



# WHAT'S BREWING

THE MAGAZINE OF THE CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE BRITISH COLUMBIA VOLUME 22 NO.3 MAY -JUNE 2012

## CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE ... THERE'S A CLUE IN THE NAME

BY PADDY TREAVOR

In February, Rich Coleman, the BC Liberal minister responsible for alcohol regulation in B.C., announced that movie theatres will now be able to apply for liquor licences, ending the prohibition of alcohol in B.C. cinemas. For those who have been supporting the [Rio Theatre](#)'s very public battle with the Liquor Control and Licensing Branch and the BC Liberal government to allow for alcohol in theatres, there is reason to rejoice, but for those of us who want to see wholesale changes to the laws and policies regulating liquor in B.C., we should not be satisfied with this small victory.



*Paddy Treavor - President CAMRA Vancouver*

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This is a Band-Aid placed on a completely broken system and although positive and helpful, it does nothing to really fix what ails the LCLB and the Liquor Distribution Branch. It is my hope that Mr Coleman's announcement is one of many that will follow as the government reviews our liquor laws, many of which are out-dated and make no sense in the 21st Century.

I was told by a LCLB spokesperson this past week that there will be a "review of liquor policy in the province" but both the LCLB and the Liberal Government are not giving the citizens of B.C. any clues as to what changes they are looking to make, if any. As of now, there seems to have been no consultation with the public and I have not come in contact with one person who works in the alcohol industry as a manufacturer, importer or distributor of alcohol who has been consulted either.

I am curious to know what our newsletter readers see as priorities for changes to our current liquor laws. I feel that CAMRA Vancouver has a role to play in letting the government know what the craft beer community really want to see change. I am asking for

*cont page 4 ...*

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weiss from their Hellesbier?

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# Campaign for Real Ale British Columbia

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## CAMRA BC

### Web sites

CAMRA BC: <http://www.camrabc.ca>

CAMRA Fraser Valley: <http://www.camrafraservalley.ca>

CAMRA Vancouver: <http://www.camravancouver.ca>

CAMRA Victoria: <http://www.camra.ca>

E-mail [camrabc@shaw.ca](mailto:camrabc@shaw.ca)

CAMRA BC: to join discussion group send request to:

[CAMRA\\_BC\\_Discussion-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:CAMRA_BC_Discussion-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)

to post a message to the list, send to:

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There's been a good deal of movement on the campaigning front since the last What's Brewing. Sterling work from Vancouver president Paddy Treavor (see front page) has seen promises extracted from the BC Liquor Control Branch to look into serving size notices and even a hint that craft beer may be included in the push to allow patrons to bring their own bottle to restaurants. One of our favourite partners is the Great Canadian Beer Festival and the directors of that worthy cultural event have met with the Deputy Minister of Solicitor General and report good progress regarding regulatory clarification for Special Occasion Licences.

This issue, John Adair looks at the rising interest in Belgian beers, among craft brewers and an equally keen home brew

movement is poised to add the Belgian-style to their repertoire (see page 14). John also hints that perhaps the love affair with uber-hoppy beers is waning and we may see a move to the Belgian style from our local craft brewers. Personally, I think we may also see a movement toward lower alcohol beers in the 3.0 to 4.0 per cent abv. It's SUCH an interesting time to be a beer lover! §

*Phil Atkinson*

*cont. from front page ...*

readers to email me, [pres@camravancouver.ca](mailto:pres@camravancouver.ca), with their top three wish list for changes they would like to see happen in regards to alcohol policies in B.C. It is my hope to put together a shortlist of desired changes to take forward to the politicians who are currently reviewing liquor policy so that CAMRA's voice can be heard loud and clear.

Cheers,

Paddy Treavor

CAMRA Vancouver President §

### Michael Jackson in Heaven



**I'm very sorry to tell you this, but the 'devil' beers are much better.**



## *Welsh Rarebit, Waffles, Bacon and Ale*

Waffles: 1 3/4 cups all-purpose flour  
2 tbs sugar  
2 tsp baking powder  
1 tsp baking soda  
1 tsp salt  
3 large eggs, separated  
1 1/2 sticks unsalted butter (6 ounces), melted  
1 cup buttermilk  
3/4 cup porter  
(you can cheat and just buy them and drink the ale)

Welsh Rarebit: 16 strips thick-cut bacon  
12 green onions, sliced fine  
4 tbs unsalted butter, cut into 4 pieces  
4 tbs all-purpose flour  
2 tsp Worcestershire sauce  
2 tsp dry mustard  
1/8 tsp cayenne pepper  
1/2 cup heavy cream  
1/2 cup porter  
2 large egg yolks  
2 cups shredded extra-sharp cheddar  
16 thick slices tomato from 4 large, ripe tomatoes

1. In large bowl, whisk together flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. In medium bowl, whisk together egg yolks, melted butter, buttermilk, and porter.

