

Malted Barley Appreciation Society

December 6, 1999 Newsletter • Pre-Millennium Edition

Last Month's Meeting: Belgian Beers Battle in the American Market

By Lucy Zachman

Kirby Shyer, formerly of Zip City Brewery and now with Interbrew (<http://www.interbrew.com>), entertained us at the November meeting with a bit of information about Interbrew's Belgian imports and some stories about the old brewpub.

Zip City, one of the area's brewpub pioneers, closed its doors in Spring of '97. After a long run, Kirby decided that the time had come. He was worn down from the battle to provide good beer and good food. Unfortunately, it was a tough time as Kirby was unemployed for six months and had his second child on the way. Eventually, he landed at Labatt USA, distributors of Leffe, Belle-Vue, Stella Artois, Hoegaarden's Der Verboden Vrucht and Hoegaarden. In fact, Labatt has made Hoegaarden the number one wheat beer in the US. With some of the other beers, however, finding an audience has been difficult.



Belle-Vue has been faced with a tough market, Kirby noted. While it can be found in many new Belgian-style restaurants, it has yet to develop a following like Hoegaarden. Ninety percent of Belle-Vue's business comes from their kriel beer, followed by five percent for the framboise and the remaining five percent for other flavors. Kirby said that because of the lack of interest Labatt may stop importing the gueuze.



On the other hand, Stella Artois has been doing

quite well in its U.S. debut. Labatt is marketing Stella as a "very upscale" beer, Kirby said. While d.b.a. carried Stella a few months ago, they eventually dropped it from their line-up. Now, Kirby said, they are asking to bring it back - a good sign for Labatt's marketing efforts.

Kirby brought an interesting selection of beers to try and a generous number of Hoegaarden and Stella Artois beer glasses that we each added to our collections. One of his outstanding beer selections was a Belle-Vue traditional lambic. This beer was smooth and refined with a lot of hay in the nose and minimal "horse blanket." Quite tasty!



Trip Report: The Great American Beer Festival

By George DePiro

It was a dark and stormy night...

OK, maybe not. In fact, it was sunny and 80 °F every day I was there. In this case, *there* was Denver, Colorado, home of the Great American Beer Festival. I was particularly eager to be attending this festival: not because there were over



1,000 beers from all over the country; not because I'd get to meet beer geeks and brewers from all over the world; not because I'd be a bit lighter for the trip home (from the loss of brain cells). What had me especially excited about this festival was the fact

that as a judge, I was getting in for free, could

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wander the floor while the festival was closed to the public, and they paid for my hotel room, too! Yippee!

I arrived in Denver expecting that the judging would be hard work, but I really wasn't prepared for what awaited me: 160 beers in 5 sessions over two and a half days! None of that is a misprint; that's an average of 32 beers per session!

There were about 12 beers in each flight, and they were all were presented at the same time, like at a homebrew contest best of show round. This made the evaluations very taxing, because I felt obligated to assess the aroma of each beer very quickly, before delicate aromatics dissipated. Most other judges simply tasted each beer in the order it was placed before them. I felt this was not the best way to perform the task; one cannot possibly give an adequate appraisal of 12 beers if they are tasted in quick succession.

The quality of the entrants was not completely unlike that found at a large homebrew contest. There were a few excellent beers, many average ones, and a few that left you wondering, "Why?" The major difference between the GABF and homebrew contests is in the ratio of average beers to very bad beers; there are fewer drastically flawed beers at the GABF.

After a day's judging we were either entertained by the Association of Brewers at a local brewpub or we were free to attend the festival (which started on Thursday evening). Tired of beer, I spent a lot of time talking with other brewers about various beery things. It was about as geeky a week as you could imagine. What fun!

Some of the notable beers at the festival (in my

opinion) included:

Deschutes Obsidian Stout (Bend, OR), a rich, malty, roasty stout with just enough hops to balance the malt without intruding upon it. I've always loved this beer, and I still do.



Southampton Publick House Saison (Southampton, NY)

was perhaps my favorite beer at the festival. Well-aged, mildly tart, with a dry spiciness balancing the malt, the beer was eminently drinkable.

Samuel Adams Millennium Ale (Boston, MA), a very sweet, ultra-high alcohol beverage (they



claimed 20% ABV) reminiscent of Scotch whisky, but not as drinkable (yes, less drinkable than Scotch). Perhaps if it is allowed to age until the millennium really begins it will be more palatable?

