

THE *Bluffer's*[®] GUIDE TO

BEER

THE
5 MILLION
COPY
BESTSELLING
SERIES



NEW EDITION

THE *Bluffer's*[®] GUIDE TO

B E E R



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‘Beer, it’s the best damn drink
in the world.’

Jack Nicholson

DON'T BE A BEER MUG

You cannot have failed to notice, even in dreary old supermarkets, that there's something afoot in the beer aisles. Raise your line of sight above the BOGOF (buy-one-get-one-free) packs of lager, depressingly cheaper than bottled water, and you will see bottles brimming with possibilities: beers flavoured with basil, watermelon or chestnut; ales aged in old whisky or cognac barrels; ales brewed by monks and fermented with wild yeast (*Brettanomyces bruxellensis*, no less). Nowadays, beer labels are singing the praises of hop varieties with names like music hall acts (Fuggle and Golding), and in Restaurant Le Posh you might even be presented with a 'beer list' by a young and happening 'somm-ale-ier'.

There are various drastic measures you could take to be mistaken for a beer expert. You could grow a beard, sport chunky knitwear, take up the bodhrán, or even steal a British Guild of Beer Writers' tie bearing its proud quill and tankard livery (you wouldn't want to double up the tie with the knitwear, obviously). Alternatively, you could

breeze through this book.

It sets out to conduct you through the main danger zones encountered in beer discussions, and to equip you with a vocabulary and an evasive technique that will minimise the risk of being rumbled as a bluffer. It will give you a few easy-to-learn hints and methods designed to allow you to be accepted as a beer connoisseur of rare ability and experience. But it will do more. It will give you the tools to impress legions of marvelling listeners with your knowledge and insight – without anyone discovering that, before reading it, you didn't know your butt from your firkin (108 gallons versus 9 gallons, since you ask). Even as we speak, a thriving craft brewing scene is eroding the edifice of mass-produced, perma-chilled blandness as slowly but surely as meltwater trickling through a glacier. A brave new world of beer is stretching out before us – a veritable bluffer's paradise.

FROM BEER TO ETERNITY: A BRIEF BREWING HISTORY

9000 BC Year Beero? We can infer from crop patterns that the ancient Mesopotamians were no strangers to a cheeky beer. Thus, the cradle of brewing lies, somewhat ironically, in the heart of the Middle East.

7000 BC The guesstimated date of pottery fragments with telltale beer residue found in the Hunan province of China.

4000 BC The ancient Sumerians produce clay tablets depicting the brewing process. Historians claim this could be the world's oldest recipe. According to the tablets, drinking beer makes us feel 'exhilarated, wonderful and blissful'. Raise your glass to Ninkasi, Sumerian goddess of brewing.

3000 BC Egyptian brewers decide that barley is the best grain for brewing, and soon develop crude forms of malting. The ancient Egyptian hieroglyph for meal is 'beer + bread'. Meanwhile, stonemasons working on the pyramids are paid in 'kash', a primitive beer probably sweetened with dates, aniseed, honey and saffron.

2000 BC In Europe, the Celts are brewing with barley, wheat and oats.

200 AD The Babylonians start cultivating hops.

740 AD The Germans catch on, planting their own hop gardens in the Hallertau region of Bavaria.

1040 The Weihenstephan brewery, the world's oldest brewery still in production, is founded near Munich.

1086 The Domesday Book registers 43 commercial breweries operating in England.

c 1150 In the first written account of brewing with hops, Benedictine abbess Hildegard von Bingen, in the Rhineland, observes in her treatise, *Physica*, that hops are a worthy replacement for 'gruit', a mixture of herbs used to flavour and preserve beer. The abbess is also said to be the first person to write about the female orgasm.

1295 Good King Wenceslaus II looks out, and awards the right to brew to 260 grateful citizens in Pilsen, Bohemia (Czech Republic).

c 1400 Lager is born, though the dark, cloudy style is not as we would recognise it today. Central European brewers find they can create cleaner, crisper beers by brewing and storing them in cool caves. *Lagern* means 'to store' in German. Though they are yet to discover yeast, or identify its role in brewing, they stumble across the lager-making process of 'bottom fermenting' where fermentation is much colder and slower. Ales, of course, are 'top fermented' (*see* page 28).

c 1500 British brewers begin their love affair with the hop, once dismissed as ‘a wicked and pernicious weed’. Most English beer is made at home by ‘alewives’, seeing as they use virtually the same ingredients (minus the hops) to make bread. The best alewives display long poles covered in evergreens and/or hops (‘ale stakes’) in their windows to attract custom, thus inventing pubs and pub signs.