2. In clean, dry bowl, beat egg whites on medium speed until firm, but not dry, peaks form.

3. Whisk beer mixture into flour mixture until incorporated. Fold in egg whites.

4. Cook waffles, transfer to

baking sheet in oven and repeat procedure .

5. For Rarebit: Cook bacon in 2 to 3 batches in large fry pan over medium heat until crisp and golden. Reserve 2 tbs fat. Transfer bacon to paper towel-lined plate (or you can cheat and buy microwave bacon)

6. Cook green onions over medium heat in rendered bacon fat (if you microwaved the bacon, cook the green onions in 2 tbs butter) until softened. Reserve.

8. Melt 4 tbs butter in largish saucepan over medium heat. Add flour and cook, stirring constantly, until pale golden. Stir in Worcester sauce, dry mustard, and cayenne and cook 30 seconds. In a slow, steady stream add cream and ale, whisking constantly and vigorously. Whisk in egg yolks. Add cheese and stir until completely melted. Season with salt & pepper.

Transfer waffles to a grilling rack and increase oven heat to broil. Break each bacon strip in half. Top each waffle with 4 pieces bacon and 2 slices tomato, then sprinkle with the green onions. Spoon about 1/4 cup rarebit over each and grill/broil until bubbling and brown at the edges. Serve immediately. §



# Bock is Back

BY IAN LLOYD

What is a bock beer anyways? Think of it as a dark German lager with a kick. We don't tend to get many bocks on the West Coast. If we are going to drink something dark, it will most likely be a stout or porter. We do love our hops; perhaps it is time to get in touch with our malty side. This is what bocks



deliver in abundance: rich, dark and sweet malts. Let's explore this classic beer style and maybe a malt amour will mature.

The bock beer style began back in 14<sup>th</sup> century Germany. At this time the brewing powerhouse was not Munich, but Einbeck in the north. From Einbeck, beer flowed south into Bavaria and Munich. In the

local dialect this beer was called 'Oanbock', which was shortened to 'bock'. For some strange reason goats are often found on bock beer labels. 'Bock' is also the German word for billy goat. By definition a bock is a dark, sweeter lager with low bitterness (20ish IBU) and a bigger alcohol content (6-7% abv). It will certainly appeal to the beer drinker with a sweet tooth.

Luckily there are a few bocks in the Garden City. Hoyne Brewing has the Big Cock bock year round and Canoe Brewpub has a seasonal Bavarian copper bock. Both are sweeter beers: the Hoyne is more restrained but the Canoe fully embraces the malts. When you pair bocks with food, think sweet and rich. Wild game, pork and roasted foods all work with bocks. Anything caramelized will mesh nicely. Caramelized onions, seared portabello mushrooms on whole wheat pasta drizzled with sweet balsamic crema; now this meal calls for a bock.

Did I mention that there were multiple variations of bocks? The helles (pale) bock was brewed in response to the pilsner phenomenon that was sweeping through Europe. At first, Munich brewers swore they would never brew a pale beer. Spaten blinked first and brewed their first Helles in 1894, over 50 years after Pilsner Urquell was unleashed. No one said old world brewing was a dynamic industry. Helles bock still retain thick, chewy maltiness but their hop bite is curtailed. Phillips brewed Springbock (maibock/helles bock) a few years ago. Maibocks and helles bocks are very similar styles; maibocks are generally released in spring (May) and can be slightly hoppier and marginally darker. The food pairing for lighter bocks are similar to pilsners. Spicy foods and sea food are optimal.

Dopplebock: double up on an already strong beer? The 'dopple' part is not a literal description. But yes, the abv of dopplebocks is raised (7-10%) and so are the malty flavours. The original dopplebock is the



rich and caramelly Paulaner Salvator. There are many imitators and they use “-ator” ending names in homage. British Columbia has had no shortage of these brews; we like our strong beers. Instigator (Phillips) and Navigator (Lighthouse) are local favourites in Victoria, while Captivator (Tree Brewing) is an example from Kelowna. The food pairs are similar to a traditional bock. This sweeter beer can also be enjoyed with deserts. Imagine this caramel malty beverage with crème brulee. I can, and it is making me salivate.



