

NAWB MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL FORM

Please note that membership fees are due on 1st July each year.
A Standing Order form is available on reverse if required.

INDIVIDUAL OR JOINT APPLICANTS

Names: please include Title, Forename & Surname (Please give member nos. if known)

1st person Membership No.

2nd person Membership No.

Address

.....

.....

County Post Code

Telephone numbers

e-mail address

Club/Circle/Guild Fee enclosed £

Cheques & Postal Orders payable to NAWB: £12 Single : £20 Joint Husband&Wife/Partners

CIRCLES AND FEDERATIONS

Name of Circle or Federation Membership No.

.....

Details of Representative (for all NAWB correspondence)

Name

Address

.....

County Post Code

Telephone numbers

e-mail address

Representatives Position..... Fee enclosed £

Cheques & Postal Orders payable to NAWB: £12 Circles and Federations

Notes: The fees quoted are annual amounts. Life membership is available at ten times the current annual fees for single and joint memberships only.

Existing members who require a receipt should enclose a stamped addressed envelope.

New members please enclose a first class stamp for post and packing.

All Membership correspondence and payments to be sent to the Membership Secretary

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Telephone 0191 2560 426



NEWS & VIEWS

**November
2016**

**The Journal of
The National Association of Wine and Beer makers (Amateur)**

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News & Views is your journal.

Your contributions are greatly appreciated

Please send any contributions you may have for the January edition by the end of December 2016. All contributions, long or short, will be very welcome. See editor's contact details on page 2.

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STANDING ORDER MANDATE

In order to save time and cost for your Association, and your own time, we strongly recommend that you use this standing order mandate for your annual membership payments. Please fill in the form below and send it to **your** Bank or Building Society, and notify the membership secretary that you are paying by this method.

Please fill in the areas as indicated. Thank you for using this method.

✂

To: The Manager,

Bank/ Building Society

Branch

Please pay:

Beneficiary's Bank: Royal Bank of Scotland Plc, Llandudno Branch

Sort Code: 16-24-14

Name: National Association of Wine & Beer-makers

Account Number: 11857449

The sum of

Quote my Membership Number:

Date of First Payment

and annually thereafter on 1st July.

Please debit my account: Sort Code:

 - -

Account Number:

Name of Account Holder(s):

Signature(s).....

Date

✂

Aniche Cellars, Hood River, Eastern Oregon specialises in French grapes and has a lady winemaker. Grape blends included Grenache/Picpoul/Viognier, Marsanne/Roussanne (very nice) and Cunoise/Cinsault/Mourvedre. The Merlot/Petit Verdot/Malbec/Cabernet Franc blend made a rather pleasant soft yet robust St Emilion style.

Treveri Cellars, Wapato (Yakima Valley), Washington is the only sparkling wine operation in this region, and has a German winemaker. Oddly, the sparkling wine was cheaper than most of the still wines we tasted. In addition to Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, they used Syrah in the Rose and for a Red, and had a Riesling demi sec.

Bonair Winery, Rattlesnake Hills (Yakima Valley), Washington. This estate winery was another to specialise in French grapes and styles. The range included a bone dry Gewurtzraminer, a Petit Verdot which needed aging and a fairly sweet Pinot Noir Rose. We also had a Gewutzraminer white port and a Touriga port which tasted rather earthy.

Island Vintners, Bainbridge Island, Seattle, Washington sold wines from 2 local wineries that buy in grapes from Yakima Valley and even Sonoma in one case. Had a sparkling and a dry Grenache Rose, before moving onto 3 reds – Sangiovese, Cabernet Franc and our favourite - a smooth Petit Verdot with blackberry, raspberry and soft tannins.

CHAIRMAN'S CHATTER

I had intended to stay off the subject of the Grainfather this time round, but events have conspired against me. We were holidaying in the United States (see later article) and I managed to schedule in a visit to a homebrew shop in order to replenish my stocks of Sparkaloid finings. I walked in the door and what is the first thing I see – A GRAINFATHER! As an aside, I browsed through the books section and discovered John Harrison's 'Old British Beers and how to make them'; the only British brewing book on show. To add insult to injury, I picked up a second prize at the Homebrew Festival of a £15 Grainfather voucher. Fortunately, I was able to use this to purchase a copper cleaning agent and some Mangrove Jack yeasts, so all was not lost. Just to clarify, my obsession with the Grainfather has been (fairly) tongue in cheek. My main reason for not getting one myself is that I tend to usually brew small volumes because I don't drink beer in large quantities nor have immediate family to help me. I actually enjoy the brewing process and experimenting just as much as the drinking.