Tequila (Anheuser-Busch, St. Louis, MO) was as bad as you might think. Before you think, "Yeah, George, but how could you possibly have said a good thing about an A-B product?" let me point out that I evaluated this "beer" (in the loosest sense of the term) as part of the blind taste panel! Entered in the "experimental" category with only the disclosure "unique ingredients," none of us knew what the drink was. It smelled to me like lemon-lime soda with alcoholic undertones. Another judge claimed Triple Sec. Whatever it was, it wasn't beer (and none of us thought it resembled tequila, either). We booted it without argument.

Next year's GABF won't be in Currigan Hall because it is being demolished and rebuilt as a larger venue. This leaves the festival's future a bit uncertain. If any of you are able to go, it is worth the trip. The town of Boulder is close by and pretty cool. The mountains are beautiful and the beer flows like Rocky Mountain spring water. They accept volunteers as stewards and table captains for the blind tasting. Aside from getting to try all of the competing beers, taste panel volunteers also get free tickets to the festival. Not a bad deal!

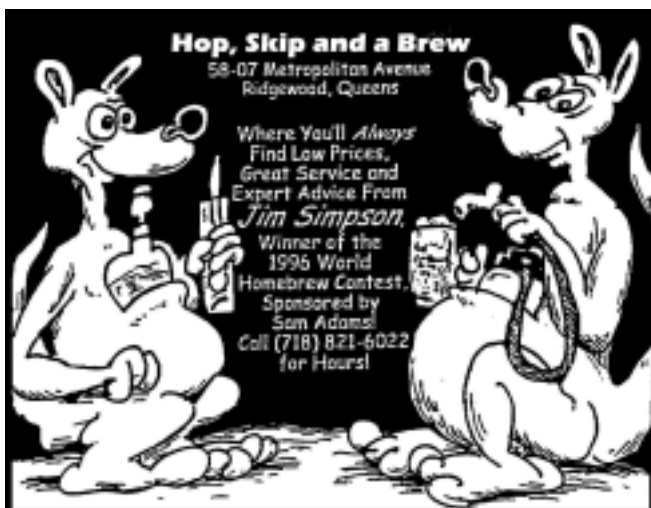
From the Editor's Disk: Yes, Virginia, There is a Samichlaus.

This is the third edition of the MBAS Newsletter under the current editorial administration. This is also the last edition of the year, the century, and lest anyone has missed it, the millennium. And, by chance this issue comes out on St. Nicholas's Day.

One of the few perquisites of being the editor of the Newsletter is being able to write a few paragraphs from time to time. Usually, the paragraphs are needed to fill empty space. While we don't need to fill space in this issue, we still get to write the paragraphs.

Thinking back over the past few months and, in fact, the past few years, it would be difficult to disregard the role that the MBAS has played in our lives. We've had George's classes and Bill's barbecues; Bob and BR's bike trips and Warren's Philly Pub Crawls. We've had two successful Best of Brooklyn Contests and we've judged at countless others. We've mourned the passing of one member and celebrated the joining of two others. And we have always had a place to go on the second Wednesday of the month where everybody knows our name, welcomes us warmly, and pours us a beer. If Samichlaus Bier is no longer with us, the spirit of Samichlaus certainly is.

That said, we want to thank the membership of the MBAS for their friendship, understanding, kindness, generosity, and complete support. The entire staff of the MBAS Newsletter wishes you and those you love a new millennium filled with Health and Happiness. –ANS



Salty

By Bill Coleman



Trip Report: Twenty-Four Hours of Beer (and More) – Part One

By Bill Coleman

Friday, October 15, 1999

Warren Becker, John Naegele, and I arrived in Brussels airport at around 8:30AM. We got our car and prepared to drive to Antwerp. Warren suggested on the flight in that we stop for breakfast at the *Crêperie Bretonne* in Louvain-La-Neuve (a place we originally had planned for several days later). We drove to that city, which translates to New Leuven, and drove around a college campus area until we found the place. *The Crêperie* was listed in Tim Webb's book as having 200 beers and 200 pancakes (crêpes). And he was right! We each had one beer and one crêpe, and then split a large bottle. All of this was to the accompaniment of about an album full of Johnny Cash music plus a few other musical items.¹

¹ Please note: Belgium is a bottle beer country; draft beer is definitely secondary. All beers listed are bottles unless otherwise noted. Also, I did not take detailed notes on all beers; I didn't want to use that as an excuse to cut off listing them.