What was once an accident is intentionally enjoyed every year. The eisbock (ice/frozen bock) beer style is made using a technique called freeze distillation. Beer is frozen which causes water-ice crystals to form. This ice is removed to further concentrate the alcoholic beverage. To my knowledge, only three Canadian breweries and one local homebrewer, have attempted to create this potent brew. Yup, this is the Hermannator from Vancouver Island Brewing. Fort Garry Brewing in Winnipeg also makes an eisbock, which is very tasty. There are few foods that was stand up to the thick, chocolatey maltiness of an eisbock. Grilled game, duck, caviar and rich Stroganoff are big foods that can handle a big beer. A brandy snifter of Hermannator and a caramel flan or chocolate cheesecake with ginger/plum sauce would be a decadent end to a meal. §

## *Cider ... never too early to start planning*

British Columbia has an ideal climate for growing apples. Indeed, on Vancouver Island many people give away their fruit because there's too much to use. Hmm ... an idea comes to mind.



The very best ciders are made from fresh-pressed, local-grown apples. The juice should not be diluted nor adulterated with sugars or syrups and fermentation often results from naturally occurring yeasts on equipment or in the cider house. After a slow fermentation through the winter the resulting cider or perry will usually be quite dry.

In practice, most cider differs from this form in one way or another. Cultured yeasts may be added for a more consistent product. Most bottled ciders are pasteurized for stability, and sweeteners may be employed to add sweetness without setting off an undesirable re-fermentation. Many of these products are of a very high quality and are an essential outlet for small-scale producers to sell their product. Most of this type of cider is made from concentrated apple juice. Filtration, carbonation and chilling are considered essential in mass-produced ciders, yet these processes often strip out or mask desirable flavours. Needless to say, CAMRA does not recommend ciders and perrys that have been processed in this way.

A strict definition for real cider is more difficult to pin down than for real ale. CAMRA believes that, as with real ale, the flavour should be the primary consideration in a 'real' product, but it would be hard to see how real cider and perry could survive in the marketplace if too rigid a definition were applied. §

# Meet the Beer Bloggers

BY JEN REIHER

Follow Jen's excellent blog at  
<http://victorianfood.blogspot.com/>

**Beer Blogger:** Ian Lloyd a.k.a. The Beer Prick



**Favourite beer of the moment:** Sours.

**Beer is important because:** "Beer binds us together. There is nothing I enjoy better than sitting around critiquing a beer and discussing new seasonal releases."

Like so many beer bloggers, Ian calls the craft beer mecca of Victoria home. "Some people follow sports; others politics. I follow beer; my friends follow beer," he explains. For the most part, his blog documents local beers with the occasional import ale for variety. He initially started his blog as a personal database, documenting each beer with a pithy and technical description and rating for future reference and comparison. Occasionally, Ian tries to achieve his goal of proving that 'beer is good for you' by posting about scientific research on the impact of alcohol and/or

beer consumption on health. "I find the health science about alcohol consumption absolutely fascinating," admits Ian.

**Blog excerpt:** *A true Cologne Kolsch is a delicate beverage. There are faint fruits, mild spicy noble hops and a very dry finish. On every Seattle trip, I make an effort to pick up a bottle of real Kolsch. The [Phillips]*

*Analogue mouthfeel is oily and chewy. I can't quite put my finger on the flavour, perhaps a recently dry-cleaned wet blanket. Don't forget the cereal, lettuce and musty/skunky hops. I shouldn't have left this beer warm up.*

Even though he is not a CAMRA executive member, it seems like a significant portion of Ian's spare time is spent contributing to the promotion of great craft beer. He is one of the founders of [www.beerontherock.com](http://www.beerontherock.com) and recently became a *What's Brewing* contributor. He also organizes the

fantastic "Beer School" tasting events at Clive's Classic Lounge in Victoria.

Despite his hard-earned reputation as an all-knowing and opinionated master of the beer scene, there are a few things Ian admits to not knowing. He claims he will never blog about his own brewing. "I homebrew using kits with slight additions," he confides. He does have some advice for new beer drinkers, however. "Don't waste your money on macro lagers; head straight for the Belgians. Any quality beverage should taste good warm or cold."

Ian's main blog can be found at [www.left4beer.com](http://www.left4beer.com) and he is also [@left4beer](https://twitter.com/left4beer) on twitter. §



# Marston's launches single-hop cask ales

BY MATTHEW MOGGRIDGE

UK brewer Marston's hopes to satisfy consumer demand for different taste experiences with the launch of 12 craft-brewed single-hop cask ales made with hops sourced from around the globe.

The plan is to brew a different beer for every month of 2012 using a single hop variety each time.



Ian Ward, Marston's category manager, said that hops were the 'herbs and spices' of beer and that each hop has its own special fragrance and flavour.

"Most beers use a mixture of hops, so by producing an ale from a single hop, we are allowing drinks and trade customers to understand what makes flavour and how it works," said Ward.

Ward added that hops have been sourced from around the world from 'passionate growers' and that Marston's will be providing consumers with plenty of

information about the provenance and history of each hop variety, some of which are completely new to the UK brewing scene.

Wai-iti and Kohatu hops are from New Zealand and consumers can look forward to Galaxy hops from Australia, Marynka from Poland, Strisselspalt from France and Citra from the USA.