1516 Duke Wilhelm IV of Bavaria draws up the Reinheitsgebot, the German beer purity law, decreeing that German beer must be made only from water, barley and hops (remember, no one’s discovered yeast yet). What seems a grand gesture to protect the traditions of German beer-making is really a practical measure to prevent brewers from using wheat, which is more urgently needed to make bread.

c 1550 Europeans are drinking more beer than water. Beer is the safer option because its water content has been boiled. Queen Elizabeth I of England starts each day with a quart of beer; that’s two pints on the royal cornflakes every morning.

1632 The Dutch West India Company opens the first commercial brewery in North America, in Lower Manhattan, New York. Buffalo, Brooklyn, Albany and Philadelphia become early brewing centres. Hop cultivation begins in the New World.

1698 Shepherd Neame, England’s oldest surviving brewery, is established in Faversham, Kent.

1722 The Bell Brewhouse in Shoreditch, London, makes the first porter from dark-roasted barley. Tax on gin, 'mothers' ruin', is raised threefold because it's ruining too many mothers. Porter becomes 'the universal cordial of the populace'.

c 1750 Newfangled coke ovens, as opposed to wood or coal, allow English maltsters to avoid burning their malt for the first time. Pale malts make pale ales.

1759 Arthur Guinness buys a disused brewery in Dublin. The rest, appropriately, is history.

1777 The first steam engine is installed in a brewery, at Stratford-le-Bow, east of London.

1785 Joseph Bramah invents the beer handpump, changing the way beer is served in pubs.

c 1790 Pale ale mutates into a turbo-charged version called India Pale Ale (IPA), heavily hopped and high in alcohol to withstand the long sea voyage from England to India. Beer geeks still get their knickers in a twist over whether or not IPA was invented by George Hodgson of the Bow brewery in London.

1810 The first Oktoberfest, now the world's biggest beer party, is held in Munich to celebrate the marriage of Crown Prince Ludwig of Bavaria and Princess Therese of Saxony-Hildburghausen.

1817 Porter and stout get richer and darker thanks to Daniel Wheeler's patent roasting machine, a rotating

drum similar to a coffee roaster allowing brewers to make dark and ‘chocolate’ malts without burning the barley.

1842 At last! Bavarian brewer Josef Groll creates the world’s first golden lager in Pilsen, Bohemia. A lager landmark of epic significance, Groll’s Pilsner style goes on to achieve global domination, accounting for some nine out of 10 beers consumed today. All lagers were dark until Groll blew the doors off.

1857 Eureka! Louis Pasteur unravels the mysteries of yeast, making the breakthrough we’d all been waiting for. He establishes that yeast is not, as is widely believed, a divine gift called ‘God is good’, but a single-celled microorganism (a fungus) that can be manipulated to the benefit of beer. In 1876 Pasteur cements his position as the father of modern brewing with the publication of his seminal brewers’ troubleshooting guide *Etudes sur la Bière*. He blots his copybook, as far as ‘real ale’ campaigners are concerned, by inventing pasteurisation. It creates clean beer at the expense of flavour, they argue.

c 1875 Lager brewing goes ballistic thanks to refrigeration technology devised by German engineer Carl von Linde. Storing lager in cold caves is suddenly very passé. Gabriel Sedlmayr II at Munich’s Spaten brewery is the first to brew golden lager on a massive scale.

1876 The Bass brewery in Burton upon Trent registers its iconic red triangle, Britain’s first trademark. E Anheuser & Co launches Budweiser in the USA.

1883 Pasteur crosses the ball; Emil Christian Hansen heads it in. A scientist and part-time novelist working for Carlsberg in Copenhagen, Hansen discovers how to isolate and cultivate a single, pure strain of yeast – in this case, *Saccharomyces carlsbergensis*. This breakthrough allows brewers to cultivate and store their own specific yeast strains, consigning the ‘suck-it-and-see’ approach to the history books.

1892 William Painter of Baltimore, USA, patents the ‘crown cork’ (bottle cap), and a machine capable of sealing 100 bottles per minute.

Late 1800s Coinciding with railroads and refrigeration, the second wave of European settlers, from Germany and Bohemia, settle in North America. From breweries in Cincinnati, St Louis and Milwaukee, lager’s assault on ale begins.

