

## BOOK REVIEWS

### **Jews and Booze: Becoming American in the Age of Prohibition**

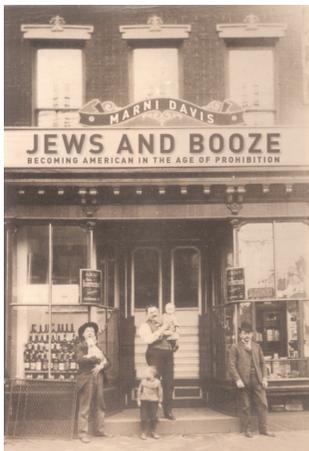
By Davis, M.

New York: New York University Press

2012, Pp. x + 262, £32

ISBN 978-0-8147-2028-8

Behind its jocular title this book describes the fascinating story of Jewish involvement in the American alcohol trade over a 100 year period, from the 1830s to the 1930s. It must be made clear from the outset that beer and brewing does not play a central role in this study despite the fact that the first breweries in St. Louis, Denver and Anaheim were all Jewish concerns. One of the most well known beers in America, Rheingold, was brewed by S. Liebmann & Sons, a Jewish family who emigrated from Germany in 1855. Germany, in fact, holds the key to the lack of Jewish participation in the American brewing trade. The United States saw a



large influx of Germans between 1840 and 1860, somewhere in the region of 1,350,000 emigrated during this period and many of these were, of course, Jews. A good proportion of all those that crossed the Atlantic had

been involved in the brewing industry in their homeland so it was not surprising that they would establish similar concerns in their adopted country. However, brewing was not a trade Jews participated in to any great extent because the German brewing guilds, like other craft guilds, maintained policies that explicitly excluded them. They also found it difficult to enter the American beer retail trade as saloons were often 'tied' to a specific brewery and this system required no 'middlemen', a position often held by Jews in both America and Europe. More openings were available to Jews in the distilling and sale of spirits and it is on these areas that the book concentrates. The text follows the trajectory of these entrepreneurs, particularly their relationship to the growing temperance and teetotal movements. As the author's own words;

In a society undergoing rapid demographic and economic transformation, both alcohol and Jews represented elements that many WASPs wanted to hold at bay. Condemnations of Jewish alcohol entrepreneurs were initially limited to Jewish immigrants who served working-class or impoverished customers. ... [C]ritics tendered a harsh critique of Jewish saloonkeepers, and of American Jewish economic activity, by intimating that Jews' presence in the saloon trade proved their failure to assimilate and essential incompatibility with American values. As denunciations grew in volume and frequency, they came to encompass middle-class and native-born Jewish alcohol manufacturers and wholesalers as well, and were eventually intertwined with anti-Semitic allegations that Jews sought to control or dominate sectors of the national (or global) economy. (pp.199-200)

Such attitudes reached a peak during Prohibition and were in part fuelled by Jewish bootleggers. Jewish alcohol concerns had been given special dispensation to

manufacture Kosher wines for religious ceremonies, but some also went on to produce drink for the black market. A number of these were uncovered by investigators from the Bureau of Prohibition and, ironically, one of their most successful and flamboyant agents was a Jew, Izzy Einstein, who became a national celebrity. He and his partner, Moe Smith, would go to extreme lengths to ensure a conviction;

they dressed up as musicians, society dandies, pickle peddlers, college athletes, and a bourgeois couple (Moe donned the dress and cloche hat) out for a night on the town. Izzy used his knowledge of Yiddish (his mother tongue), German, Polish, Hungarian, Bohemian, and Italian to infiltrate immigrant communities in cities all over the country ... On at least one occasion, he passed himself off as African American by blackening his face ... (p.179-80)

The Jewish response to the anti-alcohol movement, especially during Prohibition, highlighted a nuanced debate over what it was to be an American Jew, both within and beyond that community.

