

A triple whammy of a brewery trip

One of the wonderful things about living in London at the moment is the expanding beer market with the new and innovative brewing that is taking place. CAMRA's Games & Collectables decided to showcase three London breweries and each session at the Great British Beer Festival, they auctioned places for a triple brewery trip. This took place in September and the lucky winners went to Crate, Truman's and Tap East, which encompassed two pub breweries and two stand alone breweries (Crate has one of each!).

Crate

We started the day at Crate, which has a marvellous setting by the canal. Adrian, the manager of the pub, where the original microbrewery is, was our host. The building was derelict until 2012 when the area became part of the Olympic legacy plans and was originally intended to be a cafe but minds managed to be changed and a micropub with an art centre came into being. The influence of local artisans can be seen in the pub's furniture, which has mostly been made local artisans.

From day one, they struggled to keep up with demand; so in 2013, a second larger brewery was set up. It is a 10 barrel plant. As part of the new developments, they installed a keggling line but they neither filter nor pasteurise. They put the beer into a conical storage tank, chill and allow the yeast to drop out. This results in just a little sediment remaining in the kegs. The shelf life of their keggled beer is around 4 months. Also as part of their investment, they installed a new hot liquor tank (20 barrels), which they had to get in by hand and a keg cleaner as kegs are more difficult to clean than casks.



The beers tasted under the awning (as there was some light rain) were:

Citra 3.8% ABV - A single hop golden ale with a little citrus on the nose, more pronounced on the palate with a little honey sweetness. There is some bitterness in the finish, which is dry and lingering.

Best Bitter 4.3% ABV- the chocolate malt gives the beer its brown colour and some roasted chocolate notes. There are two British hops, Challenger and Brambling Cross, the latter giving some berry fruitiness. The sweetness and slight biscuit character is offset by bitterness that lingers with the roast notes.

Pale Ale 4.5% ABV - Another single hop golden ale but this time using Galaxy. It has a smooth mouthfeel with fruit

throughout and a little bitterness balanced by a sweet honey character. The finish is a little bitter with some spicy hops and a dryness that builds on drinking.

Wheat 5% ABV - yellow in colour with the typical cloudy appearance associated with wheat beers. There is also the typical banana nose and flavour overlaid with some spice and citrus (slightly pearly) notes. Finish is dry but with sweet malt.

IPA 5.8% ABV - Smokey notes in the flavour with some orangey citrus, which is also in the aroma. It has a rich mouthfeel with a biscuity sweetness that fades in the aftertaste. Three hops are used: Chinook, Magnum and Summitt.

Truman's

Less than a 10 minutes walk away was Truman's, our second stop, and a much bigger brewery.



It has been 24 years since Truman's brewed in London. Look around the brewery and you can find bits of memorabilia from Truman's long past. The brewery was originally known for its porters, which were lighter in colour than many brewed. For a short time, it was the largest brewery in the world. In 1890, Truman's bought Phillips in Burton on Trent, mainly for its Pale Ale, a style that had become increasingly popular. This brewery brewed until the 1930s.

The name was purchased by James Morgan and Michael-George Hemus and had the initial beers brewed by

Nethergate and then Everards when they outgrew the East Anglian brewery. Having tested the market, they decided to open a 40 barrel plant in East London, which cost £1 million of which a third was the kit; five of the eight fermenters are British. Past workers were so proud of working for Truman's that when the new brewery opened, 400 turned up.

They have their own malt mill and use both pellet and whole hop. They tend to use pelleted American hops because of the time they spend in transport and they keep better. The yeast they use is a Truman's strain from 1958, which imparts marmalade and melon notes to their beers. They use a new strain every 3 months to ensure that the original characteristics are maintained.

They do not treat the water they use for the porters (which need pH neutral water) but they do add gypsum for the paler beers.

Fermentation is generally around 3-4 days, then in the conditioning tanks for another 3-4 days and a week in the cask before releasing. They are brewing every day and expect to reach capacity before Christmas and therefore are moving into the nearby unit that was originally occupied by Beavertown.

80% of the beer is cask; with their Pale Ale being kegged by Robinson in Stockport. They also have a kegged cider from Brittany.



Truman's do a number of seasonals along with their regulars such as Lemondrop, a summer seasonal and Bold as Brass, a Rye Beer, with Southern Cross and Brewer's Gold hops. The tasting notes for with two regulars and a bottled beer are:

Swift 3.9% ABV - a golden ale using Cascade and Saaz hops. It has lemon on the nose and palate with a malty biscuit character throughout. There is a trace of bitterness in the aftertaste, which is dry.

Runner 4.0% ABV - roasted nutty flavours on the palate with some orangey fruity flavours. Aroma is of roasted malt and the finish is dry and nutty. It contains Goldings, Fuggles and Styrian Goldings.

1883 Export Pale Ale 6% ABV - bottled conditioned beer using 8 different hops from Bavaria, Bohemia, UK and USA. Warming, It has a smooth creamy mouthfeel with a fruity flavour and toffee notes that linger in the finish with some bitterness. Worth seeking out while it is available.

Tap East

The last stop was a short ride on the London Overground to Stratford, where the drinkers had to fight their way through the shopping centre to the other end and the oasis that is Tap East and the smallest brewery of the day. We were shown around by Daniel, the Duty Manager and had to go in groups as the 2.5 barrel plant was a tight squeeze, to the side of the bar. They brew three times a week, sometimes more when needed. They have four fermenters, where the beer is left for 5-7 days. In addition to cask they do some keg beer (they have a mini kegger) and bottles, which are hand bottled at 5 a time! If the beer is cask it is put into cask and kept for 2-3 weeks.



They had two of their beers on at the time of visiting along with a number of others from smaller breweries:

Tonic Ale 3% - despite the alcohol content, this yellow beer has a smooth mouthfeel. It is a fruity, citrus bitter beer with a lingering biscuity malt flavour balanced by the bitterness.

Coffee in the Morning 5.5% ABV - a nice beer to finish the day with. Roasted black malt on nose and flavour with dry black coffee finish. The flavour is of raisin fruit and a little sweet, that balances the roast character. It uses Phoenix hops and coffee beans from a nearby shop (the coffee goes into the whirlpool not into the mash)



Daniel receiving a certificate of thanks from John in the Tap East Bar

It was a fantastic day with some great hospitality from all three brewers and a wide range of beer styles. Picking just one beer from each try Crate's Golden Ale (4.5% ABV) using New Zealand Galaxy hops; Truman's 1883 Export Pale Ale, a bottled beer with eight different hops that packed a punch at 6% ABV; and Tap East's Coffee in the Morning, which certainly woke up the taste buds after a long day's supping!

If you are interested in where Games & Collectables are going for the 2015 trip, drop a note to c.cryne@btinternet.com, who will get back to you when details are confirmed.