Anyway, enough of the Grainfather – subject closed (probably). I have got involved in quite a bit of beer judging since I last wrote this piece. At the Homebrew festival, I was pressed into service as convenor of judges when Phill Turner was taken ill, and was faced with the problem of 17 ciders to be judged. My call for volunteers was met with stony silence by the assembled BJCP judges, so I had to do them myself. Funnily enough I quite enjoyed it – always good to take on a new challenge. Then there was the UK National Homebrew Festival in Bristol. Here I got the short straw of wooded and smoked beers, most of which were based on imperial stouts. I think we had 17 of those as well. Again, although not really to my personal taste, they were much better than expected, especially the wooded ones. Finally there was the SIBA (Small Independent Brewers Association) Eastern region competition. To my surprise, although there were some very good beers, there were two or three that I would have poured down the sink had I made them. And they charge for these beers! These shows provided differing ends of the spectrum in judging speed with our own NGWBJ approach somewhere in the middle. The SIBA show judging was quicker than ours as there are no comments to write, whilst as many of you know, the BJCP process can be a little tortuous.

Another significant event since the last newsletter was of course the Brexit vote. I suppose there could be benefits for homebrew if the price of imported wine goes up and we can't bring back so much from the continent, but I am not holding my breath. I was contacted shortly before the vote by someone conducting an EC survey. The European Commission Directorate General for Taxation and Customs Union (DG TAXUD) had commissioned a consulting firm to carry out a retrospective evaluation of Council Directive 92/83/EEC. The Directive concerns the harmonisation of the structures of excise duties on alcohol and alcoholic beverages in the European Union. As part of this research, they were carrying out case studies on the implementation of exemptions and reduced rates for the private production of alcohol for own consumption. Sounds ominous - might be a good thing being out of that one!

On the winemaking front, I have had a few minor disasters with corks flying out of bottles this summer. I put this down to my reduced use of sorbate in recent times following the odd occurrence of geranium. Although I always use sulphite with sorbate, this can wear off with time especially with blending. I think I may have to review this policy. I have also been experimenting with some old recipes from Amateur Winemaker using malt extract rather than grape juice or concentrate. This is OK for sweet wines, but wouldn't work for dry as there seem to be some unfermentable sugars. My grape crop is much reduced this year partly due to grey rot, probably induced by my failure to spray before I went off on holiday. I have been given some Black Hamburg grapes however, which due to the sunny weather in August and September seem to have ripened quite well this year. I did once make a passable Rose from these grapes. I also have lots of beetroot!

Please read the new schedule carefully this year as there are some subtle changes. One for the beer makers is that we have defined an English IPA as we also have American IPA as our guest beer. Also, we have a couple of special recipes for our 60th show in 2018 for you to think about. Well must go now – I have a lot of new beers to brew for the Wales and West and it will soon be Xmas!

Cheers

Peter Robinson

wines here. High quality establishment where we bought our most expensive wine – an Old Vines Zinfandel.

D'Argenzio, Santa Rosa (Sonoma), California- as the name implies, this winemaker specialises in Italian grapes. Our 5 wine tasting turned into 8, including a dry still Moscato and an Aglianico.

Sonoma Portworks, Petaluma (Sonoma), California – specialises in ports, sherries and grappas. We were not too keen on the sherry (infused with hazelnuts), but the Petit Verdot port was rather nice. As a bonus we got to taste the grappa with figs marinated in it.

Kendall Jackson, Healdsburg (Sonoma), California – has a tasting room styled as a Loire chateau. The gardens contained 26 labelled grape varieties plus a collection of fruits and herbs associated with them. They did Bordeaux blends as well as the classic American varieties. Unfortunately the Pinot Noir we bought was a Chardonnay!

Reustle, Roseburg (Umpqua Valley), Oregon – lovely setting where we tasted out on the terrace, with accompanying food and a dog named Syrah. Had an excellent Gruner Veltliner as well as their speciality Syrah and a sweet Muscat.

