

ACB Quarterly Meeting held at The Dove St Inn (Ipswich) on 7/9/19 – Minutes

Present:- Nick Davis (chair), Steve Bennett, James Pettifor, Nik Leng, Simon Baker, Steve Plampton, Guy Johnson, Colin Miller, Roger Yates.

A healthy gathering of brewers met on a sunny late summer's day at the Dove. Below is hopefully a reasonably faithful transcript of the events that took place. Reviewing my notes, I find them to be surprisingly coherent, though they do seem to go downhill at a point that roughly coincides with Colin presenting a bottle of red wine during AoB (more on that later).

In no way should this transcript be used in evidence against any party present, by any party who was not present, in either criminal or divorce proceedings (apparently I, unknowingly, rang the wife by accident, and was overheard to say "if I'm not home in 15 minutes she's gonna kill me"and then promptly ordered another pint of Cobra!!).

Anyway...after ordering our food in a surprisingly well co-ordinated fashion we got down to business.

1: Beer Challenge – Altbier

Six beers were presented for consideration including a sneaky submission from myself of a commercial Altbier made by Diebels. It's fair to say there was a healthy variance on the interpretation of the style but overwhelmingly the best beer was deemed to be Peter Burgess' submission which 6 out of the 9 of us thought was the best with the only semi dissenting voice being that of Colin who felt there was a little bit of mustiness to its aroma. For the record the commercial beer came in second (rated as the best beer by all three people who didn't vote for Peter's beer) followed by Nick Davis' submission.

2: Lacons Challenge Update

As we had fifteen minutes to kill before the arrival of food Simon gave us a quick update on the situation regarding the Clone Beer Challenge.

The head brewer has provided Simon with as full a recipe as we are likely to get, the recipe is based on a 5 barrel brewlength but there was a little bit of doubt as to whether the brewer had quoted the correct volume in litres for a 5 barrel brewlength. Suffice to say that it is best to scale the recipe for your brewing system based on the % proportion of ingredients listed and the proposed bitterness contribution of each hop addition.

Lacon's are in the process of changing their brewing yeast but will NOT provide us with either the old or new yeasts. They suggested that a reasonably neutral yeast that allows the hops to be prominent would be suitable.

We believe that we have as much recipe information as we can now reasonably expect and there will be no further requests to Lacon's from Simon and that no one else should contact Lacon's directly asking for more information.

The recipe information will be published on the GroupSpaces site only, as we have a modicum of control and privacy as to who it is then visible to (after all, the recipe is Lacon's intellectual property)

The final judging will be at Lacon's brewery on 11th January 2020 which coincides with the Norfolk ACB meeting. A brewery tour will be held along with a bit of Sampling of the brewery beers. We are responsible for organising our own food but apparently there is an excellent little café across the road from the brewery.

Given the difficulties in deciding upon a beer (at least picking a beer that was in current production!!) and getting the recipe that we've had this year, Nick Davis suggested that perhaps we consider an alternative approach for next year's challenge.

The idea mooted was that we write to half a dozen or so breweries, explaining what we were doing and asking if they would be interested in working with us, and allowing them to suggest a suitable beer for us to brew. This engages the brewery right at the beginning of the process, would allow us to brew a beer that we knew would be freely available around the region for sampling and that the brewery would be willing to share recipe details with us. We might get more co-operation rather than us turning up and telling some poor brewer that we've chosen to brew one of his beers as a challenge and can we have the recipe please.

I think this matter will be discussed further at the AGM (26th October).

3: Refractometers and Hydrometer discussion and testing

Once food was consumed, we had a discussion around hydrometers and refractometers and James supplied some wort "solutions" that he'd made up so those of us who had bought devices could test them.

Colin (I think) commented that when they run a similar exercise in Essex in previous years that it was surprising how little variation there was across the various devices that had been brought along. Roger also raised the point about the diameter of many trial jars not being large enough, resulting in the hydrometer sticking to the side of the trial jar wall. Nick D agreed with this experience when using plastic trial jars but found it to be less of a problem with glass.

A table of results is shown below...

	Refractometers					Hydrometers			TILT
Solution	SteveP	Colin's new	Colin's old	Nick D.	JamesP	NickD	NickD	JamesP	JamesP
1.000*	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.005	1.001
1.030	1.032	1.032	1.036	1.032	1.030	1.032	1.033	1.038	1.032
1.060	1.062	1.063	1.066	1.061	1.058	1.064	1.065	1.072	1.060

*distilled water

Apart from Colin's old refractometer and James' Hydrometer most devices delivered reasonably consistent results. The consistent over readings on the 1.030 and 1.060 solutions may be as much to do with James kitchen scales when weighing out the extract to make the solutions.

Nick D also showed his technique of wrapping electrical tape around the top of the hydrometer as a means of "calibration" for devices that over read.

In summary it was concluded that as long as you know how your device performs, then you can make whatever adjustments necessary during the brewing process. The analysis could have been improved by having a "reference device" of a known accuracy to use as a basis for comparison.

The use of narrow range hydrometers was also discussed but other than me remembering that they were considered to be quite expensive, don't bounce well when dropped, but might help those with failing eyesight, I don't seem to have much in the way of notes on this topic!!

4: Other Useful Devices

Almost as a segue from the previous topic, it was discussed if it would be useful (especially to newer brewers) if we could develop a list of “other devices” that we have found particularly useful in assisting the brewing process. The sort of devices that perhaps are those that might not be considered essential to the brewing process but might be considered for purchase by a developing brewer as he expands his skill. Things like pH Meters (both Roger and Nick D commented on how good they thought the VoltCraft pH meter recommended by Ashley a long time ago was), high quality digital thermometers, temperature data loggers, temperature controllers, alkalinity measurement devices etc etc...all the stuff that’s nice to have but might not be on an initial shopping list for a brewer starting out.