Marston's plans to use the same recipe for each hop variety with only the hop changing. Assistant head brewer Simon Yates said that this method would allow the unique tastes and qualities of each hop to shine through.

"It will be a very different, but intriguing taste experience that will naturally appeal to people passionate about taste and ingredients," said Yates.

Earlier this year, Marston's Cask Report highlighted the need to create more of talking point around cask ale to boost the category's current upward trend.

Mark Carter, senior drinks category manager at Marston's Inns & Taverns said that the new range will meet consumer demand for 'new, authentic and different experiences.

"We have seen this in food and wine and can now satisfy our consumers when it comes to cask ales," Carter explained.

The new beers will be available on a first come, first served basis. They will be brewed in a limited run because of the small yields of some of the more experimental hops being used, all of which have been sourced through hop merchant Charles Faram and selected by Richard Westwood, Marston's production director.

Assistant head brewer Yates will be blogging about the new brews on the Marston's website and each product will be supported by in-pub point-of-sale, pump clips, posters and table talkers. §

# Out and About with Scottie

## ... Island events

As discussed on these pages we like to see what's going on in the beer scene on the Island, so here's a quick window into a few things we attended recently:

### **Parksville 2nd Annual Untapped: Beach Club Resort, Parksville, February 23, 2012.**

It had a Western cowboy theme. They pulled it off; designed well. Bales of hay abounded like in a country movie set. Right in front of the resort they did a cavalcade of brewery branded vehicles in the semi circle round about.. Tying up the brewery horses for the night. Very snappy. The volunteers were very good; well trained and pleasant. All done up in cowboy and cowgirl look well presented and all in theme. Now for the beer and it was plentiful, includes the ones we all like:

Driftwood, Howe Sound, Phillips, Vancouver Island, Cannery, Sea Cider, Merridale, Sleeman, Granville Island, Longwood, Wolf, Lighthouse, Steam Whistle, Tin Whistle, Mt Begbie, Whistler, Middle Mountain Meadery, Canoe. Every style and taste imaginable. Fresh and local.

Sharpest dressed cowhand to my mind was Brewer Harley of Longwood in Nanaimo. He was on it. Everyone presenting got in on it. This includes reps and brewers and clans with guests attending. Some of the younger woman attending seemed to be wearing 1950's style party dresses and seemingly more upscale fashions than you characteristically see at beer events. Very pleasant. Terry David Mulligan was there again reporting on this event. He's a great chap, strong for the cause of all fresh and local things.

Lots of beer interested folk paid almost 50 bucks each for the night out, with live music, food and the top of top in crafted beers ; interspersed throughout the event with fresh



and local foods. It's a huge bargain for all. What's Brewing was engaged in all manner of beer conversation, mostly centering around hops, malt and taste. Excellent beer crowd.

What's Brewing is acquainted with the Mid Island Brewers group who attend all the mid Island events and are IPA types in a strong way. They always have something to throw into the kettle for discussion. Good positive energy.

High End Spot ... on the Parksville waterfront, with a world-class walkway, views to the mainland. Can't say enough about the place.

In the main hall, it was very loud but in the companionways where others were set up you could hear each other speak. After having said that no one minded and the group played on throughout the night.



Food was out of this world and vendors included Beach Club, Tigh Na Mara, Sysco, Rod and Gun Pub, Thallassa Restaurant, Rocky Mountain Chocolates, GFS, Longwood Brewpub, Qualicum Cheeseworks, Hollie Wood Oysters, fresh local harvested for this very event, sausages, Texas BBQ, a chocolate fountain with fresh strawberries, and hand crafted chocolate with variety of mixtures (especially with chilies—wow!) I can't easily begin to describe the ways you could marry great beers and food tastes everywhere you turned. Just phenomenal.

Chef's attending to the foods; fresh and local that day.

A happy well-run event, positive and distinctive, a real beer consumer showcase out into the spotlight and centre stage for the night in Parksville. Good job Theresa Patterson and crew. Thanks to all the extremely helpful and pleasant folks at the Beach Club. CAMRA members look for this next year, excellent value and fun night out. What we hunt for.

### **The Island Beer Festival 2012 Feb 25 Strathcona Hotel.**

What's Brewing was in the house again this year for this truly local event. Island brewers only, almost all Victoria brewers except Wolf, Nanaimo, and Salt Spring, Fulford Valley.

1 -7pm: 20 dollars entrance with festival taster glass, program, and two tokens, fresh pizza right out of the kitchens served up in front of the stage. Acoustic music with Mike Hann and Tyler Harvey.

The venue was again downstairs at Club 9One9. Brewers were spread out around different levels and people had all manner of nooks and crannies to sit and enjoy the best real beers from the island. Throughout the room beer conversation was flowing.