Springfield Cellars, Albany (Willamette Valley), Oregon – a small place on the outskirts of town, where we sampled 4 wines including an interesting Pinot Noir port.

Naked Winery, McMinnville (Willamette Valley), Oregon – no connection to our own Naked Wines, but some fairly risqué descriptions. We had a number of samples ranging from Wanderlust White (a picnic blend in plastic bottles) to Orgasmic Meritage (a Bordeaux blend from Columbia aged in oak, at \$60 a bottle).

Eyrie Vineyards (Willamette Valley), Oregon – One of the older vineyards in the area – first plantings of Pinot Noir were in 1965 and it was the first vineyard to plant Pinot Gris outside Europe. Very into Pinot – Blanc, Gris, Meunier and Noir. Their original vines Pinot Noir sells at \$80. We also tasted their 1978 Merlot.

Stave and Stone, Hood River, Eastern Oregon – very good tasting with accompanying nibbles. Had a very nice medium dry Riesling and a Burgundian style Pinot Noir. An unusual blend of Zinfandel, Merlot, Syrah, Tempranillo and Barbera didn't really work though. Maybe a bit young and confused as to what it was meant to be.

ESB made with Goldings hops and Crystal Malt and an Oatmeal Stout as part of our tasting flight.

Rockbottom, Portland, Oregon - serve beer in English pints (and had the Euros on TV). Amongst our sample were a Kolsch, a honey beer, a Belgian Golden Ale and a tea infused red ale.

Fathead, Portland, Oregon. We wanted to visit Deschutes, but there was a 50 minute wait, so we went here instead – possible our least favourite –but OK. Headhunter IPA at 87 IBUs was seriously hoppy and Bean Me Up with coffee and chocolate notes seemed like a strong sweet stout (7.2%).

Full Sail, Hood River, Oregon. July 4th lunchtime and there was a long queue of people waiting for a table in the garden with a view of the river. We walked straight inside and got a table. Beers here were not too hoppy – had a very mellow amber ale and a refreshing well balanced IPA.

Yakima Craft Brewing, Yakima, Washington – a bit more like an English pub – snacks and a dartboard. They also had an English IPA, an ESB and a Scottish Ale. All the brewpubs we visited were very friendly, but this was the most welcoming. Probably needs to be as Yakima itself is a bit of a dump!

Iron Horse, Ellensburg, Washington – just a small place with one of the more imaginative food menus around. Session Ale and IPA went well with the meal and we finished up with Irish Death (7.8%), an imperial stout.

Old Stove, Seattle, Washington – close to Pike Market this was another ‘proper’ pub which just did snacks. Plenty of alcohol around with a Wee Heavy Scotch Ale and a Double IPA both weighing in at 9.0%. Also had an amber lager and a chocolate porter. The excellent local Cheddar was a good match with the IIPA, taking the hoppiness off a bit.

Rockbottom, Seattle Washington. The same chain as Portland, but only the Kolsch was the same. Had a Helles Lager and American Wheat beer to make a change and also a very nice Irish Red Ale before finishing up with an American Oatmeal Stout.

Annex B – Wineries/Tasting Rooms Visited

Borgetto, Santa Cruz, California – we visited the tasting room in Monterey. They specialise in Pinot Noir, but they were quite expensive so we went for the Pinot Grigio.

Romilly, Santa Rosa (Sonoma), California – we got a private tasting of 4

Joyce Upton 1925 - 2016

Joyce was born in Waltham Abbey, Essex but during the depression the family moved to Perry Barr, an inner city area in the north of Birmingham, so that her father could find a job. She was educated there at Canterbury Road School and although she passed the 11+ she elected to remain with her friends at Canterbury Road and not to go on to the Grammar School.

Joyce trained as a Comptometer Operator and managed a small office of girls many of whom remained good friends for the rest of their lives. Joyce met her husband to be, Jack, on the bus that they both took to work and they were married in Perry Barr in 1948. In 1953 Jack took up a position as an Electrical Draughtsman in Plymouth and the family, now including twins David and John, moved to Saltash. Whilst there she nursed both her father and mother though ill health, and later Jack’s sister Kath.

Both Jack and Joyce were founder members of Plymouth and Saltash Wine Circles. Sadly Jack developed Asbestosis and Joyce nursed him as well until he died in 1981.

