

Malted Barley Appreciation Society

March 2006 • Volume 13 • Number 3

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Here's the March 2006 newsletter...

Cheers!

— Alan Rice —

March Meeting

Wednesday March 8, 2006

Our guest speaker is **Scott Vaccaro**, proprietor of **Captain Lawrence Brewing** in Pleasantville, New York. We'll also kill off **Splint Thy Skull**.

MUGS ALE HOUSE



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<http://hbd.org/mbas>

February Meeting

Patrick Jones

The MBAS welcomed two guests to the February meeting. First up was Patrick Jones, head brewer at Triumph Brewery in New Hope, NJ. Patrick is planning on moving to their new location in the historic section of Philadelphia. In



the meantime, he is

still brewing the Triumph Czech Pilsner with Saaz hops. This tasty brew won the Silver Medal at the 2005 GABF, and we were the recipients of four growlers.

Patrick is the host of the beer and cheese events at dba, so of course, he also brought cheese. We tasted Toussaint, from Sprout Creek Farm, a 200 acre working farm in Dutchess

continued on next page • see... JONES



TRIUMPH
BREWING COMPANY

Tony Forder

Next up was Tony Forder, the co-publisher and editor of Ale Street News. Tony was living in Europe in 1975 when he attended the first Great British Beerfest. He remembered the contributions of New Albion and Mendocino breweries. But it was at Humboldt when good beer came back to him.

Susan Babin-Forder, his wife of 26 years, is from New Jersey. He started Ale Street News there with his brother-in-law, Jack Babin. They were both home brewers. Their publication outlasted several competitors, and it will be celebrating its 15th anniversary this year.

Tony is a self proclaimed Belgian. He's looking forward to a new offering from La Chouffe on March 24 (see below). Another

continued on next page • see... FORDER



JONES • continued from page 1

County, New York. This white cheddar is made from grass fed cow's milk. It is uncooked and pressed, then aged wrapped in cloth. You can get it at Murray's for \$22/lb.

This savory and spicy cheese is firm and pronounced in flavor with a sharp bite and a lingering finish. The longer a cheese ages, the more acidic it becomes. Wine is already acidic, so beer can bring more to the party in your mouth. Hoppy beers such as the Czech Pilsner pair well with acidic cheeses.—Ed.



You can visit this free-range farm in Poughkeepsie (sproutcreekfarm.org).

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Belgian beer with a cartoon logo is Urthel. Hildegard Van Ostaden was inspired by double IPAs on a trip to the American northwest early last year. So she brewed Hop-It at 9.5% with pilsner malt, a triple yeast, and 80 IBUs of Magnum, Spalt and Saaz hops. Ask for it at your favorite beer store now.

The U.S. is the largest market for European microbrewers. They have more freedom, no tied houses, and no ImBev. Look for new beers from Italy and Switzerland, too.

On March 24, Ale Street News, in conjunction with the Belgian Consulate and Petite Abeille Restaurants, is hosting the Ultimate Belgian Tasting at the Chelsea Art Museum, home of the Moitte Foundation.. Sample beers from over 20 breweries, including the U.S. launch of Chouffe Houblon, a double hopped tripel. Meet the brewers, taste the fine food, and enjoy the artwork.

For more information and tickets, go to <http://www.alestreetnews.com>. —Ed.



Advance scout for the Chouffe gnomes in NYC.

Ultimate Belgian Tasting

Friday the Frantic Firkinteenth

BY ALEX HALL

Every Friday the 13th can be a lucky day if you like craft beer and can get yourself down to Philadelphia. It's no superstition that The Grey Lodge pub, located in the gritty northeast section of the 'City of Brotherly Love', throws a wildly popular cask ale festival every time the infamous date comes around. Friday 13th January was no exception with 18 firkins and pins of cask-conditioned ale on offer through the day.

My luck was in on this generally ill-regarded date. My friend Scott had just come off a nightshift and offered to give me a lift down. That thankfully saved me a trundling meander on New Jersey Transit and SEPTA (I'm too tight to pay Amtrak's inflated fares). We picked up another two imbibers on the way - one of whom was none other than aircraft pilot, musician, and cask ale fan Chris Wylde (who is also a fellow Englishman). One of Chris's music



These imbibers fought off triskaidekaphobia and road-tripped it to Philly for a memorable(?) afternoon.

CDs is entitled 'Cask Conditioned', and most of the tracks - all instrumental - are named after tasty British microbrewed cask ales such as 'Dark Island' and 'Summer Lightning'.

