

Moonstone Brewery Burnley, Lancashire

Claire Rawlinson

With over 20 years experience as a licensee, Yorkshireman Mick Jacques decided he wanted to start brewing his own ale. He started to look for a property that would have enough space to house his own micro-brewery and, in 2000, found the boarded-up Nelson pub in Burnley's historic Weavers' Triangle. The building, constructed in 1865, was perfectly located next to a train station, (with a quick link over the border back to Leeds), and it had a room at the front that would be ideal for the brewery. So in 2001, Mick and his wife Sandra opened the quirky Ministry of Ale pub.

The front room was transformed with equipment from Moss Brewing Systems into the award-winning Moonstone Brewery. Mick brews on average once a week in the 2 ½ barrel brewery and has the capability to produce two brews per week, equivalent to 1,500 pints. The beer list includes: Black Star, a mild at 3.4%; Blue John a 3.6% bitter; White Sapphire, 3.9%; Onyx, 4%; Trafalgar Stout, 4.9%; and Red Jasper, a 6% beer made in October for Christmas with some kept and aged until Easter.

Over the years Mick has noticed a decline in demand for the mid-browns,

but an increased call for pale ales. The Onyx and White Sapphire are his most popular brews, and he is relaunching Tiger's Eye as a pale ale to cater for this shift in taste. The ale made is usually only for sale in the pub, but the occasional brew is made for beer festivals. In 2007, Moonstone Brewery's Trafalgar Stout won beer of the festival at the Burnley Clarets Beer Festival.

The price and availability of hops means that the recipes are tweaked regularly. A variety of cultivars are used including Cascade for the mild, and Target, Challenger, Saaz, Hallertau and Mount Hood for the other ales. Thomas Fawcett & Sons supplies the malt used by the brewery, and the soft local water is Burtonised. Fermentations are not temperature controlled and the strain of yeast used is a top secret.

The brewery has been adapted as Mick has had problems with his knees. The mash tun used to be on a gantry above the copper which meant that Mick would have to climb up and down a ladder to perform the mash. Therefore, it was brought down to ground level. An underback system that pumps the mash into the copper via a heat exchanger was

installed, with Moss Brewing Systems's help. Looking to the future, Moonstone Brewery hopes to begin bottling their own beer on site.

Brewing training courses are run once or twice a month at the Moonstone Brewery. Taught by Graham Moss, the Introduction to Brewing course is very popular and pulls people from all over the world. Recent attendees came all the way from Jakarta, Indonesia. Over three days participants are taught brewing theory and gives hands-on experience of creating a full, commercial brew. And of course

there is plenty of time for some tasting in the adjoining pub.

The friendly pub has a good stead of locals, plus transient customers from the football and those who have read about the Ministry of Ale in the *Good Beer Guide*. The community spirit is enhanced by the art exhibitions put on by Mick, showcasing work from talented local artists.

Anybody interested in attending the brewing course should contact Mick on 01282 830909.



Figure 1. The Ministry of Ale.



Figure 2. Fermenting vessel and piping.



Figure 3. Mash tun and grains.



Figure 4. Fermenting vessel and cooler.



Figure 5. Copper and fermenting vessels.



Figure 6. Water storage tank.



Figure 7. Fermenting vessels with F.B.