

Minutes of MCBA Meeting: Leicester; 16th March 2013

Venue: Taps Bar, 10 Guildhall Lane, Leicester LE1 5FQ

Chair: Tim L,

Summary

Taps is a World Beer themed bar set in a character 18th Century building close to Leicester Cathedral. The bar offered a good selection of European draught and bottle beers, and MCB members had exclusive use of the atmospheric cellars for the meeting.

Two of the agenda items (judging and quiz) required the formation of five groups. Four of these were on tables in the main cellar vault, and a fifth in an immediately adjacent niche. An unseen beer pouring area was established beyond this point.

Feedback during and immediately after the event indicated that members regarded this event as out of the ordinary, but a welcome challenge.

During the meeting, the group expressed particular thanks to Lallemand for the donation of the Belle Saison yeast used for all of the Comparison Saison entries and to the staff and management of Taps Bar for making the meeting a success.

Record of Events

1. Doors Opened at 11.30hrs and members wasted no time in selecting a beer to their liking from the bar. Comparison Saison entries were dropped-off for labeling, and Tim opened the meeting at 1145hrs.
2. Pete, the bar manager, gave a short talk based on a theme of World Beer and the British Palate. He advised members that Taps is one of several bars in Leicester offering world beer, and that they see this as an area of growing popularity amongst British drinkers. There is considerable brand and label loyalty amongst drinkers, and stronger beers appear particularly attractive to the female drinker as an alternative to wine. Pete is developing his own "style compass"; a set of notes to allow him to advise beers to try based on drinkers' taste preferences - beer tasting is a regular event at Taps. In closing, Pete touched on the history of the building which has variously been an inn, house of ill repute and overflow for the local Guildhall prison cells.
3. Comparison Saison sampling and scoring was managed by Tim, supported by the bar manager Pete, in a similar manner to that employed by Alan Q at Loughborough in January. Each of five groups blind tasted eight beers and marked according to the judging criteria which was circulated with the Belle Saison yeast. For each group, the contributor members were pre-allocated to groups to avoid anyone tasting their own beer. To add more value to the sampling experience, a sheet of anonymised brew

data was supplied, to allow the groups to try to spot which beers they were sampling. Unbeknown to any of the tasters, the twelve entries were supplemented with a thirteenth beer, a representative commercial example of Saison – St Feuillien. Four of the five groups sampled the commercial example as one of their eight beers. The tasting occupied an hour of the teams' time, with much debate, as all beers were good. Following reconciliation of the scoring, it was revealed that seven of the twelve contributor beers achieved an overall score greater than the commercial example. The outright winner was our lowest gravity contribution, from Peter F.

4. Lunch comprised an excellent buffet from Taps' chef, including: a selection of sandwiches; sausage rolls; cajun battered chicken pieces; tomato & basil bruschetta; breaded prawns; mixed leaf salad and cajun spice french fries. Some beers were swapped during this time.
5. After lunch, Tim challenged members grey-matter with a brewers' pub quiz of technical, historical and geographical questions around brewing and the brewing trade. The winning team of Steve S and David S won a selection of Belgian beers kindly gifted by the management of Taps Bar.
6. Alan Q led a discussion based on his further analysis of the tasting results from the Loughborough meeting – The issues discussed were
 - a. Judging beer (acceptability vs style) agreed that it was up to the event organiser which route to take but, generally, in favour of judging against style.
 - b. Numerical penalties for faults and off-flavours. Two teams tasted same beer one marked down heavily for off-flavour and other team did not, resulting in different final scores - no resolution on this one.
7. Simon J gave a very well researched and in-depth presentation on the commercial and amateur production of Lambic Beers. The session included all attendees tasting a representative Lambic (Cantillon Gueuze 100% Lambic-Bio), with guidance by Simon on what they would be looking for in the style. The presentation was very well received.
8. Ron A talked about future events. He confirmed that the Summer Social would be in Sheffield on Saturday 8 June, details to be circulated later. He also reminded those present that the next MCB meeting was in Birmingham on Saturday 4 May. At least one brewery tour will be arranged for 2013. The future of bottle swaps is still under consideration and a note will be circulated soon.
9. Peter F, as treasurer, reported that funds are healthy at £169.82 which included £17 collected at the January meeting, it had been decided previously that the usual £1 contribution would not be requested at the Leicester event.
10. Under AOB:

- a. David S outlined the forthcoming Birmingham Beer Bash beer festival he is organizing for 26/27th July. They have some interesting and varied sponsors, and David encouraged all MCB members to attend, and to follow on Twitter and Facebook.
- b. Peter F mentioned that Martin from CCB had designed a new "Brew Format" sheet to replace the current one which was much simpler to use. This would be distributed through Ron in due course.

11. The meeting closed at 16.00hrs

END