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# Baron Mind

A Monthly Publication for the Beer Barons of Milwaukee  
*Dedicated to the Education and Enjoyment of Fermented Malt Beverages*

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May 1993

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## Beer Drinking in Europe

by John Watt

Well, I finally got my chance to taste some real Real Ale, some real Bier de Guard, and even some real Lambic, Geuze, Faro, Trappist Ale, you name it! And it was 'real good.'

What do I mean by 'real?' Well, I mean I got to taste it where they make it. I had to take a business trip to France and London in February (poor me!), and I had a few vacation days so I could pop over to Belgium on the train after I was done with the work.

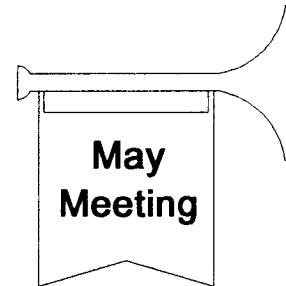
After coming home from my long absence, I thought I ought to share some of my beer drinking experiences with my Beer Baron friends and hopefully pass on a few tidbits, maybe even enough to convince some of you to make your own way to Europe. I can only say that beer drinking in Europe is extremely enjoyable, and I highly recommend it. I would suggest that if you have a choice that you go some other time than winter, because the cold weather and short days will slow you down a bit. And I was really wishing I could have been enjoying some of those wonderful brews on a sidewalk cafe instead of inside a smoky brasserie.

What were my favorites? Pretty much all of them, to be honest. The real ales in London were really great. The beer actually comes from a wood cask in the basement, and they use a 'beer engine' (which is a type of hand pump) to pump it up and into your glass. And the beers are a little warm, like you've heard. The first few sips seemed a little too warm to me, but then I 'warmed up' to the concept and decided I really liked it that way quite a lot. I managed to stop into a number of pubs during my three days in London, and they all provided me with high quality bitters, stouts, and strong ales (I didn't think that the strong ales were all that strong). Typical price for a pint of real ale: 1.50 pounds, or about \$2.25 (includes tip and tax).

France doesn't have quite the variety of beers available, because they really do like their wine. Surprisingly, Belgian beers were almost always available in the little French grocery stores, as well as in many cafes.

The French Kronenbourg brewery makes a special 'brune' style beer which I had with a pizza one night, and it was delicious. It tasted a lot like a barley wine. One night I enjoyed a traditional *bier de guard* and it was quite delicious, too. A *bier*

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The May monthly meeting is at 7:30 p.m. on May 26th at Clifford's (10418 W. Forest Home Ave, Hales Corners). This meeting will be all about malts. The featured speaker will be Mary Anne Gruber from Briess Malting of Chilton, Wisconsin. Commercial examples of wheat beers will be available for sampling that evening. As always, you are encouraged to bring some questions about homebrewing with to the meeting.



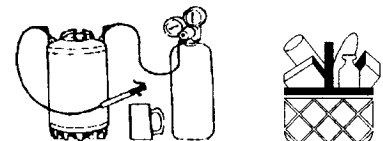
## Calendar of Meetings and Other Events

**May 26th** - Speaker for this meeting will be Mary Anne Gruber from Briess Malting of Chilton, Wisconsin.

**May 31st** - Scottish Ale Club Only Competition (Mike Bishop's entry will representing our club)

**June 19th** - Beer Barons' picnic

## Annual Picnic



The annual Beer Baron's picnic will be held on Saturday, June 19th. We will be discussing the format of the picnic at the next monthly meeting.

Gary Metzger has agreed to organize the event. The club will probably donate a keg and food will be available. We are asking everyone to bring \$3.00 and a 6-pak of beer (preferably homebrew) to pass. Mark your calendar.

## Beer Drinking in Europe by John Watt

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*de guard* typically comes in a 750 ml bottle with a cork so it can be laid down. It was a dark amber color, malty, and not too bitter. Something you could enjoy quite often! I had several Belgian beers while in France as well. I was able to buy a 4-pack of 25 cl bottles of Becasse brand Kriek or Geuze (both Lambic style beer) for about \$4. One last note on French beers: they are much more affordable when purchased in the grocery stores than in the brasseries, where they will cost \$4 or \$5 for a 25 cl bottle.

The French also like cider, and I had it with many of my lunches. A common style is the 'cider doux' (doux means sweet) which has a 2% alcohol content, so it won't slow you down in the afternoon (the company cafeteria also sells beer and wine, and many people drink them at lunch). The dry cider (4%) was also very good, and a 25 cl bottle didn't have that much of an affect on one's output (I was working remember!).

