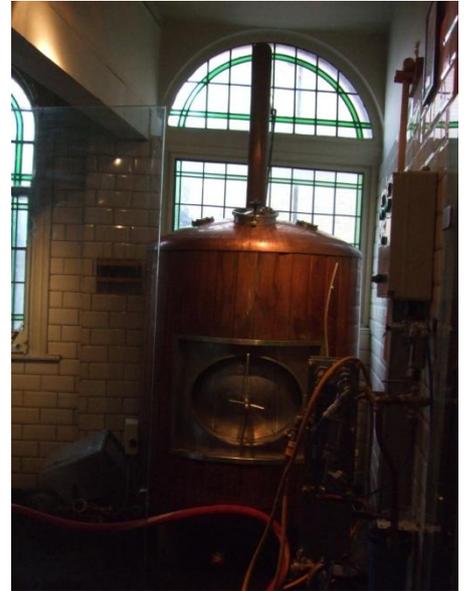


A Brewery with a Split Personality!

Although the brewery at the Florence in Herne Hill have had its ups and downs, there is no doubt that the brewer is a man who has found his calling in life!

Peter Haydon, owner and brewer, not only brews beer for the pub under the Florence brand but also brews under his nom de plume of 'A Head in a Hat'. For anyone who knows Peter, the naming of this external facing brand, will come as no surprise as Peter is rarely seen without a hat and on the occasion when the London Tasting Panel visited Peter, this was no exception! Perhaps then it was not surprising that all the beers under the 'A Head on a Hat' banner have names relating to headwear but more of that later.

The history of the 5 barrel plant is an interesting one. It was purchased by the Capital Pub Company from Dave Porter in 2007. The original brewer, Tony, had been given 3 recipes and brewed about once a fortnight, it was 'just plodding along'. In 2010, Tony decided to leave and Peter (who lived just down the road) thought there was an opportunity to make more of this little brewery. Peter approached Capital and offered a profit sharing deal if they let him operate the brewery. They agreed and then the question was how could he fit in the brewing with his job at Meantime, where Peter had been working since 2002. Fortunately, Peter managed to negotiate a consultancy role with Meantime, which would give him some time get the venture off the ground.



Peter pulled together a business plan and started brewing in January 2011, supplying Capital's pubs with the same three beers that Tony had brewed. He upped the brewing to twice a week and added another fermenter. He also added two conditioning tanks, bringing the total to six to ensure he had enough space to mature the beers for the length of time he felt the beers needed. These are all hidden from view with only the mash tun and copper visible at the back of the pub.



During the three years Tony was there, the recipes remained the same and although Peter has tweaked them a bit, they remain true in style to the originals and he has added one more so the current range is Bonobo (4.3% ABV), Weasel (4.5% ABV), Beaver 4.8% ABV) and Stoat (5.3% ABV). However, Peter wanted to do something different and came up with a second brand of 'A Head in a Hat' and this is where his historian background and, in particular, his love of beer history, clicks in. Peter decided that as everyone was doing an American Pale Ale, he'd do something different. He dug around in the archives and, as a result, all of the beers under this umbrella are based on past recipes and, to add some humour, all are named after hats. .

The beers he produces are Titfer, a 1923 3.5% ABV dinner ale from the original Camden Brewery; Trilby a XX ale from a Barclay Perkin's 1935 recipe (4% ABV); Tommy, a 4.2% Whitbread IPA from 1914; and Topper a 1805 export porter at 4% ABV, which is surprisingly light in colour.

So the business was progressing nicely but there was a cloud on the horizon when Capital sold the pub to Greene King. This gave Peter rather a headache as, because of Greene King's size, he would lose his

reduced excise duty allowance as he was no longer a small brewery but part of a brewing giant. Fortunately, he came up with a cunning plan and Greene King, to their credit, thought creatively and accepted Peter's offer to become a tenant. So since April 2012, the brewery has been truly independent. This arrangement also brought the benefit for the brewery being deemed an accredited supplier and thus could sell to the Greene King's Metropolitan pub estate.

Although trading in the current market is not easy, Peter continues to develop his customer base and has moved into bottles, supplying even up market outlets such as Selfridges. Florence/A Head in the Hat will probably never be the biggest brewery in London (and probably not what Peter wants either) but with the commitment to quality and consistency it is not difficult to see why it is the 6th oldest brewer in London.

The following are the notes from the London Tasting Panel and the two breweries.

Head in the Hat tasting notes

Titfer 3.5% ABV - an easy drinking pale brown bitter with some peppery hop character and some fruit on the palate that fades in the finish which is dry and bitter. It is based on the recipe of a 1923 dinner ale using pale, amber, brown and crystal malts with just English Cascade hops.

Capper 3.9% ABV - named after Alice Capper, the English hop grower, this beer uses British hops: Admiral, Pilgrim and First Gold and just pale malt. Alison grows two of these hops. It is brewed for the Cubitt House Chain, which has four pubs. The aroma and flavour is of fruit with some citrus peel balanced by a sweetish biscuit. The finish is short, dry and bitter. One interesting fact that Peter added, was that at one time, corpses had to be buried in a woollen hat and the people who produced them were known as cappers.



Topee 3.9% ABV - is another beer brewed for Cubitt and uses just

English cascade hops once again but this time the malts are pale, crystal and brown.

By the way, a Topee is a pith helmet. The result is a tawny brown beer with a malty fruit aroma; toffee and fruit with a slightly peely citrus character on the palate and a long dry finish.

Trilby 4% ABV - an original mild recipe that challenges the perception of what a mild was traditionally. it's a 1935 Barclay Perkins recipe (XX Ale), a Southwark brewery that was founded in 1781 and merged with Courage in 1955. It stopped brewing in the 1970s. The beer uses pale, amber, flaked maize, sugar and molasses plus Fuggles and East Kent Goldings. It is a tawny brown in colour with lemon fruit, biscuit on the flavour with a little spicy hop. The astringency (dryness) comes from the amber malt.

Tommy 4.2% ABV - is an old fashioned style IPA from Whitbread in 1914 and thus it is apt that it uses WGV hops (Whitbread Goldings Variety). It also has a little sugar added, which was typical of beers at this time. The result is a beer with a sweet, slightly fruity nose. It has a smooth mouthfeel, honeyed orange fruit and bitter hops in the flavour that linger a little with a dryness that balances the beer.

Topper 4.8% ABV - using Fuggles and East Kent Goldings, this beer is based on a 1805 porter recipe and is dark red rather than the brown or black we associate porters to look like these days. It has a pleasant roasted coffee/ cocoa nose, that is also on the palate mixed with bitter dry roast and cocoa notes that linger in the dry finish. Succulent, complex, rich and rewarding were the adjectives used. The beer

uses pale and brown malts and Fuggles and East Kent Goldings hops.

Florence beers

Weasel 4.5% ABV - well balanced pale brown best bitter with a soft citrus character and some caramelised fruit with bitterness and hops coming through in the finish. It uses Fuggles and UK Cascade hops.

Bonobo 4.5% ABV - a single hop beer using Phoenix hops. Dry and malty with citrus fruit, a little sweetness and a very dry bitter finish.

Beaver 4.8% ABV - a golden coloured beer which has some orange essence and wheat creating fruity citrus notes throughout but fading in the finish which is dry and a little bitter. Naturally cloudy. The hops are Challenger and UK Cascade.

Footnote: The UK Cascade hop was trialled in Britain a couple of years ago. It has a softer and more subtle character than its American cousin.