

News Release

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Room For A New Brew In Leeds



While Yorkshire now boasts more breweries than any other UK region - more than 70 compared to 16 in the early 1970s – its principal city's own independent brewery only arrived on the scene last year. With sales already passing 12,000 pints a week through pubs in and around Leeds; plans to speedily launch two pubs in the city and tributes for the ales flowing from beer festivals around the country, it's surprising that no-one had previously come up with the recipe for a Leeds Brewery.

The surprise omission was spotted by young entrepreneurial founders Michael Brothwell and Sam Moss, keenly aware of the renaissance in independent British brewing, through their own love of ale.

Sam Moss commented: “ Consumers are turning away from the huge brands which are seeing their sales fall, whilst craft brewers are meeting the renewed appetite for local food and drink.”

Small brewers' market share is growing in the face of a declining pubs industry nationally and Leeds Brewery appears to be in the right place at the right time. Brewing remains one of the few surviving major British industries, making a sizeable contribution to the nation's wealth and still brewing ales that have largely disappeared from most parts of the world.

Against a long tradition of beer drinking, British tastes continue to change and Leeds Brewery is a prime example of the need for diversity in brewing today. Not entirely dependent on the basic pubs most associated with real ale enthusiasts, it is grasping new opportunities that tap into changing tastes. In trendy Chapel Allerton it supplies

the stylish independent bar The Angel's Share with serious quantities of Leeds Best, a quaffable session beer.

Southerners Sam Moss and Michael Brothwell met at York University where a passion for ale was fashioned. After a stint for Michael at York Brewery the pair's eyes were opened to the possibilities for forging a business from hops, yeast and water. Researching "a commuting circle" from their York homes raised obvious tourist spots such as Whitby and the Dales, then Leeds popped up, which Sam Moss describes as "a flashlight moment".

"We couldn't believe the name, Leeds Brewery, hadn't been taken so we registered it straight away. We knew from the start opening our own pubs would be central to the business and we found a site in Holbeck we desperately wanted for our first pub, at which point the decision for Leeds was made.

"What's happening in Holbeck is unique in Leeds and it is a perfect fit for us, creating a business with 21st century values and ideas in an industry that goes back centuries. The mix of industrial heritage and creative dynamism is second to none and we wanted to be part of it."

Paul Stephens, Leeds City Council's chief economic services officer said: "Enterprise and innovation are the hallmarks of successful Leeds manufacturing companies and these two young entrepreneurs possess both qualities in ample measure. Sam and Michael have established a rapidly growing business with a great product for which there's clearly strong demand."

Getting Started

It's interesting to note how two young graduates with no trading history, no capital, no beer to tempt investors and little experience of brewing moved swiftly from dreaming over a couple of pints to running a high tech, award-winning brewing operation?

Sam Moss explains: "Holbeck developers CTP St James were pretty good to us and believed in us when we said we wanted to open a pub. They took a risk on us at a time when, at 22 and 23, no banks would touch us."

Michael and Sam raised some capital by selling a house and investing the equity in the business launch. They took advantage of a government-backed small firms guarantee scheme that reduces the risk for a lender and gave the York branch of HSBC the confidence to lend them £125k. Firmly planted and warmly welcomed in the city Leeds Brewery finds much of the inspiration for its beers from the area.

All ingredients of Leeds Best are British, with malt from Castleford, hops from Worcestershire and pure Yorkshire water. A rediscovered strain of yeast, last used 50 years ago by a West Yorkshire brewer, is key to creating the unique flavour of all Leeds Brewery's beers, and remains a closely guarded secret.

Leeds Brewery is fast becoming a stylish ambassador for Leeds, using the sky line and the city's civic owls in the point of sale designs, as well as recently creating for Leeds United a new pint 'Radebeer', named by the club's fans after the legendary player and sold at Elland Road and in city-centre pubs. With plans this year to bottle its beers for retail far beyond the city, Leeds Brewery is set to put Leeds on the map.

Leeds Brewery's first pub Midnight Bell opens next month, closely followed by a second pub in the city later in the year.

Ends

Photography: 1. Sam Moss (left) and Michael Brothwell at The Leeds Brewery
2. The Leeds Brewery's head brewer Venkatesh Iyer adds the all-important hops to a new brew