Joyce maintained that whilst Jack was alive he was always the dominant partner but that when he died she determined not to become an isolated widow but rather to continue in the Wine Circle movement which they had enjoyed together. Through this she made many new friends and flourished. Going on to become a National Wine Judge, she was also on the committee of both Plymouth and Saltash Wine circles, the National Guild of Wine and Beer Judges, the Cornish Wine Circles Association, Chair of the South West Regional Group of Judges, and Past President of the South West Counties Federation.

Joyce had an excellent palate and was renowned for her swift and confident style of judging. She was always keen to help with the training of new judges. Joyce continued judging until her late eighties when, despite still having all her mental faculties, her lack of mobility meant that she preferred to stay at home.

Joyce will be fondly remembered not only as a good judge but as a kind and loyal friend.

Hywel Edwards

I have known Joyce, (Joycie), Upton for some 29 years after being introduced to her at my first ever wine circle meeting in Plymouth. We immediately hit it off with both our senses of humour being the same and spent many hours at the various social events.

I became interested in the competition side of the home brewing hobby and Joyce encouraged me to enter a few club competitions where hers, mine and another great friend, sadly no longer with us, (Tom Smith), interest extended into judging with a well-known national judge at the time, (Hilda Wallace), who took us under her wing teaching us how to judge at our homes where we made it a social evening. I always looked forward to having these sessions at Joyce's home as she was a superb cook and her wine cellar seemed to be bottomless!

Joyce became a close personal friend of our family and was the first to visit the hospital when Sam was born and to this day he calls her "Oma", (which I believe is German for Granma).

It was also at about this time my interest extended into beer making and Joyce being Joyce soon took on the challenge of brewing where we all joined the local brewing circle, (called TABA), Tothill Amateur Brewers Association), and regularly took on the might of the well know top brewers of the country at the national where we all won major prizes. I will always remember Joyce's absolute delight at winning the 1st prize for brown ale at one of the nationals along with many other top awards over the years.

Joyce had a superb palate and it was a joy to sit near her at judging sessions where her knowledge and good humour would always be appreciated.

Sadly I lost contact with Joyce some years ago, something I regret in not making the effort to sit down with her. Probably because she had, as she put it, "Stingy fingers", that would have come my way!

I'm sure she is up there somewhere with her departed husband whom she missed terribly and is survived by her Brother and twin sons David and John.

The home brewing hobby and indeed the world is a poorer place without Joyce.

RIP Joycie.

Philip Hardy

Fogbelt, Santa Rosa, California – we went for the full range tasting of 8 beers. This was very like an English pub – we sat up at the bar and chatted with the locals. Their seriously hoppy IPA had an expiry date of 07/27 on the bottle. Armstrong Stout was more English in style – made with Maris Otter and Fuggles.

Lagunitas, Petaluma, California – an enormous place and absolutely packed. In addition to the tour, they had live music and free nibbles with your beer. Their Imperial Stout at 9.9 % was like a dark barley wine.

Bear Republic, Healdsburg, California – tasted 6 beers with Sunday lunch including an American Brown and a Rye IPA. Our favourite was the Big Bear Black Stout (8.1%) which was like a blend of dry, sweet and imperial stouts.

Wildcard, Redding, California – one of the few brewpubs which didn't do food, although you could order in pizza. The beers were very good though. Among them a Ruby Red Grapefruit IPA, an Imperial Red Ale and an Oatmeal Porter containing 5 malts as well as rolled oats.

Bricktown East, Medford, California – another excellent set of beers with our fish and chips. Our favourite here was Runaway Train India Red Ale. Although the IBUs were labelled as 100+, it was not overpoweringly hoppy. Darth Kreiger's Russian Imperial Stout weighed in at 11.0 % - the highest alcohol of the holiday.

McMenamin's Station Pub, Roseburg, Oregon – having arrived in Oregon, we were struck by the lower alcohol, the top value at this place being 6.5%. A definite emphasis on easy drinking – we had a refreshing wort hopped Golden Ale and a Raspberry beer before finishing up with Rio Red - Red Caramalt and Zythos hops.

Planktown, Springfield, Oregon – found by accident due to an accident on the freeway. Another set of low alcohol beers - ideal for lunchtime. We did the dark beers set – Streetcar Stout was the best – rich, smooth and full bodied.

