

Glass half full

Master brewer **Rod Jones** takes *Scene* on a tasting tour at the **Meantime** brewery



WIN! BREWERY TOUR AND MEAL FOR TWO!

Scene has a beer tasting session and meal for two at The Old Brewery to give away. Just answer this question: **What year was Meantime founded?** Comp ends December 21. Email answer, (and your address and phone no.) to competitions@greenwich.gov.uk or send a postcard marked 'Meantime Comp' to Woolwich Town Hall, Wellington Street, SE18 6PW

HAVE you ever wondered what the pungent aroma on the run up to the Blackwall Tunnel is? It is, at least in part, down to the second biggest beer brewery in London - the production plant for Greenwich's local brew, **Meantime**. The yeasty waft from the huge factory on Tunnel Avenue comes from the facility that produces a staggering four million pints a year. It's a real local success story for the Greenwich company that was started 10 years ago, and one that has been going

from strength to strength ever since. Master brewer for the company **Rod Jones** says its success is down to just one thing: "Quality. There's no other answer. We're a much bigger brewery now than we were ten years ago, but in trying to compete with all the big brands there is only one road to go - and that's quality. We can't compete on price, but what people want is flavour and choice." There are over 50 varieties of beer, (including chocolate and smoked), to choose from **The Old Brewery**, situated in the grounds of the Old Naval

College. And it's the juxtaposition of new and old that has made the brewers a must-visit on the maps of beer geeks worldwide. "We have people over from America just to try our Hospital Porter variety," Rod adds. The brew though, he admits, won't be to everyone's tastes, and was inspired by the naval hospital that sat just yards from the Old Brewery. In the 17 and 1800s, water wasn't safe to drink and so beer was the only way for the public to take liquid free from impurities. And to save time on transporting barrels to the mission from the brewery that

has stood since 1717, a beer pipeline was dug directly to the hospital to supply the wounded sailors.

"With the state of hygiene standards at the time - and being that the pipeline was probably never cleaned, you can imagine the state of the beer by the time it was poured to the sailors," Rod adds. "The beer then would have been very different to today." Ale connoisseurs are often thought of as the rather brash cousin of the plum-toned wine buff - but Rod reckons this is all wrong.

"There are actually more flavours in beer than there are with wine," he says. "There is just as much variety with hops as there is with grapes - sweet, fruity, herbal, bitter, aromatic and even spicy. But wine makers they are stuck with the tastes of the grapes, and are at the mercy of the weather.

"We can add a lot of flavours and different yeasts, and even modify the water to make it taste like it came, for example, from Germany, for our Kellerbier."

The Kellerbier is one of the Old Brewery's unique selling points - it's not even on offer up the road at the company's flagship boozier, The Greenwich Union.

Meantime kept the Greenwich Festivals refreshed throughout the summer, and the company founded in 2000 supplies 450 pubs, bars and restaurants in the capital, and exports to 18 countries worldwide.

The Old Brewery runs tasting sessions and tours twice a day, hosted by master brewer Rod, and the chef matches food to the wide selection of beers on offer.

Rod Kitson

Brewery Tour £25pp at lunchtime (includes one course from bar menu) Evening session £40, (three courses from evening menu)
Book on: 020 3327 1280

DLR has teamed up with The Good Pub Guide to run the Real Ale Trail which takes in the Old Brewery as well as many other southeast London boozers. More details: www.dlr.co.uk/promotions