Breweries attending were Canoe, Tofino, Driftwood, Lighthouse, Phillips, Salt Spring, Spinnakers, Swans, Hoyne, Wolf and Vancouver Island. Amongst the crowd were owners, brewers, reps and followers. I saw John Rowling of GCBF fame and a few long-time CAMRA members taking in the event, along with the ever-present and expanding group of new faces to real beer we see coming along. What's Brewing enjoys having our quick chats with all the hands involved in the beer movement both consumer and business side. It keeps us informed in our province's goings on. It's always good to catch up.

The Strathcona staff were dressed in stylistic Bavarian attire and were pleasant and keen.

What's Brewing was impressed with imagery put forward by both Hoyne and Salt Spring Brewing, which is all organic now. Signage and image is all part of the craft beer scene. Next time you're out shopping check the labels of our BC craft brewers and read what's on them. Some interesting and informative facts in relation to the beers and the market.

Thanks must go to Sean Franklin, Beverage Manager, who is a big part of this event's success. Their mandate was to just break even and give the community a chance at a fresh local beer showcase, easily accessible by bus and cab (both right out front) from downtown. Thanks to all the Strathcona staff and good show bringing real beer into the forefront for consumer enjoyment.



## **Alberni Valley Hops Fest Sat. Mar 24, 2012**

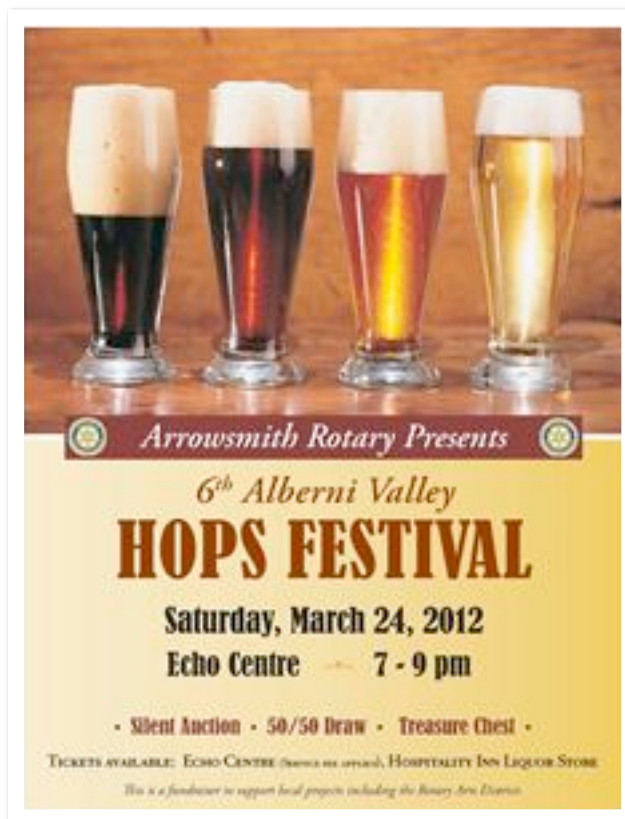
6- 7 industry 7- 9 full tilt Fest Admission \$30.00

CAMRA has attended this event the last three years and watched the community beer spirit rise on the consciousness level. Brewers are to take tickets from patrons, that's the expected procedure, but during the industry part tickets not requested. A chance for craft brewers to meet the licensed retail store and pub owners. Lots of folk in the Alberni Valley reigon who are in the beer business are looking for the new ways in beer. Choice, selection, style, variety, taste, local.

Rhabinder Dhillon spearheads a team of dedicated volunteers, serious about their commitment to Rotary Club. The mostly older members were continually asking if breweries needed help with anything. Additional drink tickets were available at nominal cost. Festival taster size glasses.

Reps never have to eat before, or after this event as the plentiful food is provided and created fresh that day from Polly's Pub, Pete's Mountain meats (sausage galore) Westwind Pub, Pizza Factory, and Port Pub. Also Serious Coffee chain attending, serving up a blast of Java, designer desert canapes for those so inclined during a night of good ale. Lots of good pub style grub with creative flair, and plentiful for all.

Volunteer staff were seen emptying the spill buckets and keeping on top of all brewers needs, evident throughout the event. Lots of details covered. In a change of pace from many years past, many patrons are now asking for the glass to be washed between each beer, getting this concept on their own accord and understanding the significance of the issue. Fantastic. Clean start each time in your glass. The real beer taste is on. No longer do breweries get the far away look as they discuss the finer points on beer, this sold-out crowd of patrons is keen for good beers, the whole what, where, why of it. Many good questions are overheard in course of the event.