1904 In the USA, the Toledo Glass Company unleashes the first fully automatic bottle-making equipment. Bottling beer has never been so cheap, quick and easy.

1911 While touring Britain, Harry Houdini accepts a challenge from Tetley’s brewery in Leeds to escape from a padlocked beer-filled churn. He is overcome by carbon dioxide and has to be rescued. (Waiter! There’s an escapologist in my beer!)

1914-1918 The lights go out over Britain as killjoy Liberal politician and paramour, David Lloyd George, restricts licensing laws to boost the war effort. Adding insult to

injury, great British beers are made to much weaker recipes; a cruel legacy from which we are only beginning to recover.

1920-1933 Prohibition, or ‘the Noble Experiment’, proves not so noble after all, creating perfect conditions for a tidal wave of organised violent crime across the USA.



‘Beer is proof that God loves us
and wants us to be happy.’

Benjamin Franklin (possibly)

1922 Shandy is ‘invented’. Running short of beer, Bavarian landlord, Franz Xaver Kugler, becomes the first person to dilute it with lemonade. Sadly, his name does not come to be associated with his invention (unlike the Earl of Sandwich, for example).

1927 Colonel Porter creates Newcastle Brown Ale, which is ironic, considering his name. It wins first prize for bottled beer at London’s International Brewers’ Exhibition the following year.

1930 Watney’s of London trials pasteurised keg beer; a move that will eventually inspire a backlash from the Campaign for Real Ale.

1939-1945 Heroic RAF aircrew coin the euphemism ‘gone for a Burton’ to replace the phrase ‘missing in action’.

'Burton', of course, refers to beer from the famous brewing town of Burton upon Trent.

1935 Krueger's Finest from New Jersey is the first beer launched in a can. A device called a 'church key' is required to open it; a post-Prohibition dig at the temperance movement?

1963 British brewers begin to favour metal casks over barrels, prompting the formation of the Society for the Preservation of Beer from the Wood (SPBW). In the USA, pull tabs are introduced on metal beer cans.

1971 Drowning in an ocean of bland, filtered, pasteurised keg beers, a small band of diehard British ale drinkers forms CAMRA (Campaign for Real Ale). It originally stands for the Campaign for the Revitalisation of Ale until they coin the term 'real ale' to describe unfiltered, unpasteurised cask-conditioned beers.

1976 Inspired by these same British ales during his military service in Scotland, Jack McAuliffe establishes America's first microbrewery in Sonoma, northern California. It closes in 1982, but the torch has been lit for the American craft beer movement.

1977 Only 167 years after Munich's inaugural Oktoberfest, Alexandra Palace in London throws open its doors for the first Great British Beer Festival. With a great sense of timing, the late Michael Jackson (not the squeaky 'moonwalker') publishes his *The World Guide to Beer*, the bible for beer aficionados.

1978 Jimmy Carter signs into US law the right for Americans to home brew. Meanwhile, in the Beer Can Regatta, first staged in Darwin, Australia in 1974, the Can-Tiki, made from 15,000 ‘tinnies’ makes it all the way to Singapore.

1982 Only five years after the first Great British Beer Festival, the first Great American Beer Festival is held in Boulder, Colorado.

1985 Beer drinkers take to wedging limes into their beer bottles, especially if the provenance of the beer is Spanish or South American. Nobody knows why, but it catches on.

1989 Quelle horreur! ‘Euro-fizz’ lager becomes the most widely drunk beer in Britain, knocking ale off its perch. The Beer Orders brings better news for ale drinkers, restricting the number of ‘tied’ pubs that can be owned by the big brewery groups and allowing the pubs’ tenants to stock a guest ale of their choice.

2002 Chancellor Gordon Brown introduces Progressive Beer Duty (PBD) in Britain, which means that brewers pay tax according to their production. Consequently, the smallest producers pay only 50% of the standard duty rate, a huge boost for the fledgling microbrewing movement.

2004 Andy ‘The Viking’ Fordham wins the Lakeside World Darts Championship. He maintains his performance-enhancing, body-mass stabilising belly by drinking at least 15 bottles of beer before competing.

2008 The big get bigger as American brewing giant Anheuser-Busch merges with InBev (itself a merger of Interbrew of Belgium and AmBev of Brazil).

2012 The tide could be turning. The British brewing industry's annual Cask Report shows that pub-goers quaffed 633 million pints of real ale in 2011, slightly up on the previous year, as the grip of 'industrial' lagers begins to loosen.

To be continued...