

The Herald Tribune



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Newsletter of the Ann Arbor Brewers' Guild

November 2012

November Meeting

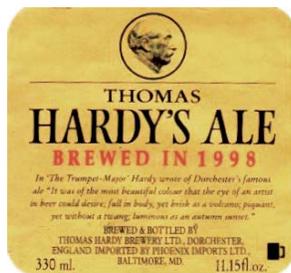
This month's meeting of the AABG is Friday **November 9th**. It will be hosted by **Adventures in Homebrewing**. See the map and directions on the next page. The featured style is **Old Ale***.

19. Strong Ale

19A. Old Ale

19B. English Barleywine

19C. American Barleywine



AABG 2012

January	Adventures in Homebrewing	Dark Lagers*
February	AiH	Dark Lagers*
March	AiH	Stout*
April	Geoff Billir and Annie Zipser	Stout*
May	Stephen Krebs	Scottish/Irish*
June	Josh Budde	Wheat Beers
July BeerBQ	Dave Olds	Mead
August	Chris Frey	Porter*
September	Michael Erickson	Light Hybrid*
October	Matt Becker	Light Hybrid*
November	AiH	Old Ale*
December	Rolf Wucherer	Old Ale*

* Denotes AHA Club Only Competition Style

All meeting are the second friday of each month beginning at 7:30 p.m., except for the July meeting (BeerBQ) which is the second saturday.

AABG Pico System

The club's pico system is available to members for brewing. If you wish to borrow it contact Mike O'Brien at:

734.637.2532

picobrew@comcast.net

Access the AABG Club System forum at:

<http://aabg.org/forum>

19A. Old Ale

Aroma: Malty-sweet with fruity esters, often with a complex blend of dried-fruit, vinous, caramelly, molasses, nutty, toffee, treacle, and/or other specialty malt aromas. Some alcohol and oxidative notes are acceptable, akin to those found in Sherry or Port. Hop aromas not usually present due to extended aging.

Appearance: Light amber to very dark reddish-brown color (most are fairly dark). Age and oxidation may darken the beer further. May be almost opaque (if not, should be clear). Moderate to low cream- to light tan-colored head; may be adversely affected by alcohol and age.

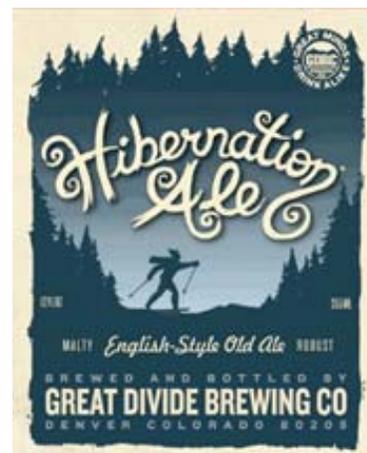
Flavor: Medium to high malt character with a luscious malt complexity, often with nutty, caramelly and/or molasses-like flavors. Light chocolate or roasted malt flavors are optional, but should never be prominent. Balance is often malty-sweet, but may be well hopped (the impression of bitterness often depends on amount of aging). Moderate to high fruity esters are common, and may take on a dried-fruit or vinous character. The finish may vary from dry to somewhat sweet. Extended aging may contribute oxidative flavors similar to a fine old Sherry, Port or Madeira. Alcoholic strength should be evident, though not overwhelming. Diacetyl low to none. Some wood-aged or blended versions may have a lactic or Brettanomyces character; but this is optional and should not be too strong (enter as a specialty beer if it is).

Mouthfeel: Medium to full, chewy body, although older examples may be lower in body due to continued attenuation during conditioning. Alcohol warmth is often evident and always welcome. Low to moderate carbonation, depending on age and conditioning.

Overall Impression: An ale of significant alcoholic strength, bigger than strong bitters and brown porters, though usually not as strong or rich as barleywine. Usually tilted

toward a sweeter, maltier balance. "It should be a warming beer of the type that is best drunk in half pints by a warm fire on a cold winter's night" – Michael Jackson.