There was a silent auction with a table full of donations, including a filled, new donated mini beer fridge full of almost all craft beers, 50-50 draw and treasure chest, all with charity in mind. The MC in his commentary keeps it all down-home old-style. Port Alberni. Local.

Breweries, agencies attending with reps and brewers were Dead Frog, with some mandarin orange amber ale and toasted coconut wit, creative and expressive beers, mentioning two of their line up. Granville Island, with their full line up. Howe Sound, offering a Dortmunder lager in cans, using Lublin Polish hops and seasonal IPA with six varieties of hops. Lighthouse, with three of their fine products. Longwood Brewery with a cask-conditioned IPA with hops grown from local Alberni Valley hop farm Beardale Aromatic and Bitters, copper Bock and framboise. Mark Anthony with their Hell's Gate and Stanley Park lines, and Pilsner Urquell and Grolsch ... two good import brands many CAMRA members



have on occasion tried and bought. Mill Street (Distillery District Toronto) was there with a wide line up including a lemon tea beer, coffee porter, Belgian wit and others. Phillips was there with their interesting beers. Tofino Brewing brought three beers, Vancouver Island had a varietal line up, and Whistler Brewing, which included their Lone Tree Cider.

The crowd enjoyed the event, the organizers did a great job right down to providing a safe ride home from the local dry grad group. You can feel the community spirit here. Again CAMRA saw many things that could use some attention but as discussed in this column at many such events anything goes in the name of charity and good works. CAMRA salutes Port Alberni Rotary for its continuing bringing a beer event focusing on good beer.

#### **Goings on about town:**

April 17 7 pm-9pm Beer Historian Greg Evans held court at the Irish Times in Victoria, celebrating a

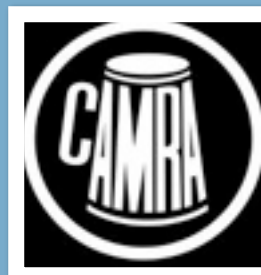
cask 6.5% abv and two-course dinner in historical honour of the Colonial Brewery, Victoria and its owner Arthur Bunster. Cost \$35.00. The cask, aptly named Bunster's Baltic porter, was brewed by Vancouver Island Brewing.

April 26 7-9pm Royal BC Museum Greg Evans talked on beer history at BC Bites and Beverages. Cost to members \$35 and to the public \$40. Many CAMRA members both in Vancouver and Victoria know Greg as a long time CAMRA member ... one from our clan of beer folk.



**Just announced:** the Empress Hotel is teaming with Hoyne Brewing to produce Empress honey wheat ale, brewed with honey produced from the Empress' own hives. Very fresh and local. §

Have a friend who drinks  
crap beer? Buy them a  
membership in CAMRA BC



# Belgians ... the next big thing?

BY JOHN ADAIR

follow John's blog at [Basement Breweries](#)

I think maybe it's safe to say hoppy beer has gone as far as it can. The hop craze that's swept Cascadia has taken the India Pale Ale, a once marginal style that seemed consigned to the dust bin of history, and turned it into a phenomenon. The style has become increasingly mainstream as pretty much every B.C. craft brewery (even the pretend ones) has produced some version of this most bitter of beers. As the IPA has increased in popularity so have craft beer drinkers demanded increasingly hoppy brews, and breweries have continued to push the envelope to satisfy their desire. But as hoppy beer has expanded its sway it seems that some people are beginning to look elsewhere, their palettes fatigued from the twang of hop bitterness, for the next big thing. But what will that next thing be?

A recent trip to Seattle helped cast some light on the subject for me, as what's happening with beer south of the border sadly seems to dictate what will happen here in around five years. While on the other side of the Salish Sea I was lucky enough to attend the sold out Belgianfest. This beer festival, featuring over 30 breweries and over 60 Belgian-style beers, had this year moved to the Bell Harbour International Conference Centre to accommodate the demand for both more breweries and more tickets. The breweries featured were not internationally distributed Trappist breweries like Chimay or Rochefort, or even smaller Belgian craft breweries like the Brouweij la Chouffe or de Ranke, but local Washington state breweries showcasing their Belgian-style offerings. I was

astounded that Washington, with a population barely 50 per cent larger than that of British Columbia, was able to put forward such a strong showing of Belgian-style beers. If we had a similar event here showcasing our Belgians (of which admittedly there are some fine examples), I imagine the event would fill a decent sized living room.

Of all the saisons, Belgian pale ales, tripels, dubbels and lambics I had that evening I only remember one



that I thought was below par, the overall standard of quality was superb. I managed to have a few conversations with some of the brewers who were on hand, and there seemed to be a common passion about these styles of beer. One of the brewers I spoke with from Schooner Exact, a homebrewer turned nanobrewer turned microbrewer, had created a



number of excellent Belgian-style beers brewed with fruity Northwest hops, a combination I have experimented with in my own brewing.