*Jews and Booze* is an excellent piece of academic research on a serious subject, written superbly, which is entertaining, enlightening and engaging.

TIM HOLT

### **Lost Beers & Breweries of Britain**

**By Glover, B.**

**Stroud: Amberley Publishing**

**2012, Pp. 160, £15.99**

**ISBN 978-1-4456-0261-5**

### **Britain's Lost Breweries and Beers**

**By Arnott, C.**

**London: Aurum Press**

**2012, Pp. 192, £25**

**ISBN 978-1-78131-002-1**

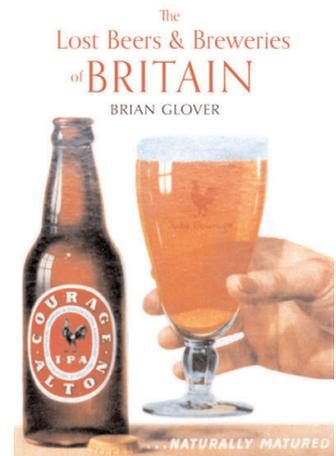
I hate a cliché me. In fact a cliché to me is like a red rag to a bull. Yes, I know that's a simile but a simile can be a cliché too, can't it? Why the semantics? Well, when I sat down to review these two books I had an overwhelming urge to trot out the old saw about two buses coming along at once. Here we have two books covering much the same topic, with remarkably similar titles,

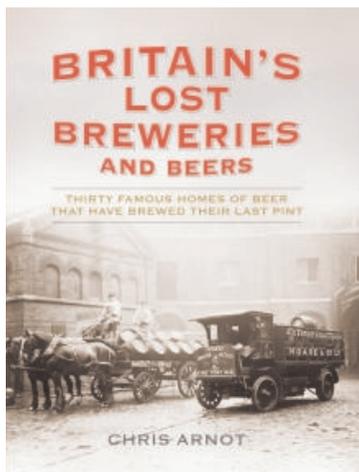
and yet the resulting works are very different.

One is large format, hard-back, glossy, with high production values and a price to match. The other is smaller in size, has soft covers, modest production values and is consequently more modestly priced. Here comes another simile; one is like supermarket fruit, beautiful to look at yet ultimately unsatisfying, whilst the other is like farmer's market fruit, smaller, plainer, yet with much more to get your teeth into.

Chris Arnott, author of *Britain's Lost Breweries and Beers*, is a journalist who has visited the home towns of thirty breweries, where he has spoken to ex employees and others about their memories of the breweries and beers concerned. In a few pages he paints a picture, relying on quotes from previously published works (including this writer's own) to fill in the 'history'. This is all pleasant enough, and some of the illustrations are beautiful but one is left with the impression that Chris is a journo who likes a pint (Ever met one who didn't?!) rather than a beer writer.

In contrast Brian Glover's *Lost Beers & Breweries of Britain* is a little treasure trove. Like Chris, Brian is also a journalist; but he will probably need no introduction to readers of this august journal, he is very much a beer writer. Brian takes us on a fascinating journey around England, Wales and Scotland and along the way tells the stories of the creation of many lost beers and breweries as well as their ultimate fates. He writes with a deep knowledge and love of his subject and there are many illustrations of old labels, beer mats and adverts, economically grouped into two black and white sections and a central colour section. The book as a whole





forms an engrossing history of the industry's - I hesitate to use the word decline, let's say transformation - from producing tasty local beers for local markets and how these brands were subverted for profit and ultimately rationalised out of existence. That may sound maudlin and sad, and so it is to those of us of a certain age, but that thought must be tempered by the phenomenal rise of the craft and micro brewers who are once again brewing tasty local beers. They may be little brewers but they stand on the shoulders of giants. Oh damn, another cliché!

So, which of these two books should you buy? Well, how about this for an idea? Buy both. Read and absorb Glover's book and file it on your bookshelf for future reference. Read Chris's book and then place it on your coffee table; it will perhaps give those who browse it an easy introduction into why you are a brewery historian and, when they enquire what happened to their favourite beer, you can take down Brian's book from your shelf.