Block 15, Corvallis, Oregon – this small town had 7 breweries. Block 15 specialises in German style beers amongst its selection of 18. We had a Kolsch, an unfiltered Pilsner and a Schwarzbier before finishing up with Ab-originale, a dry hopped amber ale containing 7 malts and 3 hops.

Golden Valley, McMinnville, Oregon – specialises a bit in Brett beers – had 4 including Blackberry and fig! We avoided these and enjoyed Red Thistle

We only did one formal brewery tour at Lagunitas in Petaluma, California. This was quite entertaining, especially the story of how it all started. The founder was quite a failure in his early business career. He was having drink problems, so his family bought him a brewing kit for Christmas – does this sound like a good idea for someone with drink problems? Then after about 10 brews he decided to go commercial. After a number of adventures, the business took off and the rest is history!

The Wines

There have also been a number of changes on the wine front, with a wide range of grapes being experimented with. We encountered Albarino, Gruner Veltliner, Aglianico, Petit Verdot, Sangiovese, Marsanne, Picpoul etc as well as all the more usual grapes. Also whereas they used to go for single varietal wines, now there is a lot of grape blending although sometimes I think they overdo it. All in all we tasted just 86 wines; well, we had to fit in beer as well. Most places charged for wine tasting, but would often refund the cost if you bought something. It should be said that we often got additional tastings above and beyond the standard set. Whether they liked our accent or they felt sorry for us due to the collapse in the £ or they recognised we knew a bit about wine I'm not sure. We were particularly privileged to taste a 1978 Merlot (the year we got married). Many of the vineyards seem to operate club schemes where their customers receive discount for regular orders and may get invited to tastings of new vintages.

The prices of decent wine were quite high it should be said. I think the most expensive we tasted was about \$60 a bottle and we bought an old Vines Zinfandel for \$46 – that was at pre-Brexit exchange rates. Funnily enough we didn't taste a vast amount of Pinot Noir which is my favourite grape. One of the few bottles of Pinot that we bought proved a big let-down. We arrived at the hotel, got the food out, unwrapped the wine and found it was a bottle of Chardonnay. This was at the only hotel we stayed in without a fridge in the room – so warm Chardonnay it was.

Annex A – Breweries Visited

Half Moon Bay, California – excellent restaurant with sea view. Beeramisu (see above) a speciality. The sponge is soaked in Saison and the Power Windows Porter (7.4%) goes very nicely with it.

Russian River, Santa Rosa, California – this was packed for lunch at 11.30! High alcohol beers were limited to 3 per person. They did a nice classic Irish stout that slipped down well, but Elaine liked the Strong Dark Ale (9.0 %), which was smooth and chocolatey.

DRINKS IN JAPAN

The strangest drink I had was called Hydrogen & Coconut Water, which just tasted of coconut water. A Japanese lady wrote that drinks with added hydrogen were consumed by young ladies who seek beauty, saying that it removes active oxygen from the body and is good for anti-ageing. Some even bathe in hydrogenated water. It can be bought on Amazon. The fad is now spreading to America. I see no scientific justification for it, with the solubility of hydrogen under normal conditions of only 0.0016 gram/litre, so the unpresurised 300 ml which I drank contained less than 0.0005 g of hydrogen. It did not noticeably anti-age me!

Its producer's website states that that their nano-technology has made it possible for the product to contain 1.6 parts per million hydrogen. According to my calculations, 1.6ppm is 0.0016 g/l, so why is nano-technology invoked? 300 ml also contains 36mg silica and due to coconut water 750mg potassium per 300ml, so they do not recommend it for those who have a kidney trouble. The water is drawn from groundwater in southern Aso, the earthquake-stricken area of Kumamoto, Kyushu. I experienced that 7.3 Richter scale earthquake when I was in Hiroshima in April, not far from Kyushu Island. The whole hotel at 1.23 a.m. shook violently but there was no panic or public announcement. Breakfast and train services were normal that morning.

The four whiskies (not whiskeys) which I tried were all very good single malts, 43% alcohol, including a 21-year-old Suntory Hibiki, which had a big, complex bouquet, an excellent fairly peaty flavour and great length.

