

Hank Speaks... **So Listen** by Hank Bienert

Instead of attending another session of the comedy/tragedy/psychological thriller called the monthly CCH meeting I went to England...and here's why. Last fall when the LA Rev Dept. was leaning on Monk for the uncollected tax bill, it was feared he would be arrested so the board (not to be confused with the bored although they often look/act alike) decided to find a place that had no extradition treaty for tax cheats and since Monk had slept through Spanish class, it would need be English speaking. I was chosen based on my past visits to the UK, my love of most things British and my possession of photos of various board members which would make my pix of recent sausage fest seem tame - who knew what strange preferences the board members have? There are parts of the UK that fit the tax haven description but when the threat went away, I was told me to take the trip anyway courtesy of CCH as "a reward for my service" or was it the photos? Although the free trip was appreciated, if more CCH members had paid their dues on time, we could've flown first class. And I did say we. The old ploy of "I'm stepping out to buy a gallon of milk" wouldn't hold up for more than a week, too short a time for that long an excursion so both Georgine and I went.

A trip to England back in 1996 had shown me what good beer could be... which led to a beer kit from my step kids... which led me to brewing. Which led in 2000 to this interesting hobby/ club.

Our impression on this trip was that London, never the most handsome European city because of a hodge-podge of classical Georgian mixed with thousands of Victorian brick buildings (Julia street X infinity) and crowded hovels (Tchoupitoulas street brick warehouses holding 8 apartments) peppered with areas of ugly concrete block structures rapidly built to replace the damage from German bombings of WW2, is still a mixed bag. The past few years and impending Olympics have seen much new work from a gush of foreign money as the world's wealthy from the third world flock there to live. When you are a well to do Arab/Chinese, you want more choices than the unattractive Muslim life/foods/climate or the Chinese experience of crowded, malodorous streets and the favorite snack of the Celestial Kingdom, fried chicken feet. These booms mean the entire east End and south bank are full of new construction of buildings generally of the same interest and appeal as the New Orleans city hall except for one that looks like a gherkin (Brit speak for pickle and another that looks like a glass cone).

On to the beer scene-

This time I noticed many more cask conditioned beers, a mixed blessing. I had brought a homebrew ale of this style to a meeting a few years ago. The low carbonation lets the malt and hops be more prominent and the feedback I got was mixed since most people seem to prefer the fullness that gas carbonation gives but IMHO, it is not so much the low carbonation but rather the degree of alcohol present that is the turnoff. I found German Keller bier which uses the same natural approach to be good as well as the English old/strong ales whereas bitters (3.5% alcohol) seem insipid. This "mild" style is much more prevalent in the UK which now has less of a beer drinking culture. Another big change was the pub food scene. It once was that "pub grub" was a locally produced surprise and it could be a negative or a positive one depending on who/what was in the kitchen and each place was unique but now the majority of pubs have joined an association and all the pubs in a group feature the exact same menu of good but not great pies, fish+chips and burgers/wraps. The two main groups are the Taylor Walker chain and the Nicholson chain, the last being historical buildings that haven't necessarily always been pubs. Each pub will offer beers particular to a certain brewery (so called linked pubs) but all now also offer guest beers which meant I could "get some Brains"(Brains is a Cardiff Wales brewery) in a pub in central London many miles from place of production-a relatively new and commendable phenomenon-like getting a Deschutes at an Abita linked place. Now that there is less emphasis on a night of heavy drinking, one sees the emergence of food oriented night life with nicely furnished places belonging to neither of the combines providing fine dining in the dining area in back of the place and usually needing reservations, the so called gastro pubs. Most pubs look alike being large open rooms in dark colors and sometimes chopped

up-visit Oscar's on Metairie road or the Bulldog as examples. The next level up would be like Winston's on Metairie road near the tracks (good fish and chips, BTW) but an especially fine one that would be in the highest tier in London as regards decor and cuisine is the upper class Irish/English gastro pub HERE in New Orleans, The Irish House on St Charles Avenue <http://www.theirishhouseneworleans.com/>

FWIW, my favorite London pubs are The Churchill for good Thai food but no better than Than-than in Gretna nor Bangkok in Riverbend and The Mall which offered a rib pie wherein the bone protrudes through the pastry cover giving visual as well as gustatory delight. From an decorative point of view we have enjoyed the Princess Louise, the Museum Tavern and the Black friar Pub. take a look- http://www.pubs.com/main_site/pub_details.php?pub_id=182

<http://www.taylor-walker.co.uk/pub-food/museum-tavern-bloomsbury/pid-C0747>

<http://www.nicholsonspubs.co.uk/theblackfriarblackfriarslondon/>

Blimey, Guv, wha' to quaff? (No extra charge for the Cockney accent) Rather than dwell on beers which aren't available here, I sought out the unusual ones that are here or have been described on the net as able to be cloned-

Meantime (a brewery in Greenwich) makes *Meantime London porter*

<http://www.meantimebrewing.com/our-beers/meantime-london-porter>

and **available** at the Rouse's downtown or airline at Labarre is *Wychwood's Hobgoblin*

<http://www.wychwood.co.uk/#/movies/hobgoblin/beers/2>

Some help on brewing these two can be had by listening to the podcasts of the Jamil show Can You Brew It? <http://thebrewingnetwork.com/shows/The-Jamil-Show>

Also consider clone recipes for Wells *Bombardier*, a tasty offering...here's a place to start

<http://www.homebrewtalk.com/f12/wells-bombardier-english-premium-bitter-clone-85480/>

The really adventuresome could try replicating the products of *Sharp's* brewed on a rock off the Cornwall coast <http://www.sharpsbrewery.co.uk> their Doom Bar and Chalky's bite/bark are the favs with the young professionals my London dwelling daughter hangs out with...bite's label mentions fennel and wheat. I urge those with analytical skills and adventurous enough to try cloning any of these keeping in mind of course the limitations on cloning I opined in an earlier post. If you can come even close you will be happy with the result, a singular libation which I trust you will share with this humble traveling scribe and those who can not clone any of these will receive my legendary forgiveness by performing a penitent act such as bringing me a beer of any quality type at the next meeting. The general summation of Georgine and myself is that the British ladies and gents, especially those in London are fine looking, well dressed, exceedingly polite mumbler who still don't know how to or don't care to season their food---much we encountered needed salt/pepper.

As always, Constructive comments are welcome via the Hopline ... for those uncomfortable with readin' n' writin' big words, please continue to mumble during meetings from the back row which is where I like to sit/sip/mumble...and where the afore mentioned free beer should be delivered

-- THNX Hank