

**Minutes of MCB meeting held at The Western, Leicester on 28<sup>th</sup>**  
**March 2015**

Members present were Alan Q, John C, Ray, Malc, Allan G, James F, Andrew G, Steve R, James S, James D, Tim, Mike C, Steve H, Sean, Tom A, Matthew S, Karl, Martyn, Robin, Andy R, Adam and Peter. ( chair ) Apologies from Ian P, Jody, Martin, Russell, Steve S and Ian R-B.

The meeting commenced at 12:15 with the usual round of introductions, new members James D and Andrew G were welcomed to the group.

**Simonds 1880 Bitter.....The MCB / NCB Challenge brew for 2015**

Peter introduced the subject and explained that this beer had been chosen as the competition brew with the gravity reduced to between 1.045 – 1.050 from the original gravity of 1.062. The beer and original recipe for OG 1.062 is described below in a separate sheet. Three members between them brewed four beers for a tasting evaluation, this was intended to assist members in choosing the best approach to brew the beer. That is whether to attempt to roast the pale amber malt at home or alternatively to replace the latter with a commercial malt or a combination of such to obtain a similar colour and balance.

## **Simonds Bitter 1880 - The Best Approach for Competition**

Description; A well balanced light coloured beer produced from a simple grist of pale and pale amber malt which was hopped with traditional Fuggle and Golding varieties.

The recipe for this particular beer was researched and published by The Durden Park Beer Circle in their book "***Old British Beers and How to make Them***". They have kindly agreed to let us reproduce the recipe for the purpose of this competition.

*The original recipe is for 1 gallon of beer with an OG of 1.062.*

*2lb 10oz Pale Malt, 8oz Pale Amber Malt, ¾ oz Fuggles @ 4.5% alpha, 1/6<sup>th</sup> oz Goldings @ 5.5% alpha( late in boil ) + 1/10<sup>th</sup> oz Goldings ( dry-hop )and the beer should be matured for 3 months.*

It has been agreed with Northern Craft Brewers that this beer, reduced in gravity to 1.045 – 1.050 should be the "Challenge Brew" for 2015. It should be noted that the "Pale Amber" which had an estimated colour of 25 – 35 EBC and was fully diastatic is no longer produced. This malt can be made at home by gently roasting pale malt or substituted with other malts or a combination such as for example; Munich / Dia-Amber / Vienna / Caramalt / Aromatic; the first three being diastatic varieties.

It was agreed that MCB members should brew pilot beers using both home roasted Pale Amber Malt and a combination of alternative commercial malts. The beers would then be "blind tasted" at the March 2015 meeting, the results evaluated and conclusions drawn on the best way to approach the competition.

Four beers have been made by three members; these are in the specified OG band of 1.045 – 1.050 and each recipe will be published in the minutes. It should be mentioned that these beers have had nowhere like "3 months maturation" and the original recommendation needs to be taken in context with the reduced OG which we have agreed.

The procedure for making Pale Amber Malt at home is described in a separate sheet.

### **Tasting the pilot beers.**

After dividing into four groups a blind tasting was carried with the four beers. Each group tasted, discussed and scored the beer. The results were then collated and the scores given out whilst the three members described the specifications for their own beer.

For the purpose of these minutes a chart has been prepared which shows the beer details for the four brews, this includes the strength, percentages of malt used, hop schedules / quantities, yeast and also the overall score awarded by members. It is hoped that this will be of assistance to members who decide to enter the competition which has now been confirmed to take place on Saturday October 31<sup>st</sup>.



## Making Pale Amber Malt at Home

A large, fairly shallow oven tray was lined with baking foil and the fan oven was heated to 90C.

850g British Lager Malt was spread evenly on the tray and placed in the oven for 1 hour and stirred at 30 minute intervals.

Then the temperature was raised to 100c for 30 mins *and the grain stirred at 20 minute intervals for the remainder of the time in the oven.*

Raised to 110C for a further 30 mins

Then raised to 120C for a further 30 mins

Removed from the oven and left to cool for a few hours in the tray. When completely cool transferred to a paper bag for a week then stored in airtight jars.

**Experiment;** Rather than stocking several grades of Cara / Crystal Malts it was decided to try roasting British Caramalt at 30 EBC to an estimated colour of 150, this was carried out at a single temperature of 170C for 30 minutes in a fan assisted oven. There are no enzymes present in caramalt / crystal malt so no need for protracted drying stages at 90C.

A few notes; There is a useful eBook available from Amazon called "Roasted" by Jason Johnson at £1.57 This provides useful information on roasting several types of malt and even making your own crystal malt from pale malt.

The malt must be whole which means that you do need a grain mill.

*Why was Lager Malt chosen as the base rather than the specified Pale Malt?* It was thought that all other factors being equal more enzymes would survive the very basic home roasting! (Lager Malt has a higher diastatic rating than Pale Malt.) Raising the oven temperature slowly in stages is apparently crucial to the survival of enzymes and the first two steps simply removes excess moisture. If it was just a case of making ordinary amber ( non diastatic ) the roasting could easily be carried out in a single stage, for example half an hour at 130C or perhaps 140 – 160C if a darker colour is required.

Peter then passed round samples of the Pale Amber malt used in both his pilot brews and also the home roasted crystal malt prepared from Caramalt. Regarding the home roasted crystal malt comments from members described liquorice, burnt, chocolate, raisin like flavours with one member suggesting it would probably work well in a Stout.

**Beer Tastings;** Four members had brought three beers and a cider for tasting. The beers were tasted by the four groups and feedback given.

**Beer Clinic;** One member brought a beer which was tasted by all and various suggestions were made regarding both the cause of the fault and how to prevent it re-occurring.

### **Announcements;**

Allan stated that it would be useful for him to receive feedback from new members who had attended recent meetings.

The London / South East Craft Brewing Competition and Festival takes place this year at Truman's Brewery in Hackney on April 25<sup>th</sup>. The event is organised by London Amateur Brewers.

Allan stated that all MCB members were welcome to join the Homebrew Festival Club and that he would provide details to anyone interested.

The MCB May meeting will take place on 9<sup>th</sup> May at The Crown, Nuneaton, which is just opposite the railway station, Ray will be in the chair.

Tim mentioned that he hoped to hold the July meeting at The Black Hole Brewery, Burton and this would be confirmed at a later date.

Malc said that the September meeting would be held at Derby on September 19<sup>th</sup> possibly at The Exeter Arms, this would be confirmed later.

Allan asked for any ideas on a Summer Social.

There was also a possibility of a trip to Slaters Brewery with details to follow.

Peter Announced that MCB funds currently stood at £355.71 with £32.00 paid in after the January meeting after deductions for the loss on the buffet, this having been due to cancellations without notice.

**Fermentation Cabinet;** Allan had constructed this and transported it to the meeting for the benefit of members. He explained the details of the cabinet which had been designed to control and minimise temperature variations of the fermenting wort. For those members wishing to build such a cabinet themselves Allan said that he would be quite happy to supply the necessary plans and construction methods used.