

## HOWARD and WENDY'S 10th BEER FESTIVAL

in The Half Moon, Hitchin

### RACS VISIT

Saturday April 26th

Eleven RACS and two RACLINGS set off from Sawbridgeworth, collecting Helen and Graham from Stondon, and arrived outside the Half Moon at 11.50am, where we joined the queue waiting for the pub to open at noon.

We had a splendid afternoon, after all

being able to choose from 65 beers and over 20 ciders, plus Wendy's super food (the plate of cheese and biscuits is unsurpassed), leaves little room for complaint. Some people went off to the market, but most of us just took advantage of a superlative beer festival.

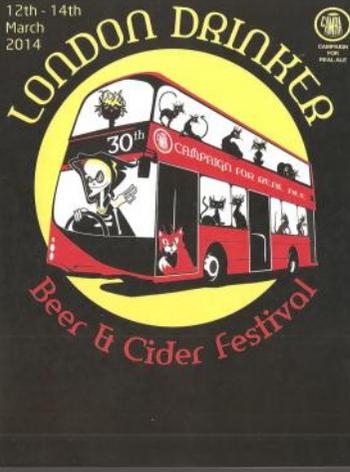


## Wednesday March 12th The London Drinker Beer Festival

Six **RACS** decided to attend the opening, lunchtime, session of this beer fest held in the Camden Centre. It featured 20 London brewers and more than 40 other brewers from all over Great Britain. It was a wonderful selection of beers and certainly all that we tasted were well kept and served. We tended to sample the pale beers, but we did have taste of the porter

from the Croydon-based brewer, The Cronx. Called Mad-Ass Chilli Porter, we failed to be blown away by the chilli — but perhaps that was because we had been eating chilli-cheese rolls for lunch, supplied by Jan. Deb and Jan managed to commandeer a table for us, so we were comfortable and near one of the bars. Although the hall soon filled up it was never too crowded. Harry and John made sure to buy their commemorative T-shirts and were seen wearing them a few days later—hard to miss Harry, his was a bright purple, while John's was a more sedate royal blue.

When the session closed at 3.00pm we were not yet ready to go home, so caught a bus a few stops on and went to the Bree Louise for a final beer. They had an amazing selection of beers on offer (and money off for CAMRA members!) and the weather was so fine we were able to sit outside to enjoy it, before making our way back to Liverpool Street Station.



### **The Bree Louise**

69 Cobourg St  
NW1 2HH

CAMRA North London  
Pub of the Year 2009-10  
Up to 20 real ales permanently available  
during London Drinker Festival-  
CAMRA members - 50p off a pint  
Perfect Pint App updated daily



**CONGRATULATIONS** are in order, yet again, for Wendy and Howard who run The Half Moon in Hitchin. Coming up to their 10th year Celebration beer festival (April 24th—27th) they have been nominated as

the Pub of the Year by the North Hertfordshire branch of CAMRA.

It is an award richly deserved. When they took over the pub in 2004, it was badly run down. Howard and Wendy have turned this around — Howard with his extensive knowledge of beer and beer keeping and Wendy with her amazing quiz and curry nights and the appetizing menu always available (particularly the plates of cheese, biscuits and pickle).

**WELL DONE BOTH OF YOU!**



## QUIZ NIGHT at the QUEEN'S HEAD, Allen's Green

Although the team from **RACS** did not win, it was a very good evening. There were six teams competing and the final scores were extremely close. The crafty questions were set by

Mark Sears while Chris did the Questionmastering job. Unravelling the anagrams in the interval break did exercise the little grey cells while the nibbles fed the inner person! As usual the beer selection was good and the beers were all in splendid condition.

The raffle raised over £30 for the Air Ambulance.

## Aphrodites Rock Brewery Visit - Cyprus

When Denise and I were in Cyprus in September last year we stumbled across a micro-brewery – Aphrodites Rock Brewery – which of course we had to visit. On the day before we were due to return to the UK we made the 15 minute trip to the brewery (which is located in an old winery in Tsada) only to find it had closed 30 minutes before we arrived.



We therefore made it our number one priority for our latest Cyprus trip at the end of March. Luckily the brewery's on-site bar – 'Bar T'at' had only reopened after the winter break the same week that we were out there. Upon arrival we were greeted by Melanie – the head brewer. The only problem with the location of the brewery is you really need to drive there. As Denise is non-driver that left my drinking capability very seriously weakened. However, the brewery do offer a five beer sampling 'paddle' for €3.50, which included a tour of the brewery, so we shared one.