The list is as follows:

Galoise Brune (Bill). I ordered a chocolate crêpe with it and it went well with a sweet, dark, malty beer.

Quintine (Warren). He ordered crêpe scampi (shrimp) cooked in Rodenbach.

Hercule (John). He ordered veal crêpe. Notes say Amoegard grand - I don't now what that means. It sounds close to Rodenbach Grand, doesn't it? I can't imagine both crêpes were made with the same beer, so I'll have to check with John but he was very happy with his combination.

Popperinges Hommelbier came next. We split the bottle three ways and the big, herbal, flowery, hop aroma finished off the meal nicely.



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L' Train from Manhattan)

Since we had a few hours to get to Antwerp for our tour of De Koninck, we decided to try one more café on the way as we had such good luck with first stop. Listed in Tim Webb's book was *Nethedal* in the town of Duffel. According to Tim Webb, this place was supposed to have 200 beers. Apparently, there has been a change of policy since he was there, as they only had a minuscule list of 20-25. I don't have a big complaint, as I know how hard it is to keep up with ever-changing bar lists from my own work on the much smaller Beer Alert page.

Even at a small local bar like this, which in the USA would probably give you a choice among Bud, Bud Light, Miller, Miller Lite, and if you

were lucky, Guinness, we were able to try the following beers:

Whitbread Extra Stout (Bill). Nice, low gravity sweet stout. I didn't know Whitbread had one.

Gordon's Highland Ale (Warren). Nice to try this big, malty Scotch ale again.



Mort Subite Kriek (John). A sweet Kriek.

From here, we headed into Antwerp. It took longer to

drive into the city than we had planned, partly because my driving directions were occasionally in error and partly because we were guessing when we got onto local streets. By the time we arrived in Antwerp, we had only a few minutes to join the group tour at De Koninck. It seemed a fairly long trip to the brewery and we were fairly tired, so we decided to head instead to *Stammineeke*, a few blocks from our hotel. It is a very nice, small bar with two floors and a woody, beer-memorabilia atmosphere. We returned to our beer sampling, with the following beers:

Orval (John). John found this beer to be a revelation, never having had a fresh Orval before. With its huge hop aroma and flavor, and subdued *Bretanomyces*, he continued to discuss it at great length throughout the remainder of the trip.

This Month's Guest Speaker



Dan Shelton, President, Shelton Broers.

Meetings are held at **Mugs Ale House**, Corner of 10th Street and Bedford Avenue in Brooklyn on the second Wednesday of each month. This month the meeting will be on the 8th.

Westvleteren 8 (Warren). A classic Trappist ale, sweet, malty dark.

Piraat (Bill). One of my favorite, big, blonde ales. At 11%, it's way to big for a tripel, but has a similar refreshing flavor.

Deugniet (John). One of the several fine tripels made by Du Bocq.

Dikkemathilde (Warren). A Belgian Pale Ale, tasty, but not as fresh as we would've liked for the style.

Helleketelbier (Bill). Notes: "Okay, complex, spicy beer." Tasted again the last night.

At this point, it was time to consume some solids. We read our Tim Webb notes, and located *Quinten Matsijs*, built in 1565, and supposedly the oldest café in Belgium. It was a very atmospheric place, but I didn't take notes on the decor because I was too busy keeping track of the beers. Here goes:

Jacobin's Gueuze (John). Too Simple in flavor. Not very authentic tasting.

Cuvee De Koninck (draft, Bill). Fresh, but hint of Bret. Hoppy. Some grainy flavor.

Bruges Tripel (Warren). Smooth, clean.

Duvel (John?). Fresh, excellent.

Kasteelbeer Dark (Bill). Delicious and sweet as always. Much less Bret than in the US.

Corsendonk Nut Brown (Warren?).

We also had a meal there, of course. I think I had soup. I can't remember; I took no notes on it. From there we moved to what is listed in my notes as Ground Zero, the *Kulminator*, which is probably my favorite bar in the world. It was very crowded, this being the night before the 24 Hours of Beer. The place was awash with beer geeks, most from England. It was time to drink some vintage beer, both Belgian and English!



Thomas Hardy 1982 (Bill). Fruity, lively (big carbonation!), intense and lively, with a hint of sourness that blended well with the malt sweetness.

John Courage Imperial Stout 1983 (Warren). A rich, malty imperial, in much better shape than the few bottles from the last batch we can get in

the USA. I believe this beer cost all of \$2.50!

