

# Malted Barley Appreciation Society

## July 1999 Newsletter

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### Notes from Portsmouth

by B.R. Rolya

In March, Bob and I took a snowy drive up to New England to judge at the South Shore Brew Off in Cranston, RI. Before heading to the contest, we spent a day in New Hampshire and paid yet another visit to the Portsmouth Brewery. We found a few things that we never tried before such as their Chocolate Brown Ale and the Kvass Russian Rye Ale. The brown ale was quite a disappointment. It had a distinct baking chocolate/dry cocoa note in the aroma combined with a powerful alcohol nose. Visually unappealing with its murky brown color and lack of head, it left much to be desired in its flavor, which was thin and reminiscent of watery hot chocolate.

The Kvass, on the other hand, was quite delicious and interesting and unlike any rye beer we've tried before. It was bright gold in color, although slightly hazy, with a big head. It had a good malt character complemented by spicy notes which were somewhat herbal and root-like. The rye provided a refreshing tartness similar to a good roggen, and if there weren't other beers to try, we would have had more of this!

We also tried some old favorites like the Old Brown Dog whose malty, caramel character was nicely balanced by low levels of bittering hops, and the Black Cat Stout, which on this occasion had a subdued, but discernible smoked malt note in the flavor. The aroma was deceptively low, but the flavor was rich, roast, and coffee-like with a touch of licorice and some finishing bitterness.

After the small but pleasant South Shore Brew Off in Cranston, we stopped by a local store to pick up some regional specialties. One beer we had heard much about but never had the chance to try was Tremont IPA from Charlestown, MA. This beer definitely lives up to its reputation. It's an incredibly well balanced IPA with a full-bodied malt character complemented by a bold hoppiness. This is a definite "must try" if you are in the area!

Another bottled beer that we enjoyed was Long Trail's Double Bag (from Vermont), which is their version of a stick. Its higher alcohol content was nicely hidden behind the roundness of the sweet malt character. A touch of nuttiness to the malt and a low but adequate level of hops combined to make a very enjoyable beer.

Once again, we had a successful beer voyage to New England where we always seem to find something new (to us) and interesting. Next on the agenda, we continue north to Canada!

### From the Editors' Disk:

Houston, Texas

Your peripatetic reporter returned recently from a week in Houston. Although Houston boasts five homebrew clubs, none was meeting during our visit. We did, however, visit a few places noted on the World Wide Web as being where to drink beer in Houston. We won't mention those we visited with a hefty selection of supermarket beers. The winners for this trip were:

**The Ginger Man** This is the original. Nestled next to the Rice University campus is old house with low ceilings and a very homey, welcoming atmosphere. With outside tables, front and back dartboards, and cozy nooks, it's a very comfortable place. Of course, the beer list is the draw. The Ginger Man's sixty-nine taps beats our own New York version by three. The location obviously affects the customer draw, which even on a Sunday in June was mostly college types – both students and faculty. The beers sampled were in good condition and the staff very helpful and courteous. The selection was similar to New York's but with fewer Belgians and more local brews. One trait shared, apparently, by all the Ginger Men is that there's too much cigar smoke. While we understand the economics of selling cigars at \$10 a pop, The Ginger Man didn't gain success as a cigar store, but as a beer bar. We only wish they appreciated more their non-smoking customers and segregated the smokers.

**The Richmond Arms** Veddy English including British football on the telly, British newspapers on the tables, and a picture of the Queen Mother drawing a pint over the bar (Young's Special Bitter, since you asked.) For some reason, The Ginger Man (see above) gets more press but for ambience the Richmond Arms is a clear winner. And, speaking of beer, the Richmond Arms is the winner on number of taps, too, with 86 (!) although only 80 were running at the time of our visit. The extensive selection is mixed with a predominance of American and British beers and a notable lack of Belgians. The bottle list is very small with Chimay Red, Duvel, and Old Foghorn the only entries worthy of mention. Another point for the Richmond Arms is that they serve food – standard pub grub with a traditional British slant (bangers, Scotch eggs, and Cornish pastry). Next time you're in Houston, the Richmond Arms is the place to quench your thirst and, considering Houston's weather you'll have one.