I spent one day in Amsterdam and as far as the beer goes, well, I didn't personally find much to get very excited about. Heineken is made there, but it is very common around the world. And to me, it isn't much better than a Pabst or a Miller. I had a 'Special Palm' beer at a cafe, and it was a decent amber beer, but without any great distinction. I had an 'oud bruin' (I don't remember the brand) that was awful, very sweet with no hops to balance the flavor. Ho hum.

The last leg of my trip included three stops in Belgium. One thing I want to get out up front: even if they didn't have the world's most interesting, varied, and delectable brews, I would still give it a incredibly high marks as a place to visit. Both Brugges and Gent are splendid cities, and with very strong preservation of their medieval roots. You can find ancient castles, churches towers, and intricate government buildings complete with spires, towers, gold statues, and even a moat or two. Brugges has been labeled the most romantic city in Europe, and I will have to agree.

Okay, now for the important stuff. The beer! It was wonderful, fantastic, interesting, tasty, unique, and most of all, it tasted great. My first taste of a Belgian beer in Belgium was in Brugges, shortly after arriving and checking into the Hotel. I went out looking for something to eat, and of course the beer menu figured prominently into the selection of the restaurant. However, ALL of the menus have interesting beers, and I accepted the fact that I wouldn't have to worry at all about finding a place with decent brews. AND I was right. My first beer was a Westminster 'dubbel' Trappist Ale. This is a dark, malty, bitter brew, refermented in the bottle, and VERY good. This particular brand seemed to be very available in the areas I

visited, and I was pleased to get to try it a couple more times. Well, I finished that beer well before lunch was done, so I had a different beer the second time.

I was anxious to try a 'white beer' which I've read about and understand that the best way to have it is when it is still young and on draught. You can buy it in the states in bottles, but it isn't the same. This is a beer made with wheat, but it has an unusual tang that makes it very unique. The particular brand that I had was made near the city of Brugges and it, too, was wonderful.

One thing I noticed early on is that whenever you order a beer in Belgium they serve it to you in a glass designed exclusively for that beer. That brand, that style. No matter where I went or what beer I ordered, I always got a glass that had the particular brand and style emblazoned on the glass. Even in one bar that boasted over a hundred different Belgian beers!

I don't think I'm going to have time or room to explain all of the beers I had and how I had them, so I'll do a quick run-down of the most memorable ones. I got my first taste of a Faro style beer, which is a young, sweetened, lambic. Very interesting, I could enjoy this style once in a while. The trappist beers were always delicious. I found the trippels to be a little too strong, but enjoyable. I tried a saison style beer, which I did not find particularly unique or memorable. It was an amber beer, not unlike many of the mild amber beers you might find in the state. The Rodenbach sour brown ale was fine, but the one I brought home was much better. I should have ordered the Liefeman's Goudenband instead (I've had this one in Milwaukee, and it is one of the best beers I've ever had!). The Leffe abbey beer was great, although strong. The St. Louis Frambois Lambic was delicious but I had to drink it too fast so I wouldn't miss the train! More white beers, but none as good as the first one. Lastly, I managed to have a Bellevue Kriek which was tasty (although not highly ranked by M. Jackson).

One of the more fortunate aspects of my Belgium trip was that the Brussels hotel had a grocery store right behind it that had a wide variety of beers at reasonable prices. The beers that I saw in the downtown stores were quite a bit more expensive. I managed to buy 29 bottles of Belgian beers to import, along with some twine and a free box. Although the pain from hauling that heavy box around train stations and the airports on the trip home lasted a number of days, I'm still enjoying the beers! And I'm now a firmly committed Belgian Brew fanatic with little hope of recuperation. And no, you can't have one of my Belgian beers- go get your own!

*Baron Mind* is published by the Beer Barons of Milwaukee, a nonprofit organization. Club officers are President - Andy Moss, 375-4216, Vice President - Dennis Davison, 545-9246, Treasurer - Scott Lord, 242-7836, Newsletter Editor - Paul Arneson, 662-2834. The *Baron Mind* is published monthly for members of the Beer Barons of Milwaukee thanks to the efforts of Paul Arneson, Jeff Brown, Maryann Sulkowski, Ted Wilinski, and other club members who contribute articles.



## Gourmet Dining at the Red Circle

I finally decided to cough up the dough and attend my first Red Circle Inn Gourmet Beer Dinner. In case you haven't heard about it, it is held three or four times a year at the Red Circle Inn in Circle in Nashotah (west of Pewaukee). My girlfriend and I attended with a coworker of mine and her husband. Because of a last minute cancellation, there were only four of us at our table.

It started out at 6:30 p.m. on a recent Thursday evening. Standing around the open room adjacent to the dining room, we were able to sample various small appetizers to go with Sprecher's Maibock beer on draught. It was a nice warm up to a wonderful meal.