The beers were mainly lager in style, although other types were available. I enjoyed a Kyoto beer, 'Originated in 1995, this is Kyoto's first craft beer. Brewed with "YAMADA-NISHIKI", a superior rice for SAKE'. 5% alcohol. Curiously, their website states that their beers are made in accordance with German purity laws, only malt, hops and water. It also states that: 'Everyone knows Kizakura as a top Japanese sake producer. However, they are also the first company to produce a local micro brewery beer way back in 1995. Using the same pure water they use for making sake, these beers are fresh with a full of rich taste. There are two types of Kizakura's beers: the Kyoto Bakushu (beer) series and the Nile series. The Nile series was produced in cooperation with the Egyptian archeology department of Waseda University (Tokyo) and the plant genetic knowledge possessed by Kyoto University. Two universities cooperated together and successfully recreated the Nile series using ancient Egyptian barley. Experience the taste of ancient Egypt in Kyoto!' That is an

unusual claim. I deplored the prominent ‘greengrocer’s apostrophe’ on tins and posters for Suntory beer, ‘The Premium Malt’s’.

Before this holiday, I had not liked sakés that much, warm or at room temperature. In Japan I chose to have them chilled and they became my choice with dinner. The bouquet seemed much better that way. With the excellent local Hida beef, I had a small flask of saké with an inlet tube containing an ice cube, cooling but not diluting the drink. At the London Wine Fair, I went to the saké tasting and tried not to laugh when the charming young lady presenter kept talking about making it from lice.

In Osaka, I was extremely lucky as I wanted to taste a range of Japanese wines. I was walking to see the castle when I found a ‘Craft Wine Holiday’ event, with stalls down both sides of a long avenue. For about £23 I was given a decorated tasting glass and ten tasting tickets, and eventually bought more. The wines were from many regions (prefectures) in Japan, some made from indigenous grapes and many from standard ones such as Chardonnay, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Muscat (red and white). Some of the reds were too young and tannic for me, but others – white, red, rosé, still or sparkling – were very pleasant. Fermenting in oak is common. Some of the wineries go back to 1890. I liked a server’s T-shirt with the legend, ‘NO WINE, NO LIFE’.

The food in hotels and restaurants was very good, usually served in non-matching china, with different colours, tastes and textures in each course, with the ingredients beautifully arranged. Often there were little candle-type heaters on the table for one or more dishes, to cook them. In the ryokan (traditional Japanese inn) in Kyoto there was a list headed ‘A Typical Japanese Meal’, and I was served with all the courses listed: aperitif; hors d’oeuvre; soup served before main dish; “sashimi” style raw fish (I had squid, prawn, salmon and a white fish); steamed fish stuffed or layered with steamed glutinous rice; assorted delicacies of various ingredients; broiled fish and meat; the ryokan’s famed own original dish; vinegary delicacies; vegetables well cooked with various ingredients; miso-shiru soybean soup; boiled rice; pickled vegetables; fruit in season. It was a very good, long dinner, but I pity any Japanese housewife who has to prepare such elaborate meals every day.

A Japanese lady told me that at home she does not prepare such enormous meals every day, but provides at least 3 to 4 dishes each time: hors d’oeuvre, soup (vegetable or miso), a small dish of vegetables and a main dish (fish or meat).

Bernard Lamb

We visited a number of unusual museums covering topics such as the history of Wells Fargo (including a real stagecoach); a hop museum, a telephone museum, and a Gold Rush Museum in Seattle. There was also a carousel museum in Albany, Oregon and a couple of towns with murals displayed on various building walls and boards. We drew the line at a pinball museum in Seattle however. We also toured the Shasta Dam in Northern California and visited Ashland, Oregon at the time of their Shakespeare Festival. That’s all the culture dealt with!

The Beers

I recall a time gone by when you just forgot about drinking beer in America. It was too cold and completely tasteless. How that has all changed. Everywhere you go there are brewpubs serving a wide range of good quality, interesting beers. The only town that didn’t have a brewery had a hop museum instead. A couple of pleasant surprises were that the beer in general was not served too cold (except in the taprooms and restaurants) and that the hops weren’t as overpowering as I had expected. The one to watch out for was Zythos – a seriously hoppy hop. The beer menus were also excellent, often having tasting notes as well as gravities, IBUs, ingredients and sometimes even SRM value. The brewpubs were almost always busy, with lots of young people, many of them women. And nearly everyone has a beard (except for the women). They also have long happy hours – one place was 11-6! There is a tendency to close quite early though. Outside of major cities, 10.00 is about as late as it gets.

