

## Dog's Granddad – with a little help from my friends

Alex Hill, founder of Dog's Granddad, unlike many brewers in London does not have a finance background, in fact his background couldn't be further away! Alex had been working for charities for the last 20 years, in areas such as mental health and homelessness. "I just decided I wanted to do something new. I love drinking beer and I had been home brewing for 3-4 years. My friends said that my beer was good and they persuaded me to take the plunge".

Alex didn't just jump in; he volunteered for Gipsy Hill and One Mile End. "It gave me great experience and it didn't feel like work, so I started to look for premises in 2019. It took me a while to find something in my price range, settling on an arch two doors down from Brixton Brewery".

However, things, as often with setting up a brewery, didn't go quite to plan. He had originally hoped to open last June but the negotiations, planning permission etc took 14 months, and Alex finally moved into the arch in December 2020.



"It took me about two and a half months to set up the brewery. It's a 5.5 barrel plant from Latimer Ales with three 5.5 barrel conical fermenters from China. I did everything myself including the floor and cold room. I had planned to put in a Tap Room at the same time but with the lockdown affecting draught beer sales, I decided to buy a small three headed canning line. With some help from a friend, who is great with DIY, we sat there with the instruction manual and then got it going. The timing worked out quite well and I've had a decent trickle of can sales" said Alex.

Alex is not intending to do cask beers, just cans and kegs. However, his beers are unfiltered and unpasteurised with the two core beers being a Session IPA at 4.3% and a Pale at 5%; both are heavily American hopped. Alex explained that he wanted to get these beers right before trying 'specials'. The first such beer is a 'normal' IPA at 5.5% and then a dark range including beers such as a Black IPA and an American Brown are planned. But "I won't be doing sours. I don't like them", quipped Alex.

Funding for the brewery came from Alex and his girlfriend, Laurie (who works for the Financial Ombudsman) topped up by a Government start up loan. But, like the help with the canning line, Alex has been fortunate with getting help from friends. One with an IT background, did the website and online sales and another, who is a graphic designer, produced the logo and label designs for free.

The help from friends is also evident in the beer production. Alex is currently brewing about once every two weeks with friends coming in to help, including with the canning. However, Alex is aware that he can't rely only on friends going forward, he is currently working 7 days a week as it is. Alex said "The first people I will need to employ are bar staff as I hope to open the Tap Room on 21<sup>st</sup> May. We'll start with Friday evening (5-11pm), all day Saturday (12-11pm) and Sunday afternoon (2-6pm) and then maybe expand depending on how things go. I can't wait to get people in".

Alex described his ideas on the Tap Room: "I'm a big gamer and intend to have an arcade of gaming machines and hosting gaming nights"

As the brewery grows, perhaps not surprisingly based on Alex's background, Alex said he would like to employ people from disadvantaged backgrounds and will probably go and talk to Ignition Brewery to see how they have fared.

But the burning question was where did the name of the brewery come from? Alex explained, "Dog's Granddad comes from the sayings that I and my friends use amongst ourselves such as 'Alright Granddad' and 'That beer is a proper dog'. All my friends are a bit weird".

So whether or not Alex will need his friends to help in the running of the brewery in the future, the friends will always have a long lasting impact on the brewery. After all, it was their influence that resulted in the strange name and there is no doubt that the brewery originally got going "with a little help from my friends".

## **Tasting notes**

### **Session IPA 4.3% ABV**

Hazy yellow/ golden ale with grapefruit, lemon, tropical and sweet biscuit on nose and flavour. Aftertaste is spicy and a growing dry bitterness with the smooth mouthfeel giving a pleasant balance. Cascade and Amarillo hops with added oats for .



### **Pale Ale 5% ABV**

Hazy gold beer with smooth creamy mouthfeel. Grapefruit, mango and tropical flavours overlaid with sweet digestive biscuit and notes of honey caramel that linger in the finish which is dry, bitter with spicy hops. Sweet citrus and tropical fruit and earthy hops on nose. Amarillo , Cascade and Mosaic hops.