Our destination was reached a minute or two past noon, and the bar was already well populated; all bar stools were taken even that early. The ever popular 'Scoats' was in charge, mallet and tap in hand, and was observed to be working feverishly to get the first round of seven firkins flowing. On watching the regular influx of eager customers, we decided the best place to stand would be at the end of the bar after it had curved round on itself to form a little 'snug' area. We were very glad of that move as by mid-afternoon the place was heaving with people jostling for cask ale, many of which must have taken the afternoon off work for this. Popular beer writer Lew Bryson joined us for a chat, and Heavyweight Brewery's master-

mind Tom Baker, unfortunately troubled by a minor back injury, appeared briefly. Yards and Appalachian Breweries also were represented in the crowd, as was a large contingent of regulars on the forums of BeerAdvocate.com - including Woody Chandler, Ale Street News's 'Beer Pest', in full imbibing attire. A 'beer pest' is apparently the highest rank of 'beer geek', surpassing all levels of Aspergic enthusiasm on the subject.

Barely by mid-afternoon the casks began to run dry, the first to 'kick' aptly being Nodding Head's 'Hoppy Ending', such as was the demand from the assembled crowd. Whenever one kicked, people would cheer; the empty being replaced by a different full one as soon as the overworked staff could attend to it. The frantic nature of this hugely popular event, coupled with lack of space, meant that this was how it had to be done. However, cask ale is an unpredictable animal - some unrefined American brews you can sometimes just put there, vent, tap, and pour, but many others need time to condition properly and settle out to be in their best condition. So those at this event which fell into the latter category would have been better had they been given proper cellaring; I noticed one was so highly naturally carbonated that it was foaming energetically out of the shive opening - and tasted 'green' and one-dimensional. If it could have been left to breathe for 24 to 48 hours using a soft spile peg, the texture, flavour, and mouthfeel would have been at their peak. But with an event that was so manic (about 20 gallons of cask ale per hour was being consumed), I suppose it's better to cut corners where necessary than not to have the festival at all; I know at least one of the beers was deliberately left unrefined by the brewery because of this.

Here's a rundown of what I imbibed, in order of tasting. I started with a glass (7oz I believe) of Ramstein Pale Ale (6.2% ABV), a delicious and well balanced brew which would turn out to be one of the best of the day. Unbeknown to many, Ramstein is just a brand name - the New Jersey brewery that produces this range is actually the High Point Wheat Beer Company. The second cask I chose as beverage of the minute was Sly Fox 'Robbie Burns' Scottish Ale' (5%), pleasantly malty and true to style. Then it was John Harvard's 'Alt Bier' (5.5%), again good for the style and very enjoyable, shortly followed by Yards 'Philadelphia Pale Ale', Simcoe-dry-hopped (4.5%). Unfortunately this was the beer that would have benefitted most from proper conditioning, while pleasant enough I found it was overly fresh ('green') and had far too much CO2 in solution. At first, the staff were getting glasses full of nothing but froth in their haste to serve the beer.

Fifth on the agenda was General Lafayette 'All Fuggled Up' (5.8%), a very tasty beer with a hoppy aroma and quite big on malt

notes but with an underlying sweetness and a lingering hoppy finish. After that, it was a close call for Nodding Head 'Hoppy Ending' (7%), a mid-dark brew, quite malty with a hoppy finish. This would be the first cask to get finished off soon after. The last



Only a real beerfly like Lew Bryson would guard a firkin.



A toast from blurry eyed beer pest Woody Chandler.

of the first seven casks up was then sampled, Rock Art 'Midnight Madness Smoked Porter' (5%) which was very enjoyable.

Casks were finishing with regularity by this point, so it was full steam ahead with the sampling. Heavyweight 'Black Ocean', a 4.5% schwarzbier, was thoroughly enjoyed, followed by Iron Hill 'Poor Richard's Ale', a malty 5.5% historic beer recipe brewed to celebrate Benjamin Franklin's 300th birthday. Appalachian Brewery's 'Oak Aged Scottish Ale' (5.5%) was tried next, followed by Victory 'Uncle Teddy's Bitter', a 3.9% replica of a British quaffing bitter. Then came Legacy 'Bixler's Alt' (ABV not stated), dark, rich, and in good condition. By this point I had been lining up several beers to safeguard against missing out, such as was the speed of consumption. That philosophy prevented me missing a few of them, but in spite of that I still was confounded by one - Flying Fish Brewery's 'Hopfish' - which lived up to its name and flew out faster than I had expected.