The brewery have five core beers (all of which we sampled), and they occasionally brew specials for Xmas, etc. The five beers in the sampler are:

**Lian Shee** an Irish red ale at 4.5% abv with a malty taste.

**London Porter** at 4.5% abv was my personal favourite with chocolate/caramel flavours.

**West Coast IPA** at 6% abv was very light hoppy citrusy beer (Dods will love it).

**ESB** is a more traditional chestnut coloured bitter at 5% abv,.

**Yorshire Rose** at 3.8% is a "session" beer that in my view lacked a little flavour but was pleasant.

Having had the samplers Melanie took us on a tour. The brewery is family run with Melanie, parents and sister all involved in the running of the brewery. They have not had an easy ride while

setting up. It took 3 years for them to obtain their license due to the bureaucracy in Cyprus, and the fact that prior to them opening the only brewers in Cyprus were the big boys - Carlsberg and Keo – both of which put up strong resistance and made it very difficult for them. But they persevered and finally opened in May 2013. Unfortunately they also lost an enormous amount of money that was earmarked for expansion at that time when the Cypriot government 'stole' it during last year's Cyprus crisis.



The majority of the malts and hops that go into the beers are imported from the UK, but local ingredients are also used. All the brewing vessels were bought new from Asia. Last year most of their beers were cask or bottle conditioned. But Cypriots don't really know how to pour such beer or know about how to look after it. While Melanie and the family are trying to educate them, they expect much of the beer they will sell this year will be bright.



The brewery has in excess of 50 bars and pubs selling their beer around the Paphos region, and the list is growing all the time. Anyone that visits the Paphos region in Cyprus should try some of Aphrodites Rocks beers, and also visit the brewery if they get a chance – especially around October when they run their own beer festival.

As we couldn't sample too much beer at the brewery, before



***This is for those of you who are social animals, but may occasionally like to give the liver a rest:***

Due to a recent illness I was not allowed to drink alcohol for a time. Whilst wishing to continue going to the pub for social reasons I got fed up with the soft drinks on offer – you can only take so much orange juice.

Therefore I started looking at the non-alcoholic beers that were on offer.

All the ones I found were of lager or cloudy wheat beer style, I did not come across any of bitter or light ale style.

Most widely available was **Becks Blue**, this was all right for one bottle, but after that left an unpleasant after taste.

**Bitburger Drive** is available in Fuller's pubs and a few places elsewhere, this had a clean taste and was one of the best of the lager types.

**Holsten non-alcohol** was acceptable but a bit bland.

**Kaliber** made by Guinness was also rather bland and left a slight unpleasant aftertaste after two bottles. However it was a great improvement on the original version available in the 19 70s or 80s where it was distinctly unpleasant drink. Older readers will also remember Barbican which also had an unpleasant taste, but this seems to have disappeared.

**Cobra non-alcoholic**, which I found in supermarkets but not pubs, was quite nice if a little sweet.

**The Bavaria brewery** (which despite its name is Dutch) make lager and wheat beer style non-alcohol beers, again not in pubs, although I persuaded my local pub to stock it for me. Both of these were good, especially the wheat beer. This was found in bottles and cans.

The best beer I came across was **Erdinger wheat non-alcohol** (not in pubs generally) in a 500 ml bottle, you would hardly know this contained no alcohol, and it had no unpleasant aftertaste.

I came across one non-alcohol cider – **Koppaberg Pear**, this had a nice fruit taste but was rather sweet for those people used to drinking bitter, although that is also true of their "normal" products.

It appears the process now used to make non-alcohol products is *Reverse Osmosis*, for the non-technical this is a high pressure sophisticated filtration method which selectively removes molecules to a chosen size. It is a great improvement on the former methods which involved heat or chemicals and thus damaged the taste. Although described as non-alcohol, these beers had 0.05% alcohol quoted on the label which should not normally be a problem to those who need to drink them.

Most products were available in 275 or 330 ml sizes and were quite expensive considering they pay no excise duty. However, it made my enforced time "on the wagon" rather more bearable.

Wednesday September 24<sup>th</sup> Tony Littler Trophy at the Calthorpe Arms, Grays Inn Rd WC1 – Inter branch SPBW trophy currently held by Wantz branch who will organise the 2014 competition. Format & details nearer the event.

# RACS



## JOIN YOUR COUNTRY'S ARMY! GOD SAVE THE KING

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## A 20-Year low on British alcohol consumption

Britain's alcohol consumption is at its lowest level for nearly 20 years, new figures show. It fell by 2.1 per cent in 2013, to 7.7litres of alcohol a head, according to the British Beer and Pub Association. It is the seventh year in the past nine years to see a fall, with an 18



percent decline since 2004. The last time consumption per head was lower was in 1995, when it stood at 7.5litres.

Brigid Simmonds, BBPA chief executive, said: "We have now experienced a decade of falling alcohol consumption. While total consumption per head is not synonymous with alcohol-related harm, these are interesting figures as the percentage of those drinking at harmful levels has been falling, as has the number of under-18s drinking."

She said that the industry would continue to tackle alcohol misuse, adding that there were several encouraging trends.

