

Portobello, a Westside story

It still might be remote but Portobello is a Brewery worth seeking out. It was back in 2013 when the London Tasting Panel paid their first visit to Portobello and a lot has changed in five years.



It was set up by Rob Jenkins at the end of 2012 with Farooq Khalid as the brewer. The following year, after some persuasion from Rob, Portobello were joined by Joe Laventure. Joe and Rob are old colleagues; they worked together at Whitbread and both subsequently spent time with various breweries including Brakspears and Ridleys. Joe's last role was heading up Budvar UK so both have a wealth

of experience and the resilience to adapt to an increasingly competitive market.

Like many Brewers at the beginning of London's Brewery revolution, Portobello have done well. They have invested heavily and increased their brew length to 30 barrels, put in an office on the ground floor and a mezzanine in the Brewery for storage. The fermenters have now increased in number to nine, ranging from 10 barrels to 60 barrels. Farooq explained 'Our mash tun is adaptable meaning we can use it a third full. This gives us a lot more flexibility in the beers we can produce'. More investment is planned for the future. Farooq would like to buy a hop infuser; this works like a big tea bag but for hops, enabling the Brewery to increase the hop character in their beers.

It is pleasing to see another London Brewery grow; their turnover is in excess of £1.5 million. There are twelve people now employed: four in the Brewery (including Farooq), three drivers, a part time credit controller, two account managers plus Rob and Joe. There is a small export market in addition to supplying 450 pubs. Rob said 'Of these, about a third are keg as they need to keep the beer longer'. Farooq added that the intention was to go 100% keg but customer demand means that 25% of the



turnover is still cask. Currently, the bottling and canning is done off site by Marstons. The bottles are pasteurised but hop oil is added to help address the hop character loss that the pasteurisation causes. The canned beers are microfiltered. Much of the London Pilsner production is also done off site.

Portobello use dry yeast to maintain their quality. Unusually, they use a lot of Polish hops such as Marynka. Poland currently grows more hops than the UK. 'They are value for money' clarified Farooq.

Their core range is London Pilsner, which is stocked by Tesco (it also sells well in Portobello, near Edinburgh); Westway Pale Ale, Star and Market Porter. They also do two seasonal plus the odd one offs, such as O Canada brewed for the Maple Leaf in Soho for Canada Day.

As well as pubs, Portobello have stands at markets and other events and they continue to look at new initiatives. They have started to brew at the George and Dragon in Acton, at what was the Dragonfly Brewery. Look out for more details or visit their website: www.portobrewing.com.



The tasting notes of these beers, put together by the Tasting Panel, are as follows:

Westway Pale Ale 4% keg and cask

Refreshing pale yellow beer with a tart lemon flavour. Aroma is of sweet biscuit, soft citrus and earthy hops. Spicy hops in the bitter slightly dry lingering aftertaste.

Challenger, Goldings, UK Cascade hops. Crystal, Pale Supermalt, Caramalt and Wheat.

O Canada 4% keg

Sweet, smooth, straw coloured golden ale with fruit, grassy hops and a little maple syrup! Finish is sweet, bitter and lingering. Creamy mouthfeel. Simcoe, Southern Cross hops; Supermalt, Wheat

Blonde 4.2% cask

Light drinking amber, fruity bitter with a biscuity malty flavour, that is also present on the nose. Lingering, dry bitter finish.

Southern Cross, Celeia, Marynka hops; Pale, Crystal, wheat, Caramel malts.

Star 4.3% cask

Pale brown best bitter with fruity, toasty sweet aroma. The flavour is of honey, toast, caramelised citrus and a touch of bitterness that develops and lingers with a spicy dryness.

Challenger, Goldings, Brambling Cross, Celeia hops; Pale, Wheat, Roasted Malt, Crystal, Amber, Wheat malts

Tropical Crush 4.4% keg

Unfiltered yellow beer was launched in November 2017 and has become a regular. It's made with passionfruit and mango purée, which are noticeable on the palate along with some bubblegum notes that are also on the nose. Strong bitter finish. A fruit beer cocktail!

Market Porter 4.6% cask

Chocolate is balanced in the aroma and flavour by some red fruits and tart lemon notes from the added Rye creating a complex very drinkable dark brown porter. Finish is lingering, starting sweet then becoming dry with a little roast.

Challenger, Brambling Cross hops; Pale, Crystal, roasted malt, roasted barley, chocolate, Amber, Rye malts (10%)

London Pilsner 4.6% keg

Biscuity sweet, smooth gold coloured beer with some lemon metallic/mineral character that fades in the long finish, which is sweet, dry and bitter overlaid with spicy hops. Aroma is of sweet biscuit.

Saaz, Brewers Gold, Lubelski hops; Weyermann Lager, Pils, Super Malt.