History: A traditional English ale style, mashed at higher temperatures than strong ales to reduce attenuation, then aged at the brewery after primary fermentation (similar to the process used for historical porters). Often had age-related character (lactic, Brett, oxidation, leather) associated with "stale" beers. Used as stock ales for blending or enjoyed at full strength (stale or stock refers to beers that were aged or stored for a significant period of time). Winter warmers



are a more modern style that are maltier, fuller-bodied, often darker beers that may be a brewery's winter seasonal special offering.

Comments: Strength and character varies widely. Fits in the style space between normal gravity beers (strong bitters, brown porters) and barleywines. Can include winter warmers, strong dark milds, strong (and perhaps darker) bitters, blended strong beers (stock ale blended with a mild or bitter), and lower gravity versions of English barleywines. Many English examples, particularly winter warmers, are lower than 6% ABV.

Ingredients: Generous quantities of well-modified pale malt (generally English in origin, though not necessarily so), along with judicious quantities of caramel malts and

When and Where
Friday, Nov. 9, 7:30 pm
Adventures in Homebrewing
6071 Jackson Road
Ann Arbor MI
313 277 2739

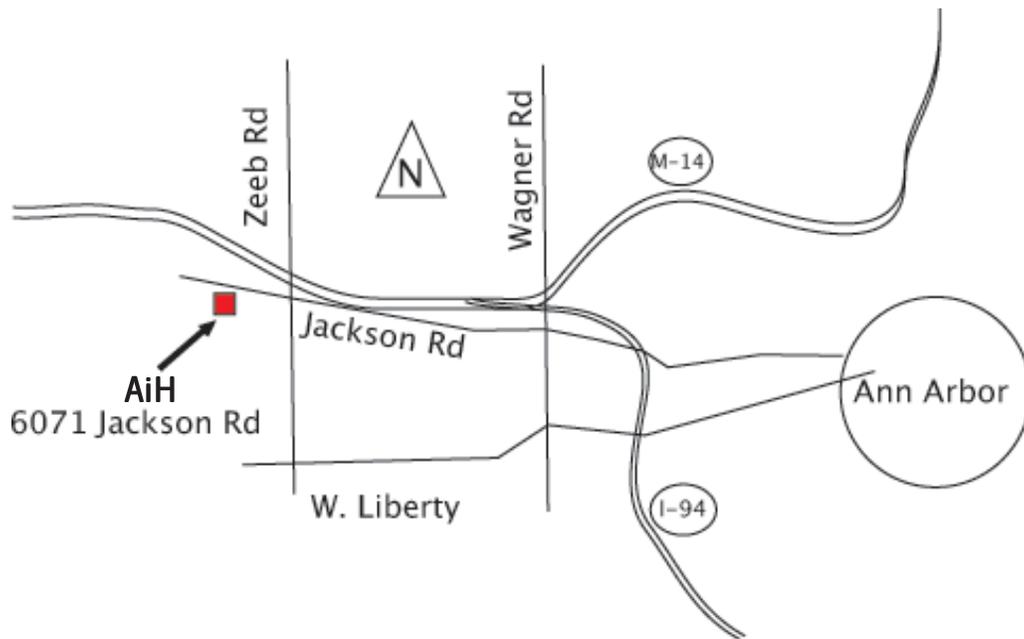
Extra Info About AiH

There are no chairs, if you want to sit down, bring a chair. Homebrew supplies can be bought from AiH, but you must make your purchase before 7:00 p.m.

AABG Policy

AABG encourages responsible, legal consumption of homebrewed and craft beverages.

You must be at least 21 years old to attend AABG meetings.



Guide for New Members

Bring a tasting glass and 1–2 bottles per batch of your beer that you'd like to share, or an interesting commercial beer. Bring tasty munchies to cleanse the palate and sop up the alcohol. Feel free to share and sample with other members and make and accept constructive comments. Please use good judgment while imbibing and don't drive while intoxicated.

...19A. Old Ale continued

other specialty character malts. Some darker examples suggest that dark malts (e.g., chocolate, black malt) may be appropriate, though sparingly so as to avoid an overly roasted character. Adjuncts (such as molasses, treacle, invert sugar or dark sugar) are often used, as are starchy adjuncts (maize, flaked barley, wheat) and malt extracts. Hop variety is not as important, as the relative balance and aging process negate much of the varietal character. British ale yeast that has low attenuation, but can handle higher alcohol levels, is traditional.

