

London's Second Oldest Brewery

Set up in 2004, Twickenham is now the second oldest, fully operating, commercial brewery in London. During this time, they have seen a number of other small breweries come and go, while they have remained, selling consistently reliable, quality beer. But this is a brewery that, although quite traditional, is not sitting on its laurels. In 2012, they moved to new premises and they have started to use their very own fresh yeast strain. They have also begun to do a full review of their beers, packaging and brand. CAMRA's London Tasting Panel popped south of the river to find out more.



As with so many breweries in London, they have been constantly growing, putting in new kit to cope with increasing demand.

'Fermenters are the main thing' said Stu Metcalf, the Head Brewer, who came to the brewery in 2012 after Tom Maineros left.

'We have added another three fermenters in the last couple of years so we can now brew 175 barrels per week and we are likely to be putting in more. We have also invested in other equipment such as a four headed cask cleaner and just three weeks ago, we put in

an automatic racking line'.

There is no doubt that the brewery looked a lot more full than the visit in 2013 but there is still some room for growth within the brewery. Steve Brown, the brewery's founder, remarked that 'We thought that this site would be more than big enough when we moved in but it's ironic that we are now renting our old brewing to use for storage, including our bottled beer'.

Twickenham's growth has increased the employment opportunities but not just locally. There is also an international element; their assistant brewers include Roberto who comes from Brazil and Valerie, from German. They have also been able to offer work training to young people involved with a local scheme to get youngsters into permanent work. Steve commented that it was good to be able to offer something back to the local community.

The move to their own yeast strain was started in 2015. They wash the yeast every five weeks but will go back to the original strain (held by Sure Brew) each quarter. Stu commented 'This is what brewery of our size should be doing. It gives us more control, the yeast 'learns' the kit and has led to improved clarity and flavour'.

Like most breweries, Twickenham has extended their range of beer packaging. They started bottling in 2012 but currently outsource. The beer (which is micro filtered) is sent to Branded Drinks in Gloucester for bottling, choosing a 330ml sized bottle, rather than the more usual 500ml, and to bottle stronger beers. The rationale was to try and stand out from what is a fairly crowded market. Their approach seems to have



paid off with beers are stocked by Majestic, Waitrose and M&S with a test starting with Aldi in three regions from March 2016.

In addition to bottles, they have been testing out a craft keg beer, Tusk (4.7%ABV), using Hepworth's in Sussex. Steve said 'We may well extend this but the beers we will put into keg are likely to be different to our real ale range.

They need a different flavour balance but in addition, we don't want to muddy the water for our customers of our traditional range'. Tusk has been stocked by some Wetherspoon's and Metropolitan pubs.

They may also, sometime in the future, trial cans but there is concern that this might be a step too far for a brand associated with traditional values.

Twickenham's beer range has altered over the years with some new beers being introduced and others disappearing but a few popular core beers remain such as Naked Ladies, Sundance and Grandstand, although most have had a little tweak, albeit sometimes minor, often due to hop availability. In addition, they brew a monthly special and some one-offs such as the 'Small Batch Stout', which is divided into four and then, in 2016, modified creating four different beers: Milk Stout, Vanilla & Bourbon, Sticky Toffee and Chocolate & Sour Cherry. Future plans include the possibility of collaborative brews with German brewers, building on Valerie's contacts.

The London Tasting Panel tasted a number of their beers at the brewery and their tasting notes were:

Grandstand 3.8% ABV

A single hopped amber coloured beer using Brewers Gold (German hop), Pale malt and Caramalt creating a fruity hoppy bitter with some earthy spicy character. The aftertaste begins fruity but then fades to a lasting dryness.

Redhead 4.1% ABV

This beer replaced Vanguard in Twickenham's repertoire. Reddish-brown best bitter with some green hops and biscuit in the aroma. Flavour is of pineapple, caramelised orange, biscuit and a trace of floral hop. A citrus pithy character is present in the finish with a growing bitterness. The ingredients include pale, dark and light crystal malts, caramel and a blend of Spalt, Brambling Cross and Pilgrim hops.



Naked Ladies 4.4% ABV

One of Twickenham's long standing beers and a favourite in their range. This golden ale uses hops from three countries: English Pilgrim, American Chinook and Slovenian Celeia. The malts are Pale and Pale Crystal producing a refreshing golden coloured beer with citrus dominating the aroma and flavour. This is balanced by some biscuit sweetness and a growing bitter dryness. There is a little spicy hop on the palate that lingers.

Winter Cheer 4.4% ABV

This seasonal beer appears December to February. It uses Pale, Chocolate and Carafa 3 malts with First Gold hops and coriander spice. It's a dark ruby brown beer with a mocha and fruity flavour. Cocoa on the nose and finish, which initially has a little fruit but the spicy notes and dryness develop and remain.

Small Batch Stout 4.7% ABV

Twickenham produced a stout, which was then flavoured by a number of different ingredients. The one we tasted had chocolate nib and sour cherry added, It used one single hop, Brambling Cross, which built on the fruitiness producing a beer that had black cherries in the aroma and flavour. The sweetness on the palate and finish was complemented by the dry dark roast cocoa character. A trace of sourness in the finish. The malts were Pale, Roasted Barley and Carafa 3.



Winter Warmer 5.2% ABV

This is a new recipe and is a December seasonal. It's a copper coloured strong bitter, which has been triple hopped (with two British hops, Progress and Pioneer), producing traces of spicy hops in the flavour and finish. It is a rich smooth beer with a honey sweetness and caramelised and pithy citrus notes. The aftertaste is dry with some bitterness. The malts are Pale, Cara Gold, Wheat and Chocolate.

If you would like to visit the brewery, trips take place on the second Wednesday in the month. The cost is £15 and includes three pints and a Twickenham glass. Alternatively, the brewery opens for big rugby matches and puts in a screen so visitors can enjoy a convivial atmosphere. For more information, visit their website: <http://twickenham-fine-ales.co.uk/>