co said:

“Susanna Forbes, one half of the inimitable Little Pomona, & simply a wonderful person, is no longer with us. A huge amount of sadness exists in the world of good cider; she had unbeatable energy levels, was a true dynamo, and had the ability to make things happen few could. And for us in particular at the Fine Cider Company, she’s been a companion in this fight for the past decade. As anyone who met her will know, she brought an optimism and charm to the world that surrounded her.

“Her legacy will most definitely live on in all she has created & shaped, from the unbeatable ground breaking bottles, to her influence on the industry as a whole; ensuring it is a vibrant, inclusive, kind community. She exemplifies the positive difference we can create between the world we find, & how we leave it. It’s such a surreal thing, this life; like fruit from a tree, we can be plucked in our prime, or fall before our time. The days of sweet blossom can pass so fast, & the winds can be so cruel. Cheers, and thank you, to Susanna; for all you were, and all you have done. And to James, her lovely husband, all they have created together, and how lovely they have always been whilst doing so. In loving memory, of a beautiful soul.”

Beer writer and buyer Mitch Adams said:

“People may have known Susanna as a champion of British drinks, but really she was a champion of people. She helped so many of us in the industry with a step up here, an introduction there. She always saw the best in people and gave her time, knowledge, influence and advice with unending generosity. I was so lucky to call her a friend and I will miss her.”

Elizabeth Pimblett, director of the Museum of Cider said:

“Susanna was such a support to the museum, and setting up Cider Women with her was a privilege. She was superb at making connections & inspiring actions, and her house sometimes seemed a league of nations the way she and James hosted international and British visitors to the ciderie. And so clever and incisive and creative – with a degree in physics. But above all, so kind. So genuinely interested in people.”



5 responses to “Industry remembers cider producer and writer Susanna Forbes”

Hilary Lumsden says:

September 17, 2024 at 4:25 pm

I am so deeply sorry to hear about Susanna, she was a warm friend and a wonderful colleague. She had so much positive energy and absolutely nothing would stop her. She will be dreadfully missed. Another star gone

[Reply](#)

Chris Charters says:

September 18, 2024 at 3:12 pm

Sorry to hear of the passing of Susanna Forbes of Little Pomona.

I meet her on several occasions where she helped with CAMRA events and festivals being awarded CAMRAs Pomona Award for her services to cider and perry in 2021.

Little Pomona produced excellent real Cider and Perry, and her influence in the industry will be greatly missed.

Farwell Susanna

Chris Charters

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[Reply](#)

Chris Charters says:

September 18, 2024 at 3:18 pm

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Chris Charters

Chairman Welsh Perry Cider Society Ltd
CAMRA Welsh Director
CAMRA Welsh Cider Co-ordinator
CAMRA Radnorshire Branch Chairman

[Reply](#)

Alice Lascelles says:

September 20, 2024 at 6:50 pm

I have so many happy memories of working with Susanna in the early days of Imbibe, and then, later on, tasting cider with her too. She was a wonderful person – kind, funny and true. My heart goes out to all those who loved her.

[Reply](#)

Phil says:

September 20, 2024 at 9:47 pm

Incredibly sad news.

I have never met Susanna but have been on many Little Pomona cider tastings with her and James.

They both come across as great people with such a dedication to cider.

They were amazing to me as a customer with Susanna regularly reaching out to recommend ciders or giving advice to save me money and give me the best experience.

Condolences to James and all at Little Pomona.

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