Vital Statistics:

OG: 1.060 – 1.090
FG: 1.015 – 1.022
IBUs: 30 – 60
ABV: 6 – 9%
SRM: 10 – 22

Commercial Examples: Gale's Prize Old Ale, Burton Bridge Olde Expensive, Marston Owd Roger, Greene King Olde Suffolk Ale, J.W. Lees Moonraker, Harviestoun Old Engine Oil,

Fuller's Vintage Ale, Harvey's Elizabethan Ale, Theakston Old Peculier (peculiar at OG 1.057), Young's Winter Warmer, Sarah Hughes Dark Ruby Mild, Samuel Smith's Winter Welcome, Fuller's 1845, Fuller's Old Winter Ale, Great Divide Hibernation Ale, Founders Curmudgeon, Cooperstown Pride of Milford Special Ale, Coniston Old Man Ale, Avery Old Jubilation.



The Emergence of Old Ale

In the first half of the 18th century, English brewers began move away from long storage of beers. The equation was quite simple—a lot of money could be saved if you got the return on the cost of brewing in 2–3 months, instead of a year or more. So brewers started to produce what they then called “running beers,” which were shipped from the brewery to the pubs after a much shorter storage period than had previously been the case. Of course, it wasn't quite as simple as that at first, as this meant a decided change in flavor. One way around this, was to keep smaller amounts of beer for a very long time, and use for blending with fresh beer to get the kind of taste the drinker was looking for. In some cases this was done at the brewery, while in others some aged beer was shipped along with running beer, and blended by the publican himself. There was even a machine invented and patented as far back as 1790, for mixing “mild” and “stale” porter.

In those days these words had a different meaning than they do today. “Mild” simply

...*Old Ale* continued

meant new, while “stale” referred to well-matured beer. Mild stayed around until the present day, although modern mild bears little resemblance to that of early 19th century milds. But the term “stale” did disappear. By the 1850’s, when porter was declining in popularity, some brewers were offering “Old Ales” directly to the public houses. These were

beers brewed specifically to be kept for a year or more at the brewery and apparently brewed to their own separate recipes. In other words, they were not meant for use in adjusting the flavor of

running beers. These kind of beers later came to be known as stock ales. Aged porters kept for this purpose became known as keeping porters by brewers, and were not normally sold to the public.

Old ales had another significant characteristic — an acidic flavor. In 1890 an English brewing consultant stated that this was a “sub-acid” flavor. Around 1900 the yeast responsible for secondary fermentation in English stock ales was identified in the Carlsberg laboratories in Denmark, and given the name *Brettanomyces*. This species is responsible for the so-called “horse-blanket” flavor in spontaneously-fermented Belgian lambic beers. However, analysis of old and stock ales, both English and American, carried out by Wahl-Henius around 1880–1900 indicated that they contained significant amounts of lactic acid. This would most likely be the source of the “sub-acid” flavor, and probably came from *Lactobacilli* in the staves of the wooden storage vessels used in those days.



Information on 19th century old ales as such is scarce. From those recipes that are available, they were usually brewed to around 1.080 OG, mainly from either all pale malt, or combinations of pale with amber malt. Mashing temperatures were probably on the high side (154 °F or higher) so as to give a dextrinous wort, and a relatively high finishing gravity, around 1.025–1.035.

Modern Old Ales

In 1880 England instituted a tax system based on the original gravity of beers. This made strong beers significantly more expensive to brew than weaker ones. Consequently, from that time there began a decline in average beer strengths. The inevitable result of these factors was that Old Ales as such became much less popular.

By the time I started drinking beer in the late 1950’s, you would occasionally come across the odd draught beers called old ale, but this was often just a marketing trick. Such beers, as they were not old in any sense, and were simply running beers, amounted to nothing more than a slightly stronger than usual mild. There were some genuine old ales, but now they were likely to be only bottle-aged.

