



**Minutes of MCB Meeting, Craven Arms, Upper Gough Street, Birmingham,
B1 1JG, Saturday 4 May 2013**



Apologies: Fraser A, Mike C, Peter F, Simon J, Jim N, Greg P, Alan Q

Present: Ron (chair) & Margaret A; Allen B (1st meeting), Ray C, John C, James F, Bill G, Allan G, Steve H, Tim L, Max L (1st meeting), Steve O, Phil S, Steve R, Ian R-B, David S, Jim S, Steve S

Introduction: Ron welcomed all those present, mostly regulars, but said it was good to see two members attending their first meeting and hoped they would attend many more.

Beer Tasting: most of the beers were tasted in order of strength and we had a little amusement by trying to guess what type of beer it was before the brewer gave us a brief description of their beer and the main ingredients.

James had a 3.8% Pale Ale (quite hoppy and refreshing), Steve H a 4.0% Mild (well balanced and not too sweet), Allen a 4.0% American Pale Ale (moreish and refreshing), Tim a 4.1% Pale Ale (again refreshing and easy drinking), Ian a 5.1% Strong Bitter (good stuff and none of us picked the use of demerara sugar), Bill a 5.2% Wheat Beer (refreshing and well received), John a 5.8% APA (good example of the style), Ian (again) a 5.8% Czech style Lager (easy drinking

despite the gravity), David a 6.2% APA (did well at Saltaire and easy to see why), Steve S a 6.9% Porter (went down easily despite the strength), and Bill (again) a 6.2% Porter (very tasty and easy drinking). Finally, Steve O presented a Bitter that he thought should be in the clinic category. However, none of us could detect any faults at all and it was declared “good stuff”.

More beers than usual but we survived to enjoy a good lunch supplied by the landlord. The overall standard of the beer was, as usual these days, high with a good variety of beer to boot.

Basic Brewing Questions: Ron introduced this item as being inspired by the visit last year to Sarah Hughes brewery and his “theory” that some of what we do, and read about in books, may be more applicable to large scale brewing than to the brew lengths employed at home.

In the event we had a lively Q&A session although in the time available only a small number of the prepared questions were dealt with. Each topic started with a question, then we considered why, and finally we discussed whether it made any difference. As an example, the first question was “do you boil your water before mashing in?” Most of us still did but a few no longer did so, and often used a Campden tablet instead. The query why produced some interesting answers, as did the difference consideration.

The other questions were; do you vary your mash beginning temperature according to the type of beer you are brewing, do you treat your hot liquor to change the Ph, do you treat your water to adjust hardness, how long do you mash for, and what gravity do you sparge down to? A supplementary was; do you sparge to a particular gravity or a target collection figure?

Simple and basic questions but they produced a lively debate with a considerable divergence of opinions and reasons. (After the meeting a number of members suggested to me that two or three questions in this vein should be a regular agenda item.)

Bottle Swaps: this item was not dealt with and Ron said that he would circulate an email to explore the issue.

Brewery visits: Ron outlined the visits that had taken place in the past - Castle Rock, Alcazar, Falstaff, Holdens, Marstons, Thornbridge, and Sarah Hughes. He said that it should be possible to visit a newish brewery in Nottingham that is establishing a good name and is run by two former home brewers. Details will follow later to gauge interest.

Future events; Saturday 8 June, Summer Social in Sheffield (details will be circulated soon). Meeting in Chesterfield, Saturday 6 July in the White Swan, 10 St Mary’s Gate, S41 7TJ.

Treasurers Report: Peter had sent details via Ron. Our current balance is £130.22. The only recent expenditure was buying eight reference Belgian beers for the March meeting, the cost being £39.60. The usual £1 collection was taken and the £17 will be sent to Peter.

Any Other Business: Ron announced that founder member, Greg Pittaway had resigned from the MCB and sends his best wishes to all that know him.

Steve S (3rd prize winner) gave a brief feedback report from the APA competition at Saltaire organised by the Northern Brewers. Allan G gave brief details of one of his prize-winning beers that had been brewed for commercial sale by Shane Swindells of the Chester Brew House brewery.

Ron apologised for bringing a substantive item up under a.o.b., namely that for various reasons he was resigning as MCB co-ordinator. Most of the 2013 programme is in place and he was willing to stay on for a few months but ideally a new co-ordinator should be in place by October. If more than one applicant comes forward there will have to be an election. There was a brief discussion on voting but no firm decision was reached. Ron will send out an email asking interested members to contact him in confidence.

Ron concluded the meeting at 16.00 by thanking the landlord for providing an excellent venue, a good lunch, and a wide range of beer in very drinkable condition. He also thanked everybody for coming and hoped we would see a good turnout in Chesterfield.

Ron A
MCB Co-ordinator
8 May 2013