

WIGHTWASH



CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE ISLE OF WIGHT BRANCH NEWSLETTER NO 18, Autumn 1997

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:

Christmas Social: Wed 10 Dec, White Lion, Niton, 8.30 p.m.

AGM: Fri 23 January, Travellers Joy, Northwood, 8.00 p.m.

Social: Wed 18 February, New Inn, Shalfleet, 8.30 p.m.

Business: Wed 18 March, Red Lion, Freshwater, 8.30 p.m..

SPECIAL OFFERS ON MEMBERSHIP

If you have thought about joining Camra, but never quite summoned up the energy, or you know someone else in that sad state, now is the time to act!

Offer Number 1: Four months FREE membership if you complete a direct debit mandate (until Dec. 31st).

Offer Number 2: £2 off the standard rate of membership.

Offer Number 3: A third of the price of the latest Good Beer Guide for members.

Coming soon: New Under 26 membership with reduced rates.

BREWERY NEWS

Burts

The Sandown Brewery & Stillroom continues to produce an impressive range of new beers in addition to the Burts regulars. Old Comical, a 4.2% malty beer, carries the nickname of the pub (formerly the Commercial). Specials were produced for beer festivals at Sandown and at the Hole in the Wall in Ryde. A stout of approx 6% ABV is expected before Christmas. Burts are believed to have bought two or three pubs in the Portsmouth area.

Goddards

The new expanded brewing plant has now been installed in another converted stone barn and is reported to be working very well. Certainly the Special Bitter and Fuggle Dee Dum are excellent. A Winter Warmer is due to be launched on 1 December.

Ventnor Brewery

There have been management changes at Ventnor and an agreement has been reached with the Badger distributor on the Island, Mike Strand, to deliver the beer, so that the brewery personnel can concentrate on brewing.

PUB OF THE YEAR 1997 - RESULTS

The Blacksmiths Arms was voted IW Camra Pub of the Year for the second year running, by a wide margin. Runners-up, very close together were the Hole in the Wall, Ryde, the Volunteer, Ventnor and the Travellers Joy, Northwood. Congratulations to all and thanks to those of you who voted - about 25% of the membership. Certificates were presented during August. There may be a change in the way POY is selected next year - it may be handled at the AGM instead of by post - let us know what you think.

LOCAL GUIDE

Production problems with the Local Beer Guide meant that we missed the summer season. Since this also made some of the information out of date, it was decided to revise the survey information and launch it in April 1998. We are beginning the surveys now, so if you want to help contact us.

GOOD BEER GUIDE

We are also starting the initial surveys for the 1999 National Good Beer Guide. If you think a particular pub should be included (or excluded), let us know. Opinions must be backed up by recent experience of the pub.

The 1998 edition is still available from the Travellers Joy or the Treasurer at £7-50 to members.

TECHNICAL TOPICS

One of the reasons given for the use of blanket pressure or cask breathers is to prevent contamination of beer from the air drawn in through the spile hole as the beer level falls. This is a particularly plausible argument where the casks are set up in the bar area. However, there are two simple countermeasures. First the replacement of the hard spile whenever the beer is not being served. This is usually sufficient where turnover is high enough to ensure that the cask is not on for more than a day or two. The second solution is to use an air filter. After the cask has been vented the spile is replaced with a small metal or plastic spigot. This is connected by flexible tubing to a filter unit, normally wall-mounted, containing a sub-micron filter element. This traps any organisms such as wild yeasts. If an activated charcoal element is added, most odour molecules will be removed as well. Several casks can be connected to one filter unit. Of course, if the equipment is not cleaned regularly in a bucket of cleaning solution, the cure will be worse than the disease!

(Source: The Camra Guide to Cellarmanship, by Ivor Clissold)

FROM OUR AFLOAT CORRESPONDENT

Carib of the Caribbean

I suppose that this is a rather sad occasion, Canberra is sailing away from the Caribbean for the very last time. I'm bringing away with me a fridge full of Carib beer, some photographs (more of that later), a series of sand midge bites on my ankles and the memory of visits to two breweries. Both are producers of Carib beer, one of the most dominant beers in the Caribbean market, certainly in the OECS (Organisation of the East Caribbean States). The "Carib" name is owned by the CDC (Caribbean Development Corporation) in Trinidad, which is part of the ANSA McAL Group, a huge conglomeration of Trinidad's leading companies.

The first brewery I visited was on the island of St Kitts. CDC still maintain the controlling shares of this brewery with the remainder owned by local investors. It was built in 1961 which makes it about the same age as Canberra; and like Canberra, you can see the odd place where the "newness" is wearing off.