A change in this approach came from Eldridge, Pope, a small brewery in Dorset, when in 1968 they introduced Thomas Hardy Ale, commemorating the writer’s death sixty years earlier. Although produced only from pale malts, its high OG of 1.125 resulted in it being a dark amber color, and it was stored at the brewery for a year or so before release. It was originally intended as a one-off, but was successful enough that the company decided to continue it. It was produced as a bottle-conditioned beer, and vintage-dated, with the early bottles recommending on the label that it could be kept for as much as 25 years before drinking! The important point about this is that Hardy Ale was presented as a beer of distinction, as a result of which it gradually achieved cult status among England’s beer-drinkers. Eldridge, Pope hived off their brewing operation in the 1990’s, and this beer continued to be produced by the now aptly-named Thomas Hardy company, who finally gave up their namesake ale in 2003. It is now brewed by the micro O’Hanlon’s, largely for the American market.

In the early 1970’s came the start of CAMRA, the consumer organization pledged to prevent the disappearance of cask-conditioned ale in Britain. A side effect of this campaign was a

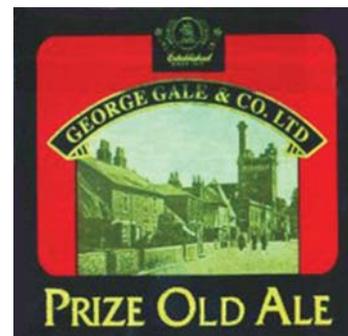
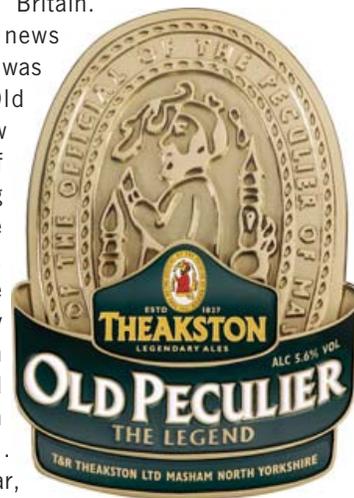
renewal of interest in beers of unusual distinction and character. A notable example was that of Old Peculier, which rapidly developed a high reputation. Theakston’s small family brewery, in a misguided attempt to expand rapidly, went through a number of contortions before falling into the hands of Scottish Newcastle, who themselves had by then become the biggest brewers in Britain.

The good news about that was that Old Peculier now had a lot of marketing muscle behind it, and became more widely available in Britain and North America.

Just this year, the circle was completed, and the Theakston family bought back their brewery in Masham, but that’s another story.

All this helped to revive interest in other similar beers, such as Gale’s Old Prize Ale, Robinson’s Old Tom and the related Winter Warmers and Barleywines. The result is that although old ales are only produced in limited quantities, and there are only a relatively small number of commercial versions, there are enough for us to define the style.

These beers should be amber to dark brown in color, with the emphasis on malt character, rather than hop aroma and bitterness, which should be muted. Fruity, estery notes, and some diacetyl can all contribute to the complexity of these beers.



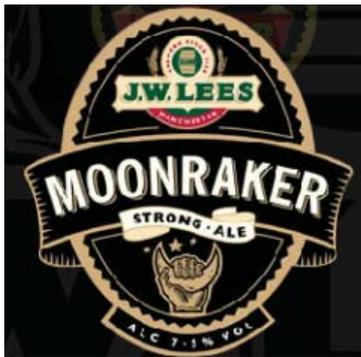
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...Old Ale continued

Brewing Old Ales

Pale malt is the main source of fermentable extract, although a mild ale malt would work well, too. We want to emphasize maltiness in this beer, so a relatively high mash temperature of around 154 °F (68 °C) is appropriate. Substituting 15–20% of the pale malt with Munich malt will also help in this respect. This kind of beer works very well with pale malt extract as a base.

To increase the mouthfeel and add a little sweetness, crystal malt is a must. Go for the darker, more caramelized varieties, (from

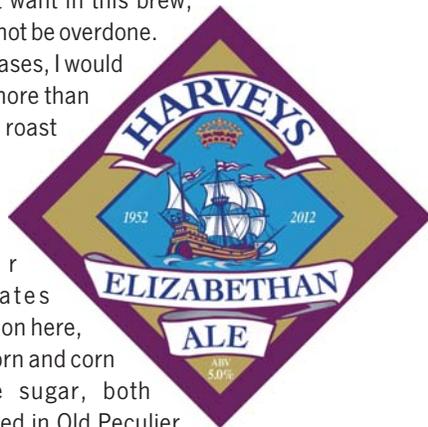


60–80 °L), but don't overdo it. We are looking for subtle complexity in this style, and don't want any flavors sticking out like a sore thumb. For my taste, 1/2 to 1 lb. per 5 gallons is sufficient. For more complexity, and an increase in color, a little roast malt works wonders. For me, chocolate malt works best, adding a slight reddish hue, and a muted roastiness. Black malt is favored by some brewers, but can add some harshness we don't want in this brew, so must not be overdone.

