

A touch of Belgium in East London

Solvay Society is no ordinary brewery. Take the name for instance. It comes from the physics conferences that were set up by Ernest Solvay, the most famous of which was in 1927 when 17 of the 23 attendees had, or were to gain, Nobel prizes. The chemicals company Ernest founded with his brother still exists today.

The brewery's owner, Roman Hochuli, is a little unusual too. He is a physicist by training (this explains the brewery's name) and Roman was doing a post doctorate at UCL before the brewing bug finally took over completely. Physics is certainly in the DNA of this brewery and its influence is even in the naming of each of the beers, from Exotic Physics and Structure of Matter to Tritium (isotope of hydrogen) and Coulomb (an electrical charge).

But Roman's uncommon background extends to his heritage; his mother is from Brazil, his father from Switzerland and Roman was born and brought up in Belgium. The latter uncovers the final link in the brewery puzzle; all of the beers that Roman brews have a Belgian influence.



The forming and development of the Solvay Society has been a journey. The original brewing took place in the cellar of the Warrant Officer pub in East London. 'Every beer I produced there had an infection' said Roman. Needless to say, a move was in order and the next stop was at the Hops and Glory in Essex Road in 2014. 'With batches of 50 to 100 litres, this allowed me to develop my core range' he explained.

Then came the need for expansion and a subsequent move to Newbury Park, which was once the home of the Ha'Penny Brewery. They closed the same year that the Solvay Society set up but it wasn't until 2016 that Roman took possession of the brewery, complete with the famous white peacocks who wander the site; Ha'Penny always had problems keeping them away



from the malt store! The brewery is on an old farm and quite a way out of London, albeit still on the Central Line, so the next initiative was a tap room to bring the beer closer to London's drinkers. The outlet is in railway arches near Leyton tube. Roman commented 'We got the keys in February and it took about two months to kit it out. We needed to decorate and put in cold storage for the beer. At the moment, although we are in a high residential area, only a few of our customers are currently from the local community. We do get a few people attending Leyton Orient games though'.

Solvay Society's beer is in key kegs (80%) and bottles; most are unfiltered and suitable for vegans. All the bottles are hand filled and hand labelled. Like most brewers, Roman is continuing to experiment with his beer range. 'I want to change people's perception of Belgian Beer over here. Not all of it needs to be strong'. Two examples of this are Minimise, described as a Table Saison at only 3.2% ABV, and Superposition, a wheat beer/ Session IPA at 3.8% ABV. The latter was his best selling beer this summer. 'The name is based on Schrodinger's Cat, in that it's neither one thing nor the other!' Other additions are barrel aged beers, which tend to be at the other end of the alcohol spectrum such as the strong Belgium Pale, Aurum, at 12% ABV.

But whatever strength of beer you like to drink, a visit to Solvay's Society's Tap Room for a taste of Belgium is rewarding and the tube is very much cheaper than the EuroStar!

The taproom is open every Thursday and Friday 4pm to 11pm and Saturday noon to 11pm with an occasional Sunday; see: www.solvaysociety.com.

London Tasting Panel Tasting Notes

Minimise 3.2%

Described as a Table Saison, a light drinking refreshing yellow beer with bubblegum, lemon and a little biscuit aroma and flavour. Peely, clean and bitter finish. 20% Spelt, Pale Malt and Torrified Wheat. Dry hopped twice with Herbrucker.

Superposition 3.8%

Fruity light drinking straw coloured wheat beer with bubblegum and biscuity malt flavours. Nose too has a little bubblegum accompanied by floral hops. Clean, slightly bitter finish. Magnum, Centennial and Monroe hops. Monroe is a German hop.

Structure Of Matter 5.5%

Hazy, warming Belgian Pale Ale with fruity yeasty aroma. Flavour is biscuity sweet with bitter overtones, peppery hop, fruit and a touch of caramelised citrus pith, which is also in the finish with a developing peppery hoppy bitterness that lingers. Malts are Caramalt, Pale and Carafa. Hops are Celeia, Minstrel and Magnum. Uses a yeast of the La Chouffe strain.

Exotic Physics 6.0%

Hazy, smooth yellow Belgian style IPA with floral hops on nose and palate overlaid with citrus, nectarine and sweet biscuity notes. The finish is spicy, bitter and dry. Malts are Extra Pale, Dextrose; hops are Mandarina, Magnum, Hallertau Mittelfruh.

Mutual Attraction 6.0%

Complex smooth hazy yellow beer aged in Oak Bourbon barrels, which is reflected throughout. The nose also has slightly earthy and citrus notes. Both are noticeable on the palate where there are hints of vanilla. Dry, bitterish finish. Dangerously easy to drink.



Tritium 7.5%

Gold Belgian Tripel with rye and pink peppercorns. Silky smooth mouthfeel. Light estery-fruity aromas with a typical tart rye notes and some yeastiness. Honey flavours balance the spicy fruitiness that lingers in the warming aftertaste. German Pilsner malt and rye with Beata hop, which is an English whole hop. Table sugar is added to the boil.

Aurum 12.0%

Dark gold beer aged for 9 months in barrels and designed for Christmas. The result is a warming, smooth complex beer with flavours of orange, rich honey and warming alcohol. There is some nutty character.