John Courage Imperial Stout 1981 (John). Ditto.

Thomas Hardy 1978 (Bill) Even better than the 1982. Less sour, lively (highly carbonated; has Thomas Hardy changed their conditioning method since then?) and malty, richly complex.

While we were drinking these beers, we were joined by Seth Washinsky and Mike Berger, and I'm not sure who ordered which beers.

St. Benedict 1983. A tripel.

Greene King Farm Stout 1978. (Bill) I actually ordered Suffolk Strong, but received this in error. It was a 21 year old sweet stout (around 4%) that still tasted delicious! Only a hint of sherry; quite a bit of body and malty sweetness. Somebody explain to me how this could be!

Floreffe 9% 1982. Greatly, malty sherry-ish balance.



Rodenbach Grand Cru 1987. I have only one note: "Beautiful." I can remember it had aged in a way that combined smoothness and complexity.

Dulle Teve 1991 (Bill). Spicy, earthy, lively, with intense cellar character.

Saturday, October 16.

That was it for the day. After our first night's sleep in Belgium and breakfast in the hotel, Warren, John and I hit the street, ready for the 24 Hours of Beer. While waiting for it to start, we browsed around the medieval Grote Markt, a big tourist area, for cards, knick-knacks, and stuff. We noted a nice beer store there, but didn't want to have to load up bottles then, so we just window-shopped. Eventually, we got bored and decided to actually drink some beer. Right on the square is a friendly, lively bar called *Pater's Vaetje* (Priest's Casket). There were some other

geeks preparing for the festival by stopping there, as well. Here's what we drank:

Oerbier (Warren). As always, excellent. Seems cleaner with less Bret than USA samples.

Hoegaarden (John). A clean, fresh, beer, tasting much more refreshing than in the USA.

St. Sixtus (Bill). Malty, sweet, delicious.

Rochefortoise (Warren).

Corsendonk Brown (John). The first repeat, probably unintentionally. See previous notes.

Gulden Draak (Bill). Another big pale beer, similar to Piraat, but spicier.



Seth and Mike at The 24 Hours of Beer.

Okay. Next stop was the *24 Hours of Beer*. Here it becomes pointless to figure out who ordered what because the five of us (being once more joined by Seth and Mike) were trying to go for as many as possible. Also, this is the one time when my notes become very hard to read. I am reporting what I can read from my notes aided by the *24 Hours* booklet and by John's notes for verification. Comments on the beers are from memory; I did not bother to comment at the time, being happy I was merely literate! While sampling the beers, I picked up a Delirium Tremens T-shirt and a few odd bottles. Here goes the list:

XX Bitter. De Ranke's powerful, hoppy, Belgian beer. Sort of like a cartoon version of Orval!

Guldenberg. Similar to the previous, from the same brewery, but with a little more maltiness (and alcohol) to balance the hop flavor. Both delicious, if not subtle, beers.

Drie Fonteinen Kriek. More detailed notes later in this list.

Drie Fonteinen Gueuze. Ditto.

Saison Silly.

Delirium Nocturnum the dark beer by the brewers of...D.T.

Delirium Tremens.

De Landtsheer Millennium 2000 (10%).

Malheur (4.5%). From the Landtsheer Brewery.

Duchesse Du Burgoyne from Verhaege. Delicious as always.

Echte Kriek, from the same brewery. Seemed a little rough; not as good.

Do Koninck Antoon. Okay, not exceptional. Seemed grainy, quality I noted in all De Koninck beers during this trip.

Begyn. Ditto. No other comments.

Caracole Brune.

Wallonie, from Brewery Mibrana. A 9.5% amber beer. My comments were "very nice!" Pretty detailed, huh? I wish I had a chance to sample this beer under less frantic surroundings.

Kerstpater. Comments read: good.

Pieter Lieven Blond.

St. Paul Triple.

Kriekenbeer.

St. Paul Double.

Bingen Blonde. Comment: "N/G"

Bingen Special. Ditto.

Lam Gods. My comment was: "Interesting. Too funky." Well, we brought back a liter of it, so I'll have a chance to try it again!

Uitzen Echte Kriek. From the same brewery. No comments at all.

Moeder Overste

Oeral. De Dolle's "lite" beer 6%. Tasty and refreshing, with just a hint of Bret.

Druivenbier.

t'Zelfde.

Kasteel Dark. Another Repeat. What else is there to say?

Kasteel Blonde. Scarily drinkable and pilsner-looking 11.5% beer.

