

## Wimbledon Brewery, paying homage to the local

There are no pineapples at Wimbledon Brewery – but there is juniper!

But the brewery's story all began some years ago at a breakfast in 2014. Mark Gordon, who worked in the city, had a burning desire to set up a brewery after putting himself through a course at BrewLab but he needed some advice on where to start. After doing some research, one morning, Mark arranged to meet John Hatch (winner of the John Young Memorial Award) to explore the options. John recommended that Mark get some professional help and suggested Derek Prentice.

At the time, Derek was doing some teaching but was happy to help Mark and from a couple of initial conversations, Derek's involvement grew. In the meantime, during the summer of 2014, Mark was actively looking for premises around the SW19 postcode i.e. Wimbledon. It took about 6 months to find somewhere.



Christmas 2014, saw the designing and installation of the kit with the brewery opening in time for the tennis championships in the summer. Their beer was launched at the first Wimbledon FC Beer Festival with their Common. "It was born in South London" said Derek. "We named it in light of the fact that it was not an 'ordinary' bitter but also in homage to the Wombles".

The initial range expanded to three British style beers: Tower, a stronger bitter named after the fact that the original Wimbledon Brewery was a tower brewery and Quartermaine IPA. Derek explained "This beer is named after one of the original owners of the brewery, which burnt down in 1889. It was opposite the Dog and Fox on Wimbledon Common. As the brewery burnt, the liquor tank collapsed and put out the fire but the horse drawn fire engine couldn't get up the hill to help. It had been wet and the water froze making it too slippery".



And that explains Wimbledon's logo. It incorporates, the fire, the tower brewery and hop cones. "It's definitely hops and not a pineapple!" said Derek.

Needless to say, Derek takes his ingredients very seriously. "We use Maris Otter malt in the Common. Malt quality plays a bigger part as you go down the gravity band as you notice the malt flavour more. Maris Otter barley was bred for brewing".

Derek then went onto explain the hops in this beer: "We wanted a classic British hop character so we used Fuggles and Goldings overlaid with Target for its bitterness. It brings in an English hop flavour but it can be harsh for bittering".

When Derek was at Young's (he was the second brewer to Ken Don), he pushed dry hopping for Special and Ram Rod. "Nowadays, at Wimbledon, we dry hop in the vessel towards the end of the

fermentation rather than in the cask. When the carbon dioxide builds up in the container, if we dry hop, the debris causes flocculation”

Derek also reflected at his time at Truman’s, where he was before he joined Young’s. “They were major producers of keg beer but before their end, they went into cask, including wooden barrels. They were probably the biggest producers of cask beer in the country at the time”.

Truman’s produced three regular beers: Green (bitter akin to Young’s Ordinary), Red (akin to Young’s Special) and Black, called Samson and akin to ESB.

Wimbledon has no problem with mixing old brewing techniques alongside the new. The Quartermaine IPA is the bigger brother of Common and uses the parti-gyle method. This is where a strong mash is produced and then split with some going on to produce the stronger beer and the rest diluted to produce Common. Both use the same hop blend. This approach has been used for centuries. The cask version of Quartermaine is 5.5% ABV but the bottle conditioned version (called just Wimbledon IPA) is a mighty 6.2% ABV, and accounts for two thirds of sales. The beer is initially filtered and then fresh yeast added to eat up the oxygen in the bottle. The summer beer is SW19 and uses a blend of British and American hops: Fuggles, Goldings, Mosaic and Cascade. The winter beer is a Porter, called Phoenix, at 4.8% ABV.



But like a lot of London breweries, Wimbledon have been growing. Their brew length remains at a 30 barrel plant, which they started with but have gradually increased the number of fermenters and conditioning tanks; they have four 30 barrel and three 60 barrel fermenters and three 30 barrel conditioning tanks. In addition, they have added a large Wimbledon branded storage container, which sits alongside their outside drinking area. This has freed up some space on their mezzanine for inside seating for the tap room and to help develop their on-sales.



Although Derek said “We want to be recognised as a premium brewing company producing cask beer and good beer!”, beer isn’t the only thing now in their portfolio. As well as liking his beer, Mark likes his gin and started producing his own in November 2020. Mark enthused, “It’s a small batch gin, using local honey and botanics typical of the Common such as gorse and heather alongside the juniper and we have added in Cascade hops and lemon”.

Called Wimbledon Garden Gin, the 43% spirit is bottled in a bottle with a swing top, which means it can be refilled and seems to be going down a storm. “It won Golds in the Global Gin Masters in 2020 and the San Francisco World Spirit Competition 2021” said Mark.

So whether you are talking of beer or gin, there is always a homage to the local at this South West London brewery and not a pineapple around!!!

### **Tasting notes**

#### Common 3.7% ABV

Light brown well balanced session bitter with hops, orange, biscuit and caramel on the nose and flavour that starts sweetish and then the bitterness comes through. The finish is bitter and dry.

#### SW19 4% ABV

Dark gold Blond Ale with hops and malt aroma with a hint of citrus. There are lemon, apricot and biscuit notes in the hop forward flavour. The hop character, which is herbal and grassy, remains in the bitter, dry finish.

#### Quartermaine 5.8% ABV

Smooth, warming amber IPA with aromas of hops and toffee orange. The flavour is a pot pourri of honey, biscuit, bitter orange marmalade, pears and apricot jam. The finish is bitter, dry and lingering with a hint of pepper.



The bottled conditioned version is called IPA and is slightly stronger at 6.2% ABV. This beer benefits from ageing.

#### Phoenix London Porter 4.8% ABV

Chocolate roasty nose with a hint of red berries and vanilla in this dark ruby brown porter. The flavour has a dry roasty character, dried fruits, a touch of orange and then slightly smoky black treacle. Bitter roasty dry finish.

Bramling Cross, Phoenix, Fuggles and Golding hops; Maris Otter, Brown, Smoked Malt, Crystal, Chocolate, CaraGold.