During my trip I was able to frequent a good number of the brewpubs and taphouses that dot the landscape across Seattle. Although I had a number of amazing hop-forward beers like Piny the Elder, Humulo Nimbus and Total Domination, it was the Belgian inspired beers that really stood out. While having dinner at the gourmet pizza place Bambino's near the space needle, I was blown away that it was Stone Brewing week, and they were serving half a dozen beers on tap from this infamously brash and

featuring the Trappist breweries as well as Belgian beers from around America (and with Pliny the Elder on tap for good measure).

So is this proliferation of all things Belgian in the US a harbinger of things to come here? If so there are certainly signs of a swing in this direction. Going back four years (again with some exceptions) it would have been difficult to come up with much in the way of quality Belgian-style beer of any sort being brewed in this province. But since the opening of Driftwood Brewery in the Rock Bay district of Victoria this has been changing. In their brief history, Driftwood has brought out numerous Belgian-styled beers including



a witbier (Whitebark) , two saisons (Farmhand and Cuvee D'Hiver), a golden strong (Son of the Morning), a Belgian fruit beer (Belle Royale) and what may have been a clone of Orval (Spring Rite). Driftwood is not the only local brewery creating quality Belgian-style products. Lighthouse brewing has its own saison, Deckhand, arguably the best locally brewed farmhouse beer, to go along with the highly experimental Uncharted Belgian IPA and Belgian Black, and the soon to be released Belgian

outspoken brewery. As it turned out it wasn't the hoppy offerings of Stone, but the farmhouse and abbey inspired beers of Boulevard Brewing and the barrel aged, wild beers of Russian River that made the evening such a memory, if perhaps somewhat of a foggy one. The evening was capped off with a visit to the Stumbling Monk, a Belgian-inspired bar that wouldn't have been out of place down some back alley in Brussels. Poorly lit and filled with cracked wooden tables and dark booths it had the feel of the old world with a bottle and draught selection

White. Although some of the other local breweries attempts at Belgians have not been quite to the same standard (and in some cases downright awful) it seems obvious that these styles are growing in popularity.

One of the local pro brewers once told me that almost all craft beer originates as homebrew, so what of the local Belgian-style homebrewing scene? If you look at many beer competitions the most entered categories are pretty predictable: India pale ale, American ale, stout, porter. But interestingly enough



Belgian and French ale (of which only one style is French in origin) is often just as heavily entered, with Belgian strong ale not far behind. But despite this seeming popularity among homebrewers I had a really difficult time finding guidance as my own homebrewing moved in this direction. There were plenty of homebrewers making American styles like IPAs and APAs as this type of beer has rocketed into ascendency in the local craft beer scene, and for a time my homebrewing efforts were firmly cemented in this realm. Similarly, lagers and German-style brewing are common, but I have never found this type of beer appealing to pursue with its long time frame for brewing, intense focus on process, and end result that leans heavily on balance and less on brewing artistry. As my initial homebrewing love for all things hoppy began to wane, in its place was not the rigour and left-brained order of German brewing but the ecstatic right-brained artistic innovation of Belgium. To me this was the very soul of homebrewing, so why were so few local brewers I knew doing it?

I think the answer to this question probably isn't a simple one. For one, Belgian beer centres on yeast and fermentation, an aspect of brewing that, ironically as it is the very essence of brewing, many homebrewers shy away from. I think there is also a feeling that Belgian beer isn't drinkable, which is odd as more than any other school of brewing, the focus seems to me on drinkability, even when brewing up to 10% abv and beyond. There also seems to be a certain fear of the unknown with these beers; because very few people are brewing them, others are hesitant to experiment with them. The local homebrewing club, [BrewVic](#), currently has a project brewing Belgian saisons. Everyone involved will brew their own version of a saison and we will get together when the beers are ready and sample them, giving the brewers a chance to talk about their beers as each one is tasted. It is my hope that projects such as these will get more homebrewers into brewing these styles.

So will Belgians be the next craftbrew craze? Of course only time will tell, but as long as local breweries keep producing good examples, homebrewers keep pushing the boundaries of the styles, and consumers keep taking the leap to try these fabulous beers there should be plenty of quality Belgian-style ales produced here in B.C. for years to come. §





# Ullage and Spillage

BY J. RANDOM

Yes, the suspense is over. Finally, the question on everyone's mind for so long will be answered. What really is in J. Random's beer fridge? Bereft of inspiration, I am going to reveal the long-buried secrets of the Random vault.