I was first met by Clement Harvey, "the man that makes the drinks" according to a girl in the office and then I was shown round by lab assistant Collis Benjamin. Collis had just returned from a packaging course in Wisconsin run by the Master Brewers Association of the Americas and proved it by showing me his hat. Employees also attend courses run by the Institute of Brewing in London although the majority of training is in-house. There is an affiliation to Allied Brewers of the UK who also supply the yeast. The hops come in the form of oil or pellets from Yakima or Northern

Brewers of the USA and the malt from Pauls or Bairds of the UK. The brewery employs about 100 people and last year it turned out just over 37,000 hectolitres (23,000 barrels - Ed). It produces:-

Carib @ 5% ABV

Skol @ 4.5% ABV

Guinness Foreign Extra Stout @ 7.5% ABV

Royal Extra Stout @ 6.5% ABV

They also produce a range of soft drinks. I was rather intrigued to see a box of Heineken bottles in the yard. These are used for their export "Ting".

St Kitts Brewery is very instrumental in promoting sport on the island; sponsoring high school sporting weeks, soccer, volleyball and it has just opened a cricket academy in an attempt to redress the balance between them and their twin island Nevis. The much smaller Nevis boasts four international cricketers including the current West Indian opening bat Stuart Williams. So far St Kitts has yet to come up with one.

My day in Grenada has got to go down as near perfect; a brewery trip in the morning, a swim off Grand Anse Beach in the afternoon (Grand Anse Beach has to rate as one of the world's finest, despite the sand midges) and to round things off, I sat in a beach bar with a cold beer and watched Brian Lara cream 31 runs off 16 balls. (I know that might not mean much to some of you, but to a cricket nut, it was pure poetry).

The Grenada Brewery was also built in 1961, but it has more of a chequered history. Towards the end of the 60s profits were low and CDC began to lose interest. In a bailing out operation, the government stepped in, bought 35% of the shares and encouraged local businessmen to buy the rest. Although the government still retains 5% it has latterly sold the remainder to the ubiquitous Guinness. Business seems to be booming and the company is set on a course of continuous refurbishment. Last year, for instance it bought four new bright beer tanks and a refrigerant storage tank. All at a cost of EC\$8,000,000.

My host there was Senior Brewer Ishmael Pierre. Ishmael started working at the brewery as a laboratory assistant. He has visited the UK on three occasions as a guest of Allied Breweries, who arranged for him to travel all over the country studying different aspects of brewing. Allied used to supply technical assistance, but that role has now been taken over by Guinness. I asked him about the days before the brewery was built and he told me that rum-based concoctions would have been the most popular form of alcoholic drink, although there were some imported stouts. He remembered that Watneys Milk Stout was a particular favourite of his father.

Like the St Kitts Brewery, the Grenada Brewery is a staunch supporter of all things local, including sports, churches, bands and the carnival, in which the employees take part with their own "jump-up" band.

The brewery produces around 35,000 hectolitres. Products include:-
Carib @ 4.5% ABV

Guinness Foreign Extra Stout @ 7.5% ABV

and a wide range of soft drinks, some of which it exports to other Caribbean islands.

Unlike the St Kitts Brewery, nearly all the "Carib" labels from the Grenada Brewery are paper and stuck on. The St Kitts version is an APL (Applied Ceramic Label); labologists please note!

The last Caribbean island we visited was Barbados where I bought some Carib imported from Trinidad. I now had three types of Carib, all with different labels. This I thought would make a very interesting photograph, especially with the backdrop of an exotic beach. I packed three bottles, a camera and a water spray (it makes the bottles look cold, you know) and went off in search of a suitable stretch of sand. At first my attempts were thwarted by cloud cover, but eventually the sun came out and much to the amusement of the locals, I set about shooting the three bottles in various locations. The final shot involved me lying flat out at the water's edge lining up the bottles, with the beach disappearing into the background. I had just taken it when three things happened almost simultaneously:

1. The best shot ever came into my viewfinder, with surf gently lapping round the bottles and sunlight glinting off the spray.
2. My camera started to rewind confirming my fears that I had run out of film.
3. Everything in my possession filled up with seawater, my shoes and socks, my pockets, my ears - everything.

After a rather soggy trudge back to the ship, I consoled myself by drinking the contents of the bottles. Although there is some variation in the flavour, all three beers were dry, crisp and very refreshing.

Ironically, the photographs were less than satisfactory so I had to get a professional to shoot them after all, (Richard Stone - see results below) which of course is what I should have done in the first place.

Tim Marshall



P.S. When I first planned this article I was going to call it the 'Tale of Two Carib(e)s'. I was convinced that I'd seen a bottle of carib spelt with an e, and for a while I was under the impression that the Grenada version was 'Carib' and the St Kitts version was 'Caribe'. I mentioned this to both Collis and Ishmael and neither had heard of 'Caribe'. By the time I'd returned home I'd convinced myself that I'd imagined it. It was with mixed emotions that, while giving my bottle collection its annual dusting, I came across the bottle in the photograph above. I was glad that I hadn't imagined it, but for the life of me I can't remember where I bought it. Any suggestions?? TM

TOWARDS CIVILISATION

The last government held a consultation into whether pubs should be able to open an extra hour on Friday and Saturday evenings. CAMRA believes they should. The present government is interested in resurrecting the issue, but it needs to know how the public feels. If you think you should have the option of drinking in a pub until a civilised hour, when others can already go to clubs and theme bars with late licences until two in the morning, make your opinions known.

