

# Midlands Craft Brewers – November 2013

## Nuneaton Meeting Minutes

### Chaired by David Shipman

#### Attendees

David S	Malc N	Phil S	Steve H
Ray C	John C	Jody E	Allan G
Steve R	Jonathan A	Peter F	Mike C
Tim L	Russell P	Jim S	James F

#### Presentation 1 – Wood ageing for home brewers

Please see separate notes which are included under Brewing Topics on our website.

#### Presentation 2 – Temperature Control

Allan G, Peter F and Malc N all presented on their experience of using temperature control to aid fermentation. Peter commenced with an explanation of the importance of temperature control for a healthy fermentation, Malc continued with a description of his temperature control build and Allan wrapped up with some further thoughts and a summary of the survey that was completed by the group.

Malc has kindly provided a couple of photos:



Thermowell in FV



Home made hot plate  
(stainless top plate removed)

Allan's summary of the questionnaire responses is as follows:

*There were 23 responses to the temperature control questionnaire and the results were as follows:*

- 1. Time of Year - 17 out of 23 (74%) brew all year round. 5 out of 23 (22%) don't brew in the Summer, 1 out of 23 (4%) doesn't brew in the Winter.*
- 2. Control of Temperature – No-one ferments just where convenient. 15 out of 23 (65%) take direct control of their fermentation temperature by placing a heater/cooler in or around the FV or indirect control by providing a temperature controlled environment, The remaining 8 out of 23 (35%) select their best place for fermentation.*

3. *Direct control of Temperature – 10 out of 15 (67%) of those who control their temperature use a range of products to directly heat or chill their wort. Examples inc Electrim Heaters, Aquarium Heaters, Brew Belts and Immersion Coolers and Pub Chillers.*
4. *Indirect control of Temperature - 5 out of 15 (33%) provide an environment with a suitable temperature. 3 of those have a fridge with a heater, while 2 have an insulated cupboard.*
5. *Monitoring of Fermentation Temperature – 18 out of 23 (78%) check their temperature, whereas 5 out of 23 (22%) don't bother.*
6. *Fermentation Temperatures – generally 18 – 21C is the normal range for Ales, although several start at the lower end and allow the fermentation to warm up. Interestingly 1 person, who is successful in a lot of competitions, starts at 22 – 24C, then allows the wort to cool.*
7. *Variation of Fermentation Temperature – generally people do not vary their fermentation temperature, although several cool their wort at the end of the fermentation.*
8. *Crash Cooling – Only a couple of people crash cool their wort to a very low temperature.*

### **Clinic**

Allan G provided a beer for the clinic which all agreed exhibited some very undesirable characteristics! There was a suspicion that this had resulted from a poor weld inside the FV but there was no definitive conclusion.

### **Tastings**

Several beers were brought along within the recipe design themes from the last meeting.

Malc N brewed the Wheat Beer recipe, and provided samples with two different levels of carbonation. Opinions were not unanimous but generally the higher carbonation level was felt to suit the style better.

Jody E made a Blackberry Wheat beer in accordance with the group design which definitely brought out a lot of fruit character in taste and colour. The fruit was briefly boiled and added to the beer following primary fermentation. 500g was added along with 50g of brewing sugar, for a 1 gallon batch. By contrast Tim L brought a Blackberry Saison in which the fruit was added at the end of the boil, with 1kg added into 23l. The flavour was nowhere near as evident and the colour was not prominent. This is backed up by experience reported on various forums etc which suggests that 500g / gal is a good ratio to aim for.

Finally, John C brought along a stout brewed to the group recipe. This showed good balance and plenty of body, and demonstrated that the group came up with a sound design for this style of beer.

### **Comparison Brew Proposal – Best of British!**

As I also have the pleasure of arranging the meeting next May, in Birmingham, I felt that provided a perfect time frame in which to set a comparison brew challenge and give reasonable opportunity for anyone who wants to participate to fit something suitable into their brewing schedules. We can then have a tasting at Birmingham of the finished results.

I've gone for a reasonably broad set of guidelines to give some flexibility to brewers and maximise appeal. The key principle is that only British hops are to be used, and there are some further guidelines to allow a reasonable amount of comparison. So the proposed rules are:

- 1) British hops, and where possible grains, only.
- 2) Style of beer should broadly fit into one of the following categories:
  - a. Golden Ales and Lagers
  - b. Low / medium-strength Pale Ales and Bitters (< 1050 OG / 5% ABV)
  - c. Strong Pale Ales and Bitters (> 1050 OG / 5% ABV)
  - d. Porters and Stouts

If necessary there could be an "Other" category if anything really doesn't fit into any of the above, but see point 3, below.

- 3) Avoid distinctive styles that take their main characteristics from particular yeasts or other features that would overshadow the hops we are showcasing. If in doubt contact me in advance and I will make a judgement on whether it is a reasonable fit.

We should extend an invitation to other groups such as the Northern and Cambridge groups and others (perhaps the fledging Birmingham Home Brewers) to send beers along (and attend if they wish) – not quite a competition, but certainly a meeting that focuses on sampling the submitted beers with an element of scoring, along the lines of the saison yeast comparison earlier this year.

I will also try and arrange a speaker or presentation on a related subject.

Please can everyone who wants to have a go indicate this provisionally as soon as possible to make sure it is a worthwhile exercise, and confirm their intention to put forward a beer (or more than one if you wish) no later than the March meeting.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Funds remain healthy thanks to the regular contributions at each meeting. Some of those funds are being used to pay for "props" such as the beers for tasting at today's meeting.

### **Future Meetings and Events**

Christmas Social – 14<sup>th</sup> December

Meeting – Leicester, 18<sup>th</sup> January

Meeting - Nottingham, 8<sup>th</sup> March

Subsequent Meetings – Birmingham (May), Burton (July)