## Last Month's Meeting

### South Hampton Brewery



**THE MALTED BARLEY APPRECIATION SOCIETY**

Meets every second Wednesday of the Month  
7:30 p.m. at Mugs Ale House,  
10th Street and Bedford Avenue, Brooklyn, NY

E-Mail: [MaltyDog@AOL.COM](mailto:MaltyDog@AOL.COM)  
Home Page: <http://hbsd.org/mbast>  
Phone: 212-989-4545 (ask for B.R. or Bob)

## Les Bières du Nord

by B.R. Rolya

In May, Bob and I took a trip up to Quebec (during which we met up with Andrew and Joanne for a tour of the Unibroue brewery). Although the main reason for going there was to attend the Festival de Musique Actuelle in Victoriaville, we managed to squeeze in some beer research.

Having gone straight from the Montréal airport to the hotel to a business meeting without lunch, we decided that we needed a beer. Urgently. The first place we tried was a brewpub called Le Sergéant Recruteur. Their selection wasn't large, but they did have some interesting styles. I tried their hand-drawn Bitter (advertised as 4.8-5% alc.), which was deep brown in color and had a very pleasant, fruity/ripe apple aroma. The hop character, which had a subtle pine character in the nose, came through very strongly in the flavor. There was some malt sweetness to balance the hops, but not a lot, and the beer ended up on a slightly thin note. Bob tried their Trappist (5.5-6%), which had a distinctive Belgian yeast character with some spiciness in the nose. This dirty brown, cloudy beer had a much weaker flavor than expected and was overall somewhat of a disappointment.

On our way to dinner, we stumbled across one of Montréal's better beer bars, Le Futenbulle. Having recognized the name and having a few moments to spare before dinner, we decided to treat ourselves to some Belgian beers (including Gulden Draak) that we've never seen outside of Belgian as well as some local beers.

The next day, we drove up to Quebec City and after walking around the Old City needed some refreshment. We tried 2 beers from the Schoune Farmhouse Brewery (which we searched for in vain in Montréal). We met the Belgian brewer from Schoune about a year ago at a beer dinner at Café Centro and had hoped to be able to visit the brewery, but unfortunately didn't have enough time. We were disappointed to find that the beers we tried (in bottles) were rather unimpressive (maybe it's better that we didn't visit the brewery!) but it seemed like it was an age/handling problem. The Schoune Ambrée (amber) was orangish-gold in color and had a Belgian yeasty aroma with some fruitiness. There was some tartness in the flavor, which also had low levels of malt and hops, but overall, there wasn't much there. The copper-colored Schoune Forte (strong) had an unpleasant tangy, yeasty note in the nose, but a nice malty flavor that gave way to a slightly astringent, almost chemical flavor.

We hope that the bottles we had were just old because we've heard such good things about the brewery. Further research will be required!

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After more walking around and climbing many, many stairs to reach an old fort on the cliffs overlooking the St. Lawrence River, we returned to the old section of town and visited L'Inox brewpub which had a nice selection of beers that we enjoyed on their outdoor terrace. Their Blanche was very clean and refreshing with a hint of wheat and lemon in the aroma. It had quite a large malt presence in the flavor as well as a touch of mild orange. Their Brune (Brown) had a deep reddish-brown color and lots of caramel in the aroma with a touch of coffee and roasted malt. The big roasty flavor was very reminiscent of a robust porter. There was a pleasant hint of sweetness that ended in a dry note. Our least favorite beer (of the ones we tried) was the Ambrée that had a very faint musty, nutty aroma and an unpleasant metallic flavor combined with an odd coconut note in the middle. Otherwise similar in profile to a low-hopped pale ale, it finished thin with some minor astringency.

One trend we noticed in Canada was the use of seasonal local products in beer (buckwheat, maple syrup, blueberries). L'Inox had their own contribution to the trend with their Epinette (spruce beer). This was one beer we had to try! It was a blonde beer and surprised us with the papaya character in the aroma. There was a hint of spruce in the aroma but it was much more present in the flavor. The beer itself wasn't very distinctive although it did have some fruit and citric notes which complemented the spruce nicely.

We did try a few other local microbrews in bars at night, but neglected to take any tasting notes. Some of the ones we enjoyed included St. Ambroise, Boréale (especially the Rousse), and Belle Gueule. These were pleasant alternatives to the Molson, etc. Dries and Ices and most bars and clubs served these alongside the macrobrews.

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The Salty Dog

The Salty Dog Appears Almost Every Month in  
**The Malted Barley  
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By Bill Coleman

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