Write to your M.P. and to:

George Howarth M.P.

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Home Office,
50, Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AT.

AMERICAN OASES

A recent trip to Canada did not give rise to great expectations on the beer front. Canadian beers - Labott, Moosebrain - are more memorable for their names than their taste. However, the local tourist guide to Ottawa listed a brewpub, so in the interests of research a trek was made to the address given in Queen Street. A large pub was discovered with two beers on offer, one light, one dark and an extensive menu. The beers, brewed on the premises, were quite good, but suffered from being served very cold and very fizzy. However, across the road at the Mayflower there were three beers from Harts, a small brewer situated some 20 km outside Ottawa brewers, one of which was billed as "real ale" and served straight from the cask at the right temperature. Very acceptable.

An even less promising destination in recent years was Salt Lake City, given the founding fathers' attitude to the demon drink. It's alright to have lots of wives, but not lots of beer. Come to think of it, the two are probably mutually exclusive. However, things have got more relaxed recently and there are at least two brewpubs there providing a range of beers. Again the emphasis is on food and the beer tends to be served cold and fizzy, but it's a start.

Finally, the last place you would expect to find decent beer must be Los

Angeles International Airport, but a local micro trading as "Rhino Chasers" has a concession at one of the bars and provides a range of quite tasty beers. The beer taps in the form of fake rhino horns, give a brief delusion that they might be handpumps, but this is not real ale. Still it is a lot better than the alternatives: Budmillers or Schloors.

NW

Champion Winter Beer of Britain 1997/8

Nethergate's Old Growler has won Camra's Champion Winter Beer of Britain Award. Brewed in the medieval Suffolk wool town of Clare, Old Growler is named after the head brewer's dog. It is a "complex and satisfying porter, smooth and distinctive. Sweetness, roast malt and fruit feature in the palate, with bitter chocolate lingering. The finish is powerfully hoppy" (1998 GBG).

The competition was judged by beer writers, CAMRA Experts and brewers at the Great British Winter Beer festival held in the Old Fruitmarket, Albion Street, Glasgow at the end of November.

Full results were as follows:

Overall Gold Winner

Nethergate Old Growler (5.5% ABV), Clare, Suffolk.

Silver

Shepherd Neame Original Porter (5.2% ABV) Faversham, Kent.

Bronze

Daleside Monkey Wrench (5.3% ABV) Harrogate, N. Yorkshire.

Category Winners

Old Ales/Strong Milds:

1. Daleside Monkey Wrench. 2= Sarah Hughes Dark Ruby Mild (6.0% ABV) Dudley, W. Midlands. 2= King & Barnes Old Ale (4.5% ABV) Horsham, W. Sussex. 3. Gales Festival Mild (4.8% ABV) Horndean, Hants.

Stouts and Porters:

1= Shepherd Neame Original Porter. 1= Nethergate Old Growler.
2. Wickwar Station Porter (6.1% ABV) Wickwar, Gloucs. 3. McGuinness Tommy Todd's Porter (5.0% ABV) Rochdale, Gtr. Manchester.

Barley Wines:

1. Lees Moonraker (7.5% ABV) Middleton Junction, Gtr. Manchester.
2. Robinson's Old Tom (8.5% ABV) Stockport, Cheshire.
3. Marston's Owd Rodger (7.6% ABV) Burton upon Trent, Staffs.

AGM REMINDER

Don't forget the AGM
at the Travellers Joy
on Friday 23 January
(8 p.m.).

All Committee posts
up for election.

Nominations and
matters for the agenda
to the Secretary:

Derek Smith (Tel. 298024)
prior to the meeting.

I/we wish to join the Campaign for Real Ale and agree to abide by its rules.

Title.....Surname.....

Forename(s).....

(Partner).....

Address.....

.....

Post Code.....Date.....

Telephone Number(s).....

1

Four months free
I would like *four months free* and I have completed direct debit mandate
Single Membership £14 Joint Membership £17

OR

2

I would like £2 off the full rate. I enclose a cheque to CAMRA/please charge my card
Single Membership £12 Joint Membership £15
Pensioner, Unemployed, Disabled £8
(Please provide proof of status)

3

I would like a 1998 Good Beer Guide
I enclose a cheque/please charge my card
Member £7.50 Non-Member £10.99

We take Access / MasterCard / Visa / Delta / Switch

Number.....

Name on Card.....

Expiry Date.....Issue Number for Switch Cards.....

Signature.....

(or phone 01727 867201 with your card details)

ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER

The views expressed are not necessarily those of the Editors or the Campaign for Real Ale, either locally or nationally. If you have any adverts or material: articles, information, pictures, recipes, please contact Nick Ward (299477 or e-mail: nward@globalnet.co.uk) or John Nicholson (299436 or e-mail: jnl02@msn.com).