The other good thing was the availability of sample trays of a range of beers. By drinking these we were able to keep consumption down such that it was safe for me to drive. We would often go to a brewpub for lunch and then buy food to have in our hotel room with a bottle of wine bought during a wine tasting. The alcohol content of the beers was also not quite as high as expected, once we got out of California and into Oregon and Washington..

According to my records we tasted 104 different beers covering a total of 39 BJCP styles. Our most commonly tasted beer was unsurprisingly American IPA with 17 samples, followed by American Amber Ale with 10. The American styles are a little different from our NGWBJ definitions in the dark beers although obviously they conform to BJCP styles. In general, I thought that their stouts tasted like a light porter and the porters like a strong mild, although we had a few Imperial Stouts as well.

Impressions

Well everything about America is big. The distances between places are vast; the mountains make ours look like hills; the cars and lorries are big; the food portions are enormous and of course the people are (with a few exceptions) huge. We have been over there on several trips, but this was our first for eight years and that was only a short visit to attend a wedding. Funnily enough for the country that has brought all sorts of technical innovation to the world, America can seem like a 3rd world country. You still have to sign credit card slips and the satellite coverage for phones and Satnav is sporadic at best.

The thing that has changed most is the beer, which I shall come to below. The other thing that really surprised me is that Americans seem to have realised there is a world outside America. There was a lot of coverage and interest in Brexit and this proved quite a good ice breaker in bars. After the referendum, when anyone found out we were British they would ask ‘how are you feeling today?’ It may have something to do with the Donald (Trump not Duck). They even had the Euros on TV which enabled me to see England being outclassed by Iceland.

As suggested above, eating is a major part of the lives of Americans. They think nothing of driving 30 or 40 miles to a restaurant, will wait an hour for a table (few restaurants over there take bookings), then they wolf down vast quantities of food in about 30 minutes before heading home (usually with a doggy bag). They also seem to eat out a lot judging by how full all the restaurants are. Two places we went to for lunch was packed at 11.30. Perhaps they can't cook – they don't seem to have all the cookery programmes on TV that we do. My personal observation of eating habits and menus suggests that 80% of meals consumed out there are either burgers or pizzas.

We generally ate in the brewpubs which were good value although not always exciting. To keep the portions manageable we would often have a main course and a salad and share. We only got to pudding twice on the whole trip, but one of these (shared of course) was the beeramisu at Half Moon Bay Brewery, which was to die for. Our culinary highlight was probably Phil's Fish Market at Moss Landing named “one of the 5 best beach restaurants in the world” by BBC Travel. We discovered this place by accident due to getting lost. Great atmosphere and wonderful fresh fish, but totally unpretentious.

A GRANDFATHER LIVING WITH A GRAINFATHER

The Grainfather has featured quite prominently in Peter's Chairman's Chatter column so it is time to even things up with an article by a user of the equipment. I understand that at the forthcoming National there will be a Friday night tasting of beers some made using the Grainfather and some not. It is all a bit of light hearted rivalry, good brewers will make good beer regardless of the equipment used. - Editor.

Some time ago I decided that the time had come to review my beer making. Over the years I had accumulated an awful lot of “stuff” Mash tuns, boilers, fermenting vessels etc. all of which were taking up a lot of space. The time had come to downsize.

Looking on the internet there seemed to be two main contenders, a Speidel Braumeister which comes from Germany and a Grainfather from New Zealand. Both were self contained and had a small footprint, exactly what I was looking for. Further research via U tube revealed a side by side comparison of the two, both systems performed well with the Braumeister just edging ahead. The Braumeister has a far more sophisticated control unit allowing various pre-programmed mash and boil steps to be carried out automatically. Built with typical German engineering it is a superb piece of kit. However all of this comes at a cost and at around £1,200 it is nearly twice the cost of the Grainfather. However I was still undecided.

A few weeks later at the national I was talking to Kevin Martin who said that he had a grainfather and that he was very pleased with it. The final push I needed was when Alan Eldret said that he also had a Grainfather and could bring it to our next Essex judges meeting. This he duly did and I along with Geoff Fryer were certainly impressed with it. One week later I was the proud owner of a Grainfather.

