

Reunion - brewery to lock horns with!

With a logo like this, you can tell that Reunion are not kidding around. When the London Tasting Panel visited the brewery before Christmas, they were intrigued by the logo, which was of two goats and a mountain. Francis, the brewer and founder explained it was the creative idea of the designer. 'Well, the goats are having a bit of a reunion and we just liked the design'.

The name is quite simple. It came from Francis meeting a friend who then provided the major help in financing the brewery. There are also a number of smaller shareholders, friends who also pitched in.

Francis studied Life Sciences at university but ended up working in the finance industry. Having done various roles at Axa, he realised that he wanted to do something more hands on. Francis said 'I had been home brewing for a while and I seriously thought about setting up a brewery about 12 years ago but shelved it because I couldn't find enough information on setting up a brewery to do a proper business plan. Over the years, things have improved and I eventually found the details I needed and decided to take a risk'.

Francis took a course at BrewLab but the hardest thing he said was finding suitable premises. 'There is a lack of industrial units in West London but eventually we found somewhere and the landlord was quite amenable. He let us assess the site, bringing in tradesmen, before signing the lease. We were also fortunate that the premises had previously been offices so it was quite clean'.



The kit was purchased from Peak Ales in Derbyshire, who were expanding. It's a ten barrel kit with four ten barrel fermenters and some five barrel conditioning tanks; they condition their beers for 7 days. One remarkable piece of kit is a wooden grist case, which was made especially for them by a Derbyshire carpenter.

Francis is a bit of a jack of all trades. The majority of the installation work was done with his own fair hands including doing stuff in the roof using a cherry picker. But his friends also pitched in, and got their reward in beer.

Their first beer was brewed just before Christmas 2015. It was a Christmas beer (4.5%) using Northdown and Cascade hops, pale malt, crystal and oats. Said Francis 'It was originally called Frost Fayre but it was so popular we renamed it Beard Tongue and now brew it all year round. Our Christmas version has added orange and spices to make it more Christmassy'.

Production is weighted towards cask with some bottles. These are bottled in Staffordshire and are micro filtered. Unlike many small Brewers, Reunion uses a wet yeast from a brewer in North

Yorkshire. Francis and his assistant brewer, are currently brewing one day a week with an increase around Christmas. In addition, there is one full time sales person (ex Clarkshaws) and an occasional delivery driver.

They currently have a range of four regular beers with a few seasonal and occasionals. Their biggest seller is a traditional bitter (3.8% ABV) called Opening Gambit. It uses all English hops. Their most unusual beer is Talwar, named after an Indian sword. The design on the bottle labels reflects this and, not surprisingly, the beer was designed to go with Indian food - it has a little spicy character itself from added coriander.

Reunion's beers can be found around Felton, Staines and Twickenham but they are beginning to go further afield and outside the M25, using Ecasks to supply wholesalers. Their bottle beers tend to be mainly in independently owned bottle shops. The brewery also have a very nice reception area and bar so, you never know, open days may be on the cards one day. Live north of the Thames and these beers tend to be a bit of a rarity but they are making an appearance at beer festivals. Try them at the forthcoming London Beer & Cider Festival in March.

For further information on the brewery see: <http://reunionales.com/>

Here are the tasting notes from the Tasting Panel:

Opening Gambit 3.8%

Traditional bitter with a pleasant balance of biscuit, hop and bitter orange. The bitterness builds strongly in the lingering finish. Hops and biscuit on the nose.

Beer Tongue 4.5%

A reddish brown best bitter with chocolate, plums and damson aroma. These flavours are also present in the flavour with some cocoa and honey. The finish is of dry cocoa, a touch of prunes and a lingering sweetness.

Talwar 4.5%

Sweet earthy hops overlaid with a lemony fruitiness and a touch of spice from the added coriander, which is also there in the finish, which is dry, bitter and lingering. Lemon on the nose in this crisp yellow beer.

Incredible 5%

Amber beer with a smooth mouthfeel and a honey sweetness overlaid with a mix of fruits. Some earthy hop character is present throughout. Finish is bitter. The aroma is of sweet malt and fruit.

Single Hop Knot 5.2%

An amber coloured smooth strong bitter with a little orange blossom in the aroma. The dry bitterness builds on drinking with an underlying mix of green apples and citrus and a residual sweetness.