Our dedicated beer fridge is a black Danby Millenium Wine Cooler, bought from Home Despot. It was cheap, fit under the bar/brewery counter and did not disgrace the décor. It has broken down just once in 10 years but was easily repaired. We simply removed the shelving designed for wine, leaving one shelf for cans and short bottles and the bottom for 650ml and larger. It does have a glass front, not ideal, but no daylight reaches that part of the Random abode and the pot lights are not on that much. We also keep towards the back, the few clear bottles and/or pale beers that turn up. The best thing is it can be set to 15°C, our preferred temperature for drinking most of the beer styles the spouse and I enjoy; five degrees below room temperature, provided said room is a barely-heated public bar in England. Not that there aren't a few beers in the food fridge, but they are the exception.

Now to the beers themselves. There are basically three classes: the regulars, the guests and the end-of-the-world collection. The regulars are a pan-Canadian selection, by circumstance not design.

Starting on the East Coast, our bitter of choice is Propellor ESB from Halifax, Nova Scotia. It pours a russet brown with a cream-coloured



*Treasure trove. Or supped in certain instances.*

head, always a good sign. This is a beautifully balanced extra special bitter with a reasonably consistent quality. If it does stray from the ideal, it tends to a touch too much diacetyl. Those who should know ascribe this to not renewing their yeast soon enough. Usually, holding off buying it for a few weeks avoids further disappointment. They seem to become aware of the problem after a while.

Our preferred stout is St Ambroise oatmeal stout from McAuslan Brewing in Montreal, Quebec. Remarkably rich in flavor for a 5% beer, it can be way too roasty when fresh.



Strange as it may seem we age this beer, preferably for about six weeks, before drinking. We also unashamedly use it to blend with a guest beer we find we don't like, making a black and tan or even a black on black. It has a very cream-coloured head unlike a certain thin stout I could mention.

We have no regular beers from Ontario, partly lack of availability but mainly because they just don't measure up. Have you been to Ontario? Why is it that they have so few really top class beers? The Prairies don't get representation either and the reasons are largely the same. In addition I suspect the limited number of craft brewers makes for less competition and less pressure to exceed.

If we are talking Canada, then B.C. is the place for IPA's right? We keep two on the go, Red Racer IPA from Surrey and Driftwood Fat Tug from Victoria so our regular beer selection really does span coast to coast. Red Racer IPA can be a tad on the piney side so it's not exactly a session beer. However, it is remarkably consistent in quality. I am sure this is mostly down to the brewers, but with a major contribution from the light- and oxygen-excluding abilities of aluminum. Like Ambroise oatmeal stout, blending with Red Racer IPA saves a lot of blah beer bought on spec. Fat Tug was the second world-beating IPA to come out of B.C. and this is now so well known, it can sometimes be hard to find. As the newbie, this is not a beer with which we have long-term experience. Our only disappointment so far has been one less-than-perfect bottle, and most people would not even have noticed the defect.

There is one non-Canadian beer amongst our regulars and that is my Desert Island Beer. I believe the world powers will eventually have to banish me to a desert island, but as a concession they will provide infinite supplies of one beer, plus an I-pod rather than discs (in joke for ancient ex-pats). That beer would be

Old Rasputin, Russian imperial stout from North Coast Brewing in Fort Bragg California. Clearly this deal would have to include a solar-powered beer fridge and regular air drops. We have never knowingly had a bad bottle but would probably never detect an off flavour amongst the plethora of sensations tickling our taste buds, even if we tried. This is very much a sipping beer. Too many of these and you will be seeing Tsars.

Frequent guest appearances are made by Tree Hop Head IPA and Cutthroat pale ale, but most of our guest beers are impulse purchases, limited releases or examples of "heard it through the hop-vine". Examples in there right now are Captivator double Bock from Tree Brewing, dark chocolate porter from Lighthouse, Total Eclipse of the Hop IPA from Howe Sound Brewing and Singularity from Driftwood. Mostly these days we know what we like and we like what we know. However, you will have noticed that we don't expect perfection. Customary excellence beats consistent mediocrity.

The end-of-the-world collection is for when Mitt Romney announces a retaliatory strike on China because North Korea fired a rocket at America, but they're not at the top of his personal hit list. Among this collection are a 2000 Thor's Hammer (the last of the original) and a 1995 Tall Ship barley wine (a long-defunct Squamish microbrewery for the information of recent converts). We also have few Thomas Hardy's, sadly not the original. Those we brought over from the UK went during one of George Bush's sabre rattling episodes. More recent additions include some Woolly Buggers from Howe Sound Brewing and a 20 pounder from Driftwood. Most importantly, there resides a 1980 Closing Time barley wine, I made with an O.G. of 11.30. As the atmosphere turns to plasma, I will either evaporate in bliss, or the awful taste won't last too long. §

# Calendar

- Details on Vancouver area events at <http://camravancouver.ca/events/>
- Details on Fraser Valley area events at <http://www.camrafraservalley.ca>
- Details on Victoria area events at <http://camra.ca>

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