

## Beerblefish, entering a new universe?

For many people, despite being around in some guise for some six years, Beerblefish<sup>1</sup> tends to hide its light under a hop sack.

It was set up by James and Bethany Atherton and they moved into the current, small brewery premises in Edmonton in 2016. It's always been a small team with James and Bethany only working part time. These days, the day to day operations is split between Glenn Heinzl (who also has his own beer range under the Tankley name) and Michaela James. Both brew but Glenn takes a lead on



sales. If Michaela's name is familiar it is probably because she has brewed at a number of London brewers including Volden, Alphabeta and Enfield.

Michaela joined Beerblefish last August after Andy, the previous brewer, moved to Meantime. "It was very fortunate timing" said Michaela. "Thanks to the pandemic, I had been furloughed for a while by Enfield Brewery and then made redundant. James had heard through the grapevine that I was available and here I came".

James commented, "The addition of Michaela meant that Glenn didn't have to brew as well as sell the beer. We identified that we needed to look at off sales and Bethany built us a website so people could buy online. If the order is local, then Glenn will deliver it, otherwise it's down to Parcelforce".

When the November lockdown hit, Beerblefish added "the 12 beers of lockdown". "We mixed them up and discounted them. We also started to offer mini kegs" said James. "We had a premises licence and could have kept our bottle shop open but it seemed the wrong thing to do with pubs being closed. We stopped doing markets as well. We did okay in 2020 because small pack has better margins and selling direct to the customer meant that these were better margins too".

This ethical approach is also in the way they employ people. Their previous brewer, Andy, was an ex serviceman. This came about when James and Bethany were helping out at Crisis at Christmas in Paddington and they noticed that there were a disproportionate of ex service people there and employed Andy. Their support extended to education and Andy was encouraged to take his IBD Certificate of Brewing. The new comer is now James, who has Cerebral Palsy. James started on a 6 months placement but is now a permanent part time member of staff.

This attitude of giving something back extends to Bethany's personal life, as well as having a busy job as a solicitor, she sits on the audit committee of the Archbishops Council for the Church of England as well as being a Trustee of a Trust.

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<sup>1</sup> The brewery's name was inspired by the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy.

Beerblefish also got involved with International Women's Day in March. Always a supporter of Unite, which aims to get women brewers to commemorate the day, Michaela brewed SMASH, a 5.2% organic pale ale. Michaela explained "This year's theme was compassion so I thought it would fit. It was the first ever I had brewed an organic beer".

But this beer wasn't the only one where they have been experimenting. They have produced an unusual beer called Mumm. James said "I came across this on a website, It's a black German spiced beer dating back centuries. It really is a lost style and we named it after Christian Mumme, who is reported to have brewed it in 1492. We know it was exported from Germany to England in medieval times".



James has always had a passion for old beer recipes and Beerblefish have retained their heritage range. Based on Victorian recipes, they have developed a bit of a cult following, with beers such as 1853 ESB, 1892 IPA and 1820 Porter and they are good value for money in 500ml bottles. But it isn't all about history and strong beer; there are plenty of contemporary beers to complement these older beer recipes including a 5.8% lager called Edmonton lager; a table beer (Hoppy Little Fish 3.5%) and their Pan Galactic Pale Ale 4.6%, which won a gong in the Great Taste Awards for 2020.

There are great plans ahead for Beerblefish. The space at the Edmonton brewery has been increasingly cramped so they are upping sticks to a new universe. The new unit is on the Uplands Business Park in Blackhorse Road, Walthamstow, where they will be neighbours of Signature Brew and Exale Brewing.

They intend to use their current brewing equipment but new will be their intention is to have a tap room (alongside their shop) and, as well as the brewery, they are intending to distil gin. They have

already had some forays into selling gin (and the latest batch used wild hops that were growing around the brewery gates) but Bethany said they are also considering distilling whisky and maybe even rum!



Their new taproom opened in July 2021. Blackhorse Road is looking like the place to be and the Bermondsey Mile looks like having a major competitor.

## Tasting Notes

### Edmonton Lager 5.8%

Full flavoured and smooth. Lemon and biscuit on nose and palate. Finish is sweetish with a developing bitterness and a trace of resinous hops.

German lager malts; Saaz, Admiral and Archer hops.

### **Hoppy Little Fish 3.5%**

Described as a Table Beer, it's a refreshing smooth pale ale with a fruity, perfumed hoppy aroma. The flavour has notes of pineapple, lemon and biscuit. Lingering bitter finish with a hint of dryness.

Maris Otter and Cara aroma malts; Cascade, Dr Rudi and Archer hops.

### **Edmonton Best Bitter 4.3%**

Amber coloured smooth traditional bitter. Pears and citrus fruits overlay caramelised fudge. Dry bitter finish.

Maris Otter and Caramalt; Cascade, Archer, Progress and Mittelfruh hops.

### **Hop 7 4.5%**

Strong fruity nose with a little faint biscuit and a hint of banana. Biscuity smooth with a flavour of fruit cocktail. Earthy hoppy, sweet bitter finish. Dark gold in colour,

This beer uses up left over hops so hop blend varies. This example used a base of two British hops (Olicana and Archer) and two American (Citra and Cascade).

### **Pan Galactic Pale Ale 4.6%**

This beer won a Great Taste Award. It's amber in colour, full bodied with fruity tangerine notes with sweet biscuit. The aftertaste starts soft then becoming slightly bitter and dry.

Maris Otter and Cara aroma malts and the hops include Citra, Ella and Galaxy.

### **1853 ESB 5.3%**

Pale brown, well balanced premium bitter. Caramel aroma with a touch of fruit. Sweet caramel flavour with marmalade and a gentle developing spicy hoppiness that becomes slightly bitter in the aftertaste.

Maris Otter, Cara aroma and Crystal malts; Progress, Saaz and Dr Rudi hops.

### **1982 IPA 6.9%**

Full flavoured beer with marmalade and caramelised fruit throughout. Finish starts dry becoming bitter.

Maris Otter, Cara aroma and crystal malts; Pilgrim, Citra, Goldings and Amarillo hops.

### **Ginger Beerble 5.3%**

Golden brown with ginger aroma, flavour and finish. Flavour is well balanced with sweet, spicy and biscuit character. Finish is slightly bitter and dry.

Hops are Challenger, Saaz, Dr Rudi and Amarillo. Spiced with coriander, cardamon, clove and pepper.

**Viking ale 5%**

Orangey brown beer with spicy nose and flavour which lingers in the finish. Caramelised orange and roasty sweet notes are on the palate. The latter remains in the dry aftertaste.

Ingredient are: water, barley, hops, yarrow, heather, juniper, myrtle, yeast.