In both cases, I would add no more than 1/4 lb. roast malt.

There are two other candidates for addition here, flaked corn and corn or cane sugar, both being used in Old Peculier.

These should only be added at the rate of around 10% of the total grist, and will only increase alcohol and make the beer lighter for a given gravity. The reason why British brewers use these is simply to reduce the nitrogen content of the beer. In other words to lower protein residues, and thus reduce



chill-haze. Frankly, I do not think chill-haze is really a problem in a beer of this color, and I do not normally use these adjuncts myself. If you feel the need to add fermentable material in order to hit target gravity, then why not either use malt extract, or a dark sugar. The latter will add a slight rum note, which goes quite well in this type of beer.

When it comes to hopping old ales, we certainly do not want to overdo it. I actually think you want to be in the range 30–40 IBU for bitterness, although the BJCP homebrew contest guidelines give 60 IBU as the top end of the range. Preferably, you want a fairly mild hop, for both bittering and aroma and English Fuggles fit the bill admirably, but can be substituted with Challenger or Northdown.

You simply need a good top-fermenting ale yeast, preferably one which will give some fruity estery flavor to the beer, rather than a so-called "clean" yeast. White Labs WLP002 English Ale, or WLP004 Irish Ale are good, as are Wyeast 1028 London Ale, and 1098 Whitbread. Aim for 65–70 °F for the primary, but with these yeasts, it won't matter too much if the temperature drifts a little above 70 °F. Properly brewed, an old ale makes an excellent fireside companion in a cold winter. And the next winter.

– Terry Foster, Sept. 2004



Top 20 Old Ales

Kuhnenn Bourbon Barrel Fourth Dementia (4D) Old Ale	4.12
AleSmith Barrel Aged Decadence 2005	4.04
Founders Black Biscuit	4.03
Kuhnenn Fourth Dementia Old Ale	3.99
Harviestoun Ola Dubh (40 Year Old)	3.98
Kuhnenn Fifth Dementia Very Old Ale	3.92
Harviestoun Ola Dubh (30 Year Old)	3.92
AleSmith Decadence 2010	3.91
The Bruery Fruet	3.89
Founders Kaiser Curmudgeon	3.88
Harviestoun Ola Dubh (18 Year Old)	3.85
Harviestoun Ola Dubh (16 Year Old)	3.84
Harviestoun Ola Dubh (12 Year Old)	3.82
The Bruery Papier (Rye Whiskey Barrel Aged)	3.81
Fish Tale Old Woody English Old Ale	3.78
The Bruery Coton	3.77
Founders Curmudgeon Old Ale	3.75
Great Divide Hibernation Barrel Aged	3.74
Great Divide Hibernation Ale	3.72
The Bruery Papier (Brandy Barrel Aged)	3.72

#1 Kuhnenn Bourbon Barrel Fourth Dementia

A: Pours a dark brown with plum edges. A one finger head of tan foam forms on the pour and quickly dissipates to some wisps and a thin collar. Splotchy, soapy lace is left down the glass with some light sticky residue as well. **S:** Wow, there is a ridiculous amount of deliciousness going on in the nose. Sweet bourbon, light oak, slightly charred marshmallow, dark prune fruits, grainy malts and a little touch of alcohol the back end. **T:** Sweet bourbon is up front with some woody oak mixing in as well. Heavily toasted marshmallow, semi wet leather, roasted oats and some tobacco leaves. Light bitter dark fruits. The finish has a slight alcohol flavor with a touch of heat. **M:** Heavy bodied with low carbonation. The finish is smooth with some minimal heat with a nice sweetness. **O:** I didn't think the regular 4D could get any better. Oopsie! Barrel aging that bad boy just enhanced everything I loved about the regular 4D and just added new layers of complexity. I couldn't be more happy Serving type: bottle.

– Reviewed on: 05/10/2012