At about 7:15, we were called to the dining room. The sit down dinner began with a smoked salmon and basil-pesto cheesecake appetizer, accompanied by Duvel Ale (Belgium). The cheesecake was very unusual and very good. It was not sweet at all, and the salmon and pesto came through very well. The Duvel Ale, with its champagne like quality, enhanced the flavor of the cheesecake and vice-versa.

Sierra Nevada Pale Ale, with its malty bitterness, went well with the spicy Persian carrot salad. I went back and had a taste of the Duvel Ale at this point, and I must say that it wasn't compatible with the salad. The salad's powerful spices required a beer with a strong hop character too stand up to it, and the Sierra Nevada did a good job of it.

The dinner consisted of two separate main entrees. Yes, two. There was to be no leaving this place with any sense of hunger in your belly! The first entree was cilantro chicken with papaya salsa. It was served with dill-tomato rice and old Peculiar Yorkshire Ale (England). The papaya salsa gave the chicken a sweet and sour flavor. Old Peculiar is a dark brown, quite sweet beer and in very good condition. It really brought out the flavor of the chicken and the papaya salsa. Each time they do one of these dinners they have a 'wildcard' where they are not sure exactly how the combination will come off. This was the evening's wildcard, and it came off great!

Getting full yet? I certainly was, but that didn't stop me from continuing! The second entree arrived at our table and it was a beef tenderloin with green peppercorn-roquefort sauce, served with a zucchini and cauliflower medley with peppered pecans. Delicious. The beer which accompanied this course was Jenlain French Country Ale (France). The beer is a 'bier de guard' served in a 750 ml bottle with a wired cork seal. Bier de Guards are strong amber beers meant to be laid down for aging. The steak was very good and cooked to perfection, like everything else served that night. The vegetables were very spicy, but it took us a while to pin it down. The hotness was not at all noticeable when you ate the vegetables, but after a while

my mouth got very hot. The Jenlain Ale did a good job of cooling mouth and pleasing my beer palate.

At long last it came time for dessert. It was an Old Fashioned Sour Cream Blackberry Pie. If you like berry pies, you would love this. I'm not sure where the sour cream was, either in the crust or the filling. The pie was served with Capital's Gartenbrau Bock (Madison). The Capital beer was the only disappointment of the night. It tasted metallic and was rather unpleasant. So I set it aside and enjoyed the pie.

For those who were interested, the back room was opened up and the guests were invited to finish up the Sprecher Maibock. I had enough alcohol for the evening and chose to pass up this otherwise tempting event.

As the dinner came to a close, it amazed me what a fine job the staff of the Red Circle Inn did with this dinner. Every course was brought out to a room of about 120 people promptly and with perfection. The dishes were presented very well (not just slopped on like many large events) and were the right temperature. There was no want of beer throughout the whole night. Throughout the dinner, there was no lack of beer. For our table of four, we consistently received 3 twelve ounce bottles of beer at the beginning of the event. Next time I'll make it a point to take it easy on the keg beer at the beginning of the event. I would have liked to have had a few more sips of some of the dinner beers. With the long drive back to Milwaukee, I had to be at least a little careful. Maybe next time I'll find a nearby hotel!

Lastly, in case you are wondering, the cost was \$40 per person which included tax and tips. It sounds like a lot of money, but after you finish the meal you will know that it was \$40 well spent. And you will be anxiously awaiting the next opportunity to do it again. See you there!



## Brewing With Style

So far this year there is enough interest in forming two style groups. One will be looking into Belgian Ales while the other group will be searching for the right type of lager to study. If you haven't joined a style group before you don't know what you are missing! If you have been a style group member in the past you might want to consider spinning off and starting one up yourself. The groups are a good way to get to know other Beer Baron members and learn more about the beers that we so love to drink. If you are interested in joining a style group contact the group leader for more details.

*Belgian Ales* - Larry Krolikowski (545-8509)

*Lager* - Scott Lord (242-7836)



## Membership Information

Annual membership dues are ten dollars. Basically, this pays for the cost of producing and mailing this newsletter. In addition, we charge fees for the meetings, between \$1 and \$5, depending on the cost of the beer we taste that night. Membership dues can be paid at the monthly meetings or you

can send a check for \$10 to the Treasurer, Milwaukee Beer Barons, P.O. Box 27012, Milwaukee, WI 53227.

We mail the newsletter free of charge to prospective members for three months. The date that appears on your newsletter address label is the end of the three month period. If that date is prior to 5/1/93 you will not receive another newsletter unless you pay the annual dues.

For current club members, it is up to you to remember to renew -- we do not send out reminders. So check the date on your address label to see if it's time to ante up.

# Support Clifford's Supper Club with your patronage.

Clifford's allows us to use their banquet room at no charge to the Milwaukee Beer Barons.  
Our support will help show our appreciation.  
**PLUS - The food is VERY GOOD!!**

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