The final quintet was beckoning. The delicious Weyerbacher 'Heresy' (8.2%), a rich Russian imperial stout, was then eagerly ordered, followed by Brewer's Art Proletary Ale (5%). Then Lancaster 'Doppelbock' (7%), the superb but very potent Middle Ages '10th Anniversary Ale' (10%), and winding up with Troegs 'Oatmeal Stout' (6.8%). Recollections of the last few are less clear than the first few for obvious reasons, and it was too crowded to take detailed notes. By the time I had got to the Troegs, there were only two firkins still flowing - and it was only early evening!

All in all, it was a great day with great beer. Aside from my slight disappointment that some of them could have been better with proper cellaring, Scoats and his crew pulled off a marvellous feat - I certainly plan to be back there for the next one on Friday 13th October.



THE GREY LODGE
6235 Frankford Avenue
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 19135-3404
Phone: 1 215 624 2969
'Cask Conditioned' CD by Chris Wylde
<http://www.chriswylde.net/caskconditioned.html>

This article also appears in **The Gotham Imbiber**.

More Frantic Firkins (This Time Local)

BY ALEX HALL

The Brazen Head's 8th Tri-Annual Cask Festival ('Cask Head') was never expected to be a subdued affair. Breaking records once again, the latest event (24th-26th February) saw no less than 21 different beers on sale through the weekend. Six of these were 5.4 gallon pins, while the rest were standard 10.8 gallon firkins.

Highlights included the first ever casks out of Captain Lawrence Brewery, the new 'Ivy League Pilsner' from heavyweight Brewery, and Blue Point's 'Poor Richard's Ale' (the old Colonial recipe of Benjamin Franklin). The Heavyweight brew was deemed fastest seller on the Friday, while the intensely molasses-rich Blue Point offering lasted something like three hours on Saturday. The latter was actually brewed on the Brick House brewpub plant, which is operated by Blue Point. Captain Lawrence was in full steam not far behind with two pins of their Smoked Porter, previously aged for several days in an oak cask. One of the pins was a relic of Britain's past brewing heritage, being branded for the Strong Brewery of Romsey - which was closed back in 1981 by the then predatory Whitbread Beer Company, now long-devoured themselves by bigger fish.

Also very noteworthy was a rare cask of Schmaltz (He'Brew) Messiah Bold, two delicious dark beers from local heroes Sixpoint (Black Soul Porter and Diesel Stout), a tantalising Irish Stout from Garrett Oliver and Co. at Williamsburg's Brooklyn Brewery, and the delicious Frosty's Winter Wheat and Hop Angel IPA from Chris and Mark at Chelsea. Not to mention the delicate and delicious Yorkshire Pub Ale, and the bolder, well-balanced Belgian-style Abbey Single from Southampton Publick House - both of which amazingly ran out within a minute of each other. High Point of Butler, NJ, appeared at the festival for the first time with their delicious Ramstein Pale Ale, a brew I had been impressed with at Friday the Firkinteenth (q.v.).

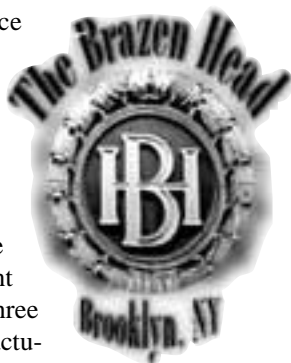
The list of great brews goes on, there were two from Heartland (Scotch Ale and Not Tonight Honey Porter). On the three 1938-vintage beer engines, between the Heartland Scotch and the Yorkshire Pub Ale could be found Coniston Bluebird XB, an easily quaffable Best Bitter from England. Ithaca, who are currently having distributor woes, provided their delicious Cascazilla IPA which lasted no time at all. Warwick Valley Winery supplied a firkin of their perry (hard pear cider) for the first time, while Blue Point - in addition to

the aforementioned Colonial brew - had a rare and potent blend of the last five years vintages of barleywine named 'Five Old Bastards'. Almost as potent, closing off the weekend on Saturday night and Sunday was a firkin of Victory Storm King Imperial Stout.

Many familiar faces were seen at the festival, the best yet for both range and attendance. It just shows the mighty pulling power of real cask-conditioned ale!

NEXT CASK FESTIVAL: 21st-23rd April 2006, The Brazen Head, 228 Atlantic Avenue, Brooklyn.