The idea was well received, and Nick D will draw up a little proforma to send out to the membership and we can collate the feed back into something that can go up on Groupsaces and be good content for the new website.

5: Capping on Foam

An issue raised by Nick D as to what it meant and how practical it was to achieve. But in the time after adding it to the agenda I discovered that it was generally applied to the process of bottling beer that had already been carbonated (e.g. when bottling from a corny keg) rather than when bottling from the FV.

6: BrewCon Club Night

Last year a few of us attended and represented the ACB at the “club night” which was held as part of the Brew Con homebrewing “expo”. The question was raised as to whether we were going to attend again this year.

Apparently, the Norwich lads under the stewardship of Keith Bailey are planning to have a bar so there might be the possibility of joining in with them.

BrewCon takes place over the Saturday/Sunday 23rd/24th November at Beavertown Brewery with the Club Night held on the Saturday evening.

7: ACB Recipe Book

Nick D asked, given all the wonderful beers that our club members brew, many of which do well at local and national homebrew competitions, we should consider producing an Anglian Craft Brewers Recipe Book. Self-publication of a small A5 sized pocketbook doesn’t cost a great deal and the costs could easily be recouped by the sale of a large handful of copies.

The thorny issue of “profit” and “finance” then reared its ugly head as it usually does when money is mentioned in our meetings. Notwithstanding these issues it was felt that the idea of at least collating our recipes had a great deal of merit. Nick said (at least I think I said this!!) that he would try to come up with a layout format.

More discussion on this topic can be had at the AGM.

Roger’s popularity waned a little bit during the discussion when he revealed that he had a relative who worked for the “Revenue”.

8: Dorothy Hollamby Hops

Colin said that he would be happy to organise a new order from DH if folks were interested. He did say that it would also be nice to get some feedback from people who had previously ordered.

9: Donation to Royal British Legion

Steve P, Colin M and Nick D visited the RBL at Wivenhoe on Wednesday evening to hand over a £70 donation from moneys raised during the ACB homebrew competition held back in June. Well...that concluded the main part of the meeting, in pretty good time if I remember correctly and allowed us a good deal of opportunity to have a decent "Any Other Beers" discussion....and there were plenty of them, including comments on a couple of commercial beers that were bought during the day...

Jester (Dove St. Inn Brewery)

Without wishing to be too unkind this beer was universally disliked, lots of green apples and medicinal "qualities". "Bloody awful" was one comment I heard and if you wanted to try a beer with multiple faults then this would be a good place to start.

Takes Two (Ampersand)

From the Ampersand website: *"A double dose of mango in this American style wheat beer gives a hit of tropical flavour that dances on the palate. Backed up by the Belma and El Dorado hops for additional aroma & some hop bite this is a dry refreshing beer perfect for sipping in the sun."*

Although largely enjoyable it was thought that this beer was more an NEIPA than a wheat beer.

Northern Star (Northern Monk)

A Mocha Porter brewed in collaboration with North Star Coffee Roasters. All who tasted this beer thoroughly enjoyed it, but the general comment was that there wasn't much coffee in it but the "hit" of chocolate was bloody lovely.

Hell Lager (ABK Brewery)

A smooth Munich Helles lager. Perhaps a bit on the sweet side.

Famosa Lager 5.2% (Guy Johnson)

This beer brewed by Guy is a Guatemalan lager, the recipe coming from the book "Clone Brews" by Tess and Mark Szamatulski (a good book of recipes of many varying styles...I have a copy myself). An enjoyable beer that was perhaps a tad phenolicy with some Belgian like overtones. (I think Steve P was at this point accused of being a bit "Jilly Goolden")

NEIPA 5.5% (Nik Leng)

Nik had to leave early so was spared the direct personal critique, but it was felt that the beer was a bit buttery and could possibly do with more time in the FV to clean up some of the flavours.

APA 4% (Colin Miller)

Dry, thin, lemony, orangey, tangerine, mint, lychees, bitter finish were all descriptors used during the enjoyment of this beer

MerryLegs II 5.5% (James Pettifor)

James described his beer as being based on a “historical mild recipe” but fermented with a Voss Kveik yeast at 33 degrees and bottled within 5 days of brewing. This beer had a nice malty aroma and was clean and creamy.

Dopplebock 7.5% (Steve Bennett)

Apparently, the same beer Steve entered into the Altbier challenge based upon Wheelers Aventinus recipe (found in Wheeler and Protz’s “Brew Classic European Beers at Home) but with a couple of tweaks adding some hop extract and wine yeast. This beer was a much cleaner version with a nice dry finish.

Vino Collapso Chez Miller Red Wine 12% (Colin Miller)

Too many tannins, possibly oversparged, no hop aroma, low carbonation were the general comments about this hugely enjoyable red, the significant majority of which was consumed by your truly.

Ginger Stout 5.6% (Colin Miller)

Talk about saving the best until last. A hugely smooth stout with a well-balanced hit of ginger. Steve P praised the improvement that age has brought to this beer having sampled it many moons previously. If the Famous Five had lashings and lashing of this ginger beer, then Enid Blytons books might have needed an X-rating.

At this point in the day, I’m not sure if we had passed the scheduled meeting close time, most folks left to weave their way home. A few of us stayed on for a couple more drinks before Colin , Steve P and me partook in some Indian Cuisine where more beer was consumed.

A hugely enjoyable day, with some good beer, good food and good company.