Brigand. Another big, blonde, tasty beer.

Boon Gueuze.

Boon Kriek.

Boon Lambic.

Loterbol. Comments: No so good.

Drossard. From same brewery. Comments:

Okay.

Fiart Cuvee de Noel. Comment: Okay.

Fiart Triple. Comment: Okay.

Blanche. Comment: Okay.

Next beer listed says: "Our oud Floreffe Meilure 1989." Can anyone explain that? I don't know what I meant. There are several Floreffe beers listed....

Ter Dolen Blonde (6.5%). (From De Dool. See comments later).

Ter Doten Double Dark (7.1%).

Ter Dolen Tripel.

Bieken from Boulens. My comment: "La Chouffe-like."

Pagjis, from same brewery. I had no comment.

Pottenbreker, also from Boulens. "Dark, lico-rice."

Orval.

Westmalle Tripel.

Rochefort 8.

La Chouffe.

MacChouffe.

Triple Karmelite

Kwak.

Petrus Oud Bruin. Good.

Petrus Blonde okay. May also be a reference to Petrus Special.

Reinart Grand Cru.

Reinart Triple.

Bloemenbier - Seems to be Reinart Xmas beer.

Floreffe Blonde.

Floreffe Brune.

Barbar Blonde.

Barbar Winterbok (?).

That was it for 24 Hours, as we were closing in tightly on 100 beers. We left Mike and Seth and dropped off our goodies at the hotel.

I remember the next stop very well. *Waagstuk*. Another really great Antwerp bar. There was a slide demonstration going on, and then there were some college-age girls playing medieval music, and the place was pretty busy with post-24 Hour traffic. As we sat around discussing beers, one of the authors of *Beers of Wallonia*

and *Beers of France*, Keith Rigley, overheard our beer geek talk and ran to his hotel to give us each a copy of the two books, autographed!



Talk about generosity! We tossed a Salty Dog comic book and a Beer Songs CD in his direction as well. We met another beer geek who seemed to have taken incredibly detailed notes of every beer in creation. He also told us about a new café to go to in Bruges, though we didn't make it there. I got a pair of Delirium Tremens suspenders to complete my elephant clothing. The notes get somewhat clearer here:

Cuvee L'Ermitage (Bill).

Westvleteren 12 (Warren).

Verboden Vrucht

Triple Moine 1991 (Bill). Now we were getting into vintage again, as the place got less crowded.

Roman Dobbelen Bruinen 1986 (Warren).

Gordon's Christmas Ale 1995 (John).

The owner also gave us two beers to go: Bieken, Zeppelin.

After that, we headed back towards the apartment as it was past 2 in the morning, at least. But we couldn't resist stopping in *Elfe Gebod*, with its bizarre display of religious memorabilia. The beers we had were mostly repeats



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Contests and Events

When	What	Where	Who/Phone	Notes
12/16	Vintage Stout n' Stogies Gilded Otter Brewing Co.	New Paltz, NY	914-256-1700	
12/26	Boxing Day Celebration at d.b.a.	41 1 st Ave, NYC		Bring a coat for New York Cares and get a free pint.
12/27	Debut of Dogfish Head New World Stout at d.b.a.	41 1 st Ave, NYC		This brew has been at Blind Tiger, but this is the first showing at d.b.a.
1/22	Southern New England Regional Homebrew Contest	Weston, CT	Von Bair 203-4529447	Deadline for entries: January 19. Email: ereetc@aol.com
TBA	MBAS Visit to Southampton Publick House	Southampton, NY	B.R. Rolya	Another of our famous tours to local breweries. Email to br@interport.net
2/4	War of the Worts V	Lahaska, PA	Alan Folsom 215-343-6851 215-628-0353	Entries due 1/15-1/29/2000 \$6 for first, \$5 for the rest. Email: folsom@ix.netcom.com
2/6	Beers International 17 Anniv. Party & Charity Event	Teaneck, NY	971-853- BEER	
2/26	Best of Brooklyn 2000 at the Brooklyn Brewery	79 North 11th St Brooklyn, NY	Andrew Henckler 718-626-3978	Entries should be received between Feb 7 & 18. \$5 for the first 5 entries, \$4 each after that. One entry per sub-category (exc for Cats 19, 20, 22-26). Email henckler@my-Deja.com for details.
3/19	NYC Spring Regional Home- brew Competition.	Staten Island, NY	TBA	Entries due by March 16. \$5 entry fee.