Accurate, up-to-date figures were important for the debate, she said. For instance, lower alcohol beers and wines — which are often cheaper because they are subject to less tax — have become more popular in recent years.



*Back in 2003 and 2004 when RACS went on tour to Cornwall, we were shown round the Sharp's Brewery at Rock by Rhys — since then he has gone on to other things...*

The Harbour Brewing Co was started in 2011 by Brewer Rhys Powell and Eddie Lofthouse who share a passion for beer and surfing, both with the dream of opening their own brewery. Rhys had taken steps to make his dream a reality studying Brewing and Distilling at Heriot Watt University in Edinburgh, and having taken a position as a brewer at Sharps Brewery in Rock, North Cornwall. Eddie had been running the family business, The Atlantic Hotel and Doom Bar in New Polzeath, Cornwall, for a number of years. The Hotel and bar closed in early 2011 and is due to be rebuilt as a new hotel, apartment, restaurant and bar complex. This provided a perfect time to make a career change. In early 2011, they decided to take the dream a little further. they met in a pub in Padstow and decided they would open a brewery. The first thing they did was celebrate by drinking a few beers and deciding a name. It seemed a good idea to name ourselves after the place the idea was conceived, and Harbour Brewing Company was born. Starting from scratch, the opportunity was there to install a brewery system with the versatility to allow the brewing to be as creative as possible. Eddie found a 10 British Brewers Barrel (bbl) system designed in California, and built in Hungary, by the American firm Bavarian Brewing Technologies.

## **Hops and dreams**

**The Craft Beer Revolution: How a Band of Microbrewers Is Transforming the World's Favourite Drink.**

By Steve Hindy.

*A master microbrewer analyses a revolution*

TO THE uninitiated, American beer is fizzy dishwater. The informed tippler knows better. Walk into any of the thousands of craft-beer bars or brewpubs that have sprung up in recent years across the country and choose from an array of taps, perhaps a hoppy IPA, a delicate lager in the Pilsner style or an imperial stout with a hefty slug of alcohol. America still purveys some of the worst beer in the world, but it also brews much of the best. The craft-beer explosion is the reason why. In the past three decades a grassroots movement has turned into a big business. Microbreweries have gone from nowhere to slurping 10% of a market worth \$100 billion a year, though it is still dominated by two giant companies, Anheuser-Busch and MillerCoors. In "The Craft Beer Revolution" Steve Hindy, co-founder and president of the Brooklyn Brewery, one of America's most successful small beer makers, tells of the struggle to "bring down the Goliaths". Mr Hindy, like many microbrewing pioneers, got a taste for more flavoursome beers while living abroad and then turned his hobby into a business. Favourable legislation helped to turn a tide of consolidation that had left America with under 50 breweries by the 1970s. Today it has 2,500. Microbreweries and brewpubs laid the foundations in the 1980s. A decade ago a new bunch added a more businesslike approach to the idealism and dedication of the first wave, caring as much about margins and distribution deals as hops and malt. They were helped by the emergence of well-heeled, green-tinged consumers wanting local produce from farmers' markets, or indeed small breweries. These new customers were prepared to pay a hefty premium for it. Technology played a part too. Tiny brewers could

ill afford the giants' marketing budgets, but dedicated beer sites on the internet helped to spread the word about the latest tasty tipples. Social media has allowed brewers to talk directly to drinkers. Mr Hindy calls the internet "the greatest ally" of the movement. The first microbrewers in the 1980s were spurred on by a tax break for small breweries and the lifting of a prohibition-era ban on home-brewing. But turning out a lovingly-made and delicious beer was easier than turning a profit. The forerunner of the new craft-brewers, Fritz Maytag, great-grandson of a washing-machine magnate, bought Anchor Brewery in San Francisco in 1965 and struggled financially for years. New Albion Brewery, another trailblazer and inspiration for the first surge in microbrewing, went out of business in 1982, six years after it rolled out its first barrel.

The revolution has much further to run, according to Mr Hindy's thorough dissection of the business and portraits of the people at its core. Around 1,500 breweries are in the planning stage in America. But the giants are fighting back. They have invested in craft brewers to learn their tricks if not to make money. Some beer-lovers fear that large brewers could eventually use their power to beat the microbrewers at their own game. Anheuser-Busch and MillerCoors both make successful craft-like brews. Mr Hindy generously calls them gateway beers that will attract more drinkers to hard-core craft brews who will be unlikely to be fooled by mainstream beers masquerading as microbrews. Exclusivity is part of the appeal as much as the beers' complex and sometimes unusual flavours. And it is a trend that is spreading worldwide. Britain, whose ales inspired many American artisan beer makers, is witnessing a microbrewing boom. Beer buffs can prop up a bar, craft brew in hand, in unlikely outposts such as Azerbaijan and North Korea. As Mr Hindy rightly points out, "Once you taste a craft beer, there is no going back."