Delivery was rapid and assembly was straightforward. On to the first brew. I decided to brew a straightforward bitter, so after following the instructions on the initial cleaning I was ready to go.

There is a simple formula to follow to calculate the initial amount of mash water, so in this went, add the inner grain basket [this has solid sides with a perforated top and bottom plate] set the temperature control to 67 degrees and wait for it to achieve this, which it did fairly rapidly. Now dough in the grain, making sure it's well mixed, and put on the top perforated plate. Damn, when I initially cleaned the unit I had left the top plate in the grain basket. So

out came all of the hot malt, remove the top plate, tip the malt back in and finally add the top plate. Now for the clever bit. Add the glass top, connect the recirculating arm and switch on the pump. This constantly pumps and recirculates the liquor through the malt and the heater keeps the temperature constant. There is no need to pre-heat to a strike temperature.

Once mashing is finished the inner basket is lifted up and sits on 3 internal brackets allowing the wort to be sparged and drain down. Switch the heater to boil, remove the grain basket, add hops and boil.

Now for another nice touch. The unit comes with a counter flow chiller so once boiling is finished the chiller is attached and the chilled wort can be pumped directly into your fermenter. Cleaning is a doddle, everything is made from stainless steel and can quickly be washed down. It all packs away neatly and takes up very little storage space.

The next brew that I made was a lager and I used a step infusion mash, not because I needed to, but because it was easy to do. Set the temperature for the first step and the unit will hold it there until you set the next temperature step. On the Braumeister these can be programmed to step up automatically but I don't find it too onerous to check my watch and do it manually. After all, a few minutes here or there is not really going to matter too much.

I believe that a revised control unit is under development to give more automation to the temperature steps. But at around £100 to upgrade I don't think I'll be bothering.

The one thing the unit could do with are external handles to lift it by.

One final thing, you can purchase an Alembic Pot Still unit to make your own spirits. Custom and Excise allowing of course.

Mike Davey

CHANGES OF E-MAIL ADDRESSES

Please note that some of the E-mail contacts for Committee members have changed. The changes are because the old e-mail addresses were attracting large volumes of junk mail. Please ensure that you use the new contact addresses for future e-mails.

Also please remember that if you change your e-mail address that you notify Elaine Robinson. She regularly has a few e-mails bounce back

BEER, WINE, MOUNTAINS AND MUSEUMS (A Tour of the West Coast of America)

The Trip

We started out with a few days in LA, staying with a friend of ours. This was a good idea to get over the jet lag and come to terms with the heat. This part of the trip was fairly non-alcoholic as our friend is almost teetotal. But she did insist that we consume a rather nice bottle of 2009 Bordeaux that she had been given. Other than that, pomegranate tea looks a bit like beer and is very refreshing, but it's not quite the same!

Having picked up our hire car, we headed up the coast to San Simeon, visiting Hearst Castle for the 3rd time (we have now done all the tours). On the first day of travel, the temperature varied between 66-114 deg F often changing by as much as 20 degrees over a few miles. From there we headed up the coast road staying at Salinas which we used as a base to go whale watching and visit Monterey. We then navigated our way through San Francisco, via the Golden Gate Bridge en route to Sonoma where we spent 3 nights and tasted a lot of wine and beer. It was now time for the great outdoors and we visited Lassen Volcanic Park and Crater Lake where there was still snow in late June.

By now we were in Oregon and we worked our way up through the Willamette Valley on our way to Portland. Here we were able to make use of the good public transport system to make our way round Portland (and its breweries) – there are over 100 of them. We drove down by the Colorado Gorge to Hood River on July 4th, seeing Mount Hood most of the way and indulging in more wine and beer! It was then time for more mountains as we headed into Washington arriving in the Yakima Valley via Mount St Helens (the volcano that erupted) and Mount Rainier National Parks. Yakima is another good wine area and is also the largest hop growing region in the States.

The final leg of our journey took us to Seattle for a three night stay. This is not a good place to drive so we caught the bus into town. You won't be surprised to hear that Seattle has quite a few breweries as well! We also enjoyed the famous Pike Market and went across to Bainbridge Island on a ferry where we happened to find ourselves wine tasting. It was a tough trip!

All in all, we drove 2500 miles. The journey back was a bit lengthy as we had to fly back via LA. To fly directly back from Seattle would perversely have been much more expensive.