This article also appears in *The Gotham Imbiber*.



Brooklyn Conquers England!

Congratulations to Brooklyn Brewmaster Garrett Oliver, who recently was on a brewers' exchange to some British microbreweries. When there, he brewed a batch of Smoked Porter at the Kelham Island Brewery in Sheffield, South Yorkshire. He must be doing something right as this brew was voted Champion Beer of the Festival at the recent Bradford Beer Festival at Saltaire, West Yorkshire - beating over 110 other cask-conditioned ales! Cheers Garrett!

Thursday 23rd March 2006 - Barcade, Dogfish Head & The Pain Relieva.

Friday 24th March 2006 Ale Street News presents the ultimate Belgian tasting at the Chelsea Museum of Art. See <http://www.alestreetnews.com> .

Saturday 25th March 2006, 2pm - Mugs Ale House, MBAS annual Williamsburg pub crawl, meet at Mugs then on to another 5 great beer bars.

Wednesday 12th April 2006, 7.30pm - Mugs Ale House, MBAS monthly meeting. The guest speaker will be Steve Bayconich, NYC Sales Manager for Blue Point Brewery.

Saturday 15th April 2006, 1pm Split Thy Skull, Sugar Mom's Church Street Lounge, Philadelphia, PA.

Friday 21st-Sunday 23rd April 2006 - Brazen Head, 9th 'Cask Head' Cask Ale Festival, at least 18 casks will pour over the weekend.

Saturday 29th-Sunday 30th April 2006 TAP NY Beer Festival, Hunter Mountain, NY. See <http://www.tap-ny.com/> .

Wednesday 3rd-Saturday 6th May 2006 NERAX. The 10th annual New England cask ale extravaganza. See <http://www.nerax.org/> .

Friday 2nd-Sunday 4th June 2006 Glastonwick 2006, Shoreham-by-Sea, England. The 11th annual cask ale and music festival, the beer range (50+ rare casks) is courtesy of your MBAS President! See <http://www.cask-ale.co.uk/>



LOCAL BEER EVENT VENUES:

Barcade, 388 Union Avenue, Brooklyn 11211. Tel. 718 302 6464. <http://www.barcadebrooklyn.com/> .

Brazen Head, 228 Atlantic Avenue, Brooklyn 11201. Tel. 718 488 0430. <http://www.brazenheadbrooklyn.com/> .

Collins Bar, 735 8th Avenue, Manhattan 10036. Tel. 212 541 4206. <http://collinsbar.com/> .

David Copperfield's, 1394 York Avenue, Manhattan 10021. Tel 212 734 6152. <http://www.davidcopperfields.com/> .

Hop Devil Grill, 129 St. Marks Place, Manhattan 10009. Tel. 212 533 4467. <http://www.hopdevil.com/> .

Mugs Ale House, 125 Bedford Avenue, Brooklyn 11211. Tel. 718 384 8494. <http://www.mugsalehouse.com/> .

Spuyten Duyvil, 359 Metropolitan Avenue, Brooklyn 11211. Tel. 718 963 4140. <http://www.spuytenduyvilnyc.com/> .



Every Tuesday, 7 p.m.

191 Fifth Avenue, Park Slope, Brooklyn (at Union Street)

Weekly beer tasting and cheese pairing, sometimes featuring a guest speaker from the trade. Details: 718-230-7600

<http://www.bierkraft.com>

Alex Hall's

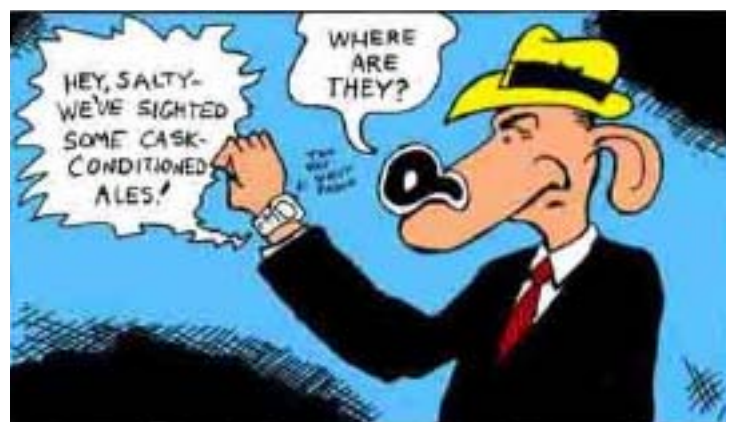
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