

## HIGH SPIRITS FOR CITY

Waterford Distillery “will put city on map”



Under new ownership: the former Guinness Brewery on Waterford's Grattan Quay.

The former Guinness Brewery on Waterford's Grattan Quay has been sold to a renowned London wine and spirit merchant and will be refitted as a distillery to produce the new 'Waterford Whiskey' label.

Speaking to The Munster Express, Edinburgh-based Mark Reynier (52) said he is relishing the challenge of “keeping alive a wonderful history” of alcohol production in the heart of Waterford.

“I’m not a multi-national company, nothing like it; I’m a standalone, small scale businessman but I’m a small scale businessman with a big idea.

“Distilling whiskey is not like brewing beer; it’s a lengthy process before one reaches a point where you have a product ready for sale. It’s a long-term project, and I suspect the creation of a business where time is such an important commodity will be welcomed in Waterford.”

Mr Reynier heads up Hawthornglen Limited, an Irish company which is part of Renegade Spirits, which he co-founded with Chairman Sir John MacTaggart and Finance Director John Adams.

“Some will tell you that monks introduced whisky to the western isles (of Scotland) - I’ve never bought that story,” Mr Reynier contended.

“It goes back much further than that - all the way back to the Vikings (marauding through Syria in 800 AD, and ultimately bringing barely to Norway), who of course, founded Waterford - which made the opportunity of acquiring the brewery here additionally significant.”

He added: “There’s been brewing on this particular site since 1792, and that history will be kept alive in what will become a significant, state-of-the-art Irish whiskey distillery.”

Paul Reynier comes to Waterford with a stellar reputation in distilling. In 2000, along with Messrs MacTaggart and Adams, he bought the Bruichladdich distillery on the Scottish island of Islay for Stg£6.5 million.

In 2012, Bruichladdich was sold to French conglomerate Rémy Cointreau for £58 million, which included £10 million of acquired debt.

The shareholders of Renegade Spirits Ltd, according to the statement issued by Diageo, are “private individual investors from the UK and Ireland, with one Irish investor originally from Waterford having board representation”.

For its part, Diageo said it was delighted with Renegade’s acquisition of the Grattan Quay site.

According to Diageo’s Paul Armstrong: “This is a vote of confidence in Waterford and will help to ensure that the city remains an important economic hub in the south east.

“The Waterford site has a brewing legacy that is synonymous with the city and we are delighted that the site will remain an important hub of economic activity and a substantial draw for further inward investment in the region.

“Our employees at Waterford made an outstanding contribution to the success of our business over many years. Diageo recognises and appreciates the critical role that the Waterford Brewery has played in the success of Diageo’s beer brands, particularly Guinness.”

Mr Reynier said that while the distillery will have an exclusively operational function, he was open to the prospect of converting the original brewery building on the site as a museum, which would create a welcome footfall in the Lower Quay. We’ll have more on this welcome development in next week’s edition.