

Muswell Hillbilly – a secret in the Mews!

When was the last time there was a brewery in Muswell Hill? There doesn't seem to be any record of any commercial brewery in the area in the last 500 years until Muswell Hillbilly got going.

Muswell Hillbilly's history echoes many others in that it was set up by four home brewers but its uniqueness is that it is probably the only brewery in a London mews!

At the back of Muswell Hill, this small brewery is certainly hidden away and occupies not one, but two properties in the Mews. Martin, who is an ex deputy head teacher, explained to the London Tasting Panel the Brewery's history and how they acquired their buildings.

"The four of us have known each other for a number of years and we were brewing at the end of Pete's garden. We also spent some time brewing at UBrew, where we learnt from our mistakes. Then Pete's wife told us of a property in the Mews and we started brewing on a 100 litre kit, which we had purchased from Oddly. As we were brewing upstairs, it wasn't ideal" said Martin.

Martin continued, "Then we moved into these premises in 2018 and we were lucky to get space at the end of the Mews and moved in a 500 litre brewery, purchased from Affinity in 2020". But Martin isn't totally happy: "We are seeking bigger and better kit now and we are looking for investment. The current brewery is now quite old and inconsistent. We'd like to do a lager but can't with the current kit and we'd would like to do canning but it's expensive, so we hand bottle".



All of the owners are still working, with Martin doing cover at a North London School. Pete, works for UPS, and handles the distribution; Bob, a graphic designer, does the design work, including the bottle labels, and Steve, who is a social media entrepreneur, looks after the finances. Steve set up Friends Reunited before selling it some time ago.

Muswell Hillbilly recently set up a pop up pub in Hornsey. "We think pop ups are a way forward for us" said Martin. "The Archway Tavern, Woodmans and the off license at the end of the road regularly take our beer however, we need more people to have heard of us".

Their keg beer is keg conditioned and they don't force carbonate. This accounts for 60% of their sales, with cask about 5%. Martin commented "We have tried our bottled beer with a few restaurants but they often say it isn't fizzy enough". The bottled beers are bottled conditioned.



Although most of the hops used in their beers are fairly well known (including some of the newer English hops), some of the beers use a hop named N10, which is grown in local gardens. The core beer range is Tetherdown Wheat Beer, which uses a Saison yeast, lemons and bergamot; Muswell Hillbilly IPA, with the addition of crystal rye (4.8%); Palace Sunset Red Ale with blood orange; Down the Colney Hatch Porter infused with wood from whisky barrels and Fortis Green Breakfast Stout (4.8%) with ground coffee. They also regularly do specials.



Martin sums up Muswell Hillbilly at the moment

“We are located off the beaten track but the locals like it because we are a bit of a secret”

To taste their beers, the tiny ‘secret’ tap room opens Friday night, Saturday and Sunday. Get there early for a seat!

See www.muswellhillbillybrewers.co.uk for more information.

Tasting Notes

Fortis Green Breakfast Stout 5.3% (Cask)

Creamy, full bodied flavoured stout with added coffee resulting in strong roasty coffee notes throughout. There is a touch of dark chocolate on the palate where the fruit notes (red fruits, raisins and marmalade) and sweet caramel are noticeable. Finish is dry, slightly bitter and lingering.



IPA 5.7% ABV (Cask)

Hazy easy drinking pale golden ale with an assertive aroma of tropical hops with orange, lemon and some apricot notes that are also in the flavour, which has a honey biscuit sweetness. The sweetness remains in the aftertaste with a slight bitterness.

Avenue Mews Black IPA 6.3% ABV (keg)

Floral aroma with some chocolate and coffee. These are also in the flavour alongside an orange and malt character with a hint of caramel and a little earthiness. The flavours fade quickly in the clean aftertaste that is slightly dry. Restrained bitterness.

Bierre de la Mews Belgium Pale 4.3% ABV (bottle)

Smooth hazy yellow beer with passion fruit, mango and citrus on nose and palate overlaid with a honey/caramel biscuit sweetness and some bitterness that remains in the finish, which has a warming with an earthy hoppy character.

Down the Colney Hatch Lane Smoky Porter 5.2% ABV (keg)

Very dark brown porter. Delicate smoky notes overlaid with sweet caramelised treacle, balanced by a dry roasty chocolate character. The orange, blackberry and caramelised fruits adds to the complexity. The finish is drying and roasty-bitter. Aromas of tobacco, leather, burnt toast, dark marmalade, dark plum, blackcurrant and orange.

Palace Sunset Red Ale 5.2% ABV (bottle)

A reddish brown hazy beer with aromas of blood orange, a touch of tart lemon and a hint of toffee. Gentle roasty chocolate overlaid with orange on the palate with some malty biscuit Finish is pleasantly dry with a malty sweetness.