PETER MOYNIHAN

### **The Brewer's Tale: Memoirs of a Master Brewer**

**By Priestley, F.**

**Ludlow: Merlin Unwin**

**2010, Pp. 160, £10**

**ISBN 9781906122171**

A delightful little book, excellent value, and an ideal present for someone, or preferably oneself. Frank was born in Sheffield and started as a laboratory assistant at Tennants in 1959, later becoming the Master Brewer at Castle Eden and the volume records his career, with

various asides on related aspects of the industry. Easily readable, yet containing sufficient description of the technology, it is much in the style of the late-lamented Anthony Avis.

It provides a good insight into how the industry changed, as traditional methods of production gave way to accountancy driven ones, post the Whitbread umbrella. Good to also read someone else who has views on the impact of the shape and nature of F.V.s on beer flavour. It was very interesting to read how long the dropping system remained in use. I was intrigued to read on page 23 how the persistence of Harold Burkinshaw saved Gold Label, though the modern version doesn't sound half as good as the original, matured in hogsheads for up to a year. Frank clearly enjoyed the product sampling which was then a necessary part of the job and it seems a lost world when one compares his descriptions of the workers' traditional close involvement with their beer to the sterility of modern production plants.

The photos presumably have not been seen before, though I'm not sure about the caption on page 81 which states the racking of the last barrel of traditional draught at Sheffield in 1974, since I thought the Exchange site was still producing real ale at the time of its closure in 1993. Perhaps it refers to Woodlesford, which closed in 1972? The slow absorption into Whitbread is a classic study of what was happening in many other breweries at the time.

One minor quibble is that on page 52 the ale-conners 'sitting in sticky ale' story is repeated. Perhaps one day there will be a definitive version of when and where this story arose and whether there is indeed any truth in it.

MIKE JONES

### **Forest of Dean Pubs Through Time**

**By Sandles, G.**

**Stroud: Amberley Publishing**

**2012, Pp. 96, £14.99**

**ISBN 978-1-4456-0398-8**

### **North Cotswold Pubs Through Time**

**By Sandles, G.**

**Stroud: Amberley Publishing**

2012, Pp. 96, £14.99  
ISBN 978-1-4456-0401-5

### South Cotswold Pubs Through Time

By Sandles, G.

Stroud: Amberley Publishing

2012, Pp. 96, £14.99

ISBN 978-1-4456-1074-0

Author Geoff Sandles and the team at Amberley have been busy over the past year. The three books under review are additions to the regular and prolific series from this publisher, looking at the pubs of a given area. As with the others in the series, these books cover the centre and immediate vicinity of the areas defined. They are all produced in colour throughout which allows the pictures excellent reproduction quality, and the black and whites images look pretty good as well.

The format places the old views of the selected pubs at the top of the page and the modern day view beneath. Sometimes this is merely the image of a house or commercial premises, really just showing where the pub had once stood - the fate of a number of our old inns. It gives the contemporary reader the opportunity to see what has changed and to appreciate what used to be there.

However, I am pleased to report that across each of the three volumes, the story is not as bad as the national media might have us believe - well at least as far as this part of the country is concerned. Losses are inevitable as available cash dwindles and spending priorities are re-assigned, but as the Author shows us, some of the inns he includes have adapted to a different clientele and changed to offer different services, reflecting the needs of the people who visit pubs.

The captions provide a very brief historical background and as far as I can tell, bring out the salient historical facts. Where there is a local or regional brewers' sign available or actually on the old building, this is added as a close up. This at least gives us historians an opportunity see whose beer was served and relates some of the familiar names from the past.

In all they are three useful books for walks around each of the areas and, as I have said before, a good sampler for further investigation of both the pub and the brewer.

KEN SMITH

