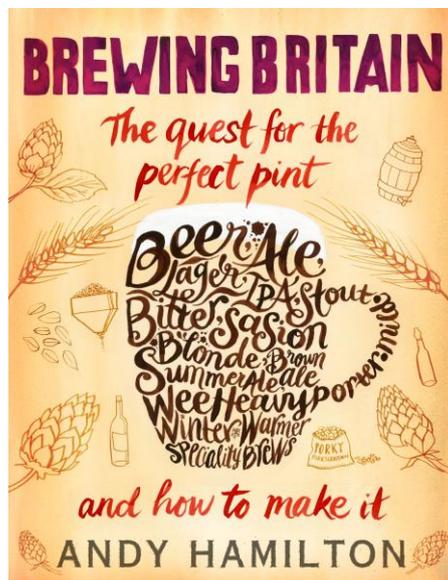




The Northern Craft Brewers

"We Live We Brew"



Review by Ian Priddey

An author who states that if he was only allowed to drink beer from one county in the UK, he would choose Yorkshire, noting that "Without a shadow of a doubt, some of the best beer in the world is brewed in the land between the Peak District and Yorkshire Dales" is off to a good start with me; but then as a resident of Calderdale I could be accused of being biased!

Now I have guide books to find good beer and a variety of books about beer styles and brewing, but nothing quite as wide ranging and comprehensive as this one. Chapters include terminology, tasting beers, hangovers, brewing techniques, off flavours, growing ingredients, hop varieties, different styles of beers with suggestions for some of the best commercial examples to try along with malt extract and full mash recipes; finishing with a directory of specialist bottle shops, home brew supplies and internet suggestions. My home brew supplier, local CAMRA beer festival and the Northern Craft Brewers were all

listed correctly. In fact the book as a whole is well written and although I can usually find loads of proof reading errors and mistakes in what I read, I found very little that that was wrong or I could disagree with – the only typo I spotted was so obviously wrong it would not fool any brewer.

So how has Andy got all this into just over 400 pages? Well it is nearly all words with just a few simple line drawings by way of illustration. This is a book to read and reference, not one to sit on the coffee table looking pretty. The other reason is that some areas are touched upon in general terms without going into great detail. The section on growing hops for example does not go into the post-harvest treatment of the plant and the suggestion of using spent hops as a mulch for your garden plants may be good for the roses, but does not point out that hops eaten by your pet dog will be anything but good and at worst deadly. The Gruit Ale extract recipe stated the herbs should be added to the boil but the all grain recipe was not clear if the herbs were to be added to the mash or the boil, indeed there was no specific reference to boiling, so it was not clear if this had been omitted or if the intention was not to boil this one. Which got me to thinking what would be the difference between adding the herbs to the mash and not boiling, compared to adding them to the boil?

I think one of the book's strong points is to treat it as a source of inspiration, ideas and references - but don't necessarily expect it to be the last word on any topic. There are entire books devoted to hops etc if that is what you are into. Experienced brewers may find little new about brewing techniques here but some of the information on new hop varieties and yeast suggestions for different styles is likely to be of use to even experienced brewers. I'd never thought of growing my own barley before but this book now has me thinking about that as a future project...

The print is of reasonable size and easy to read, indeed I was able to read most of the book on a train and in a pub. The writing style is personal and a little blunt at times (maybe not a book for the easily offended) but there are some nice and at times unexpected touches of humour along the way. All in all, a veritable source of information and inspiration.

Bantam press, 2013 ISBN 9780593072400 Hardback, 424 Pages £12.99