

## Ullage and Spillage

by J.Random

Vancouver prides itself on being a popular tourist destination, but I suspect numbers would be less impressive if we subtracted cruise passengers passing through. The city also has a reputation as a conference location, though we are seeing a downturn in non-essential business travel. I've attended and co-ordinated a few over the last 10 years. When I travel, I seek out brewpubs and bars with craft beers and I'm rarely disappointed. Until recently, Vancouver lagged behind most North American cities in attractions for beer lovers. Sure, we have an excellent selection of brewpubs downtown. My out-of-town clients now invariably ask "what night can we get together at Steamworks/Yaletown/DIX (delete as applicable)." We also have a good supply of microbreweries, supplying bars, pubs and restaurants so visitors have a reasonable chance of bumping into a local craft brew. However, Vancouver had, until recently, been missing two key features. First was a beer bar with more than a handful of craft brews. Second was a pub with a regular supply of cask conditioned beer. Thanks to Nigel Springthorpe at the Alibi Room we now have a world class beer bar (14 taps). Thanks to R&B Brewing and the new Irish Heather, we now have cask beer available seven days week. What is more, these two locations are only a stone's throw apart in Gastown. OK, so you would have to get a lucky bounce.

After recent trips, it occurred to me our hotels should also be serving B.C. beers. Imagine my surprise when the Cambridge hotel in Ontario offered Wellington pale ale from the Waterloo Brewery and Stone Hammer dark, not to mention Morlands' Old Speckled Hen, one of my favourite imports. I was also delighted to find Big Rock beers in the Calgary airport hotel. Vancouver hotels have proved disappointing. More than once I've asked, "have you any local beers?" and the answer has been: "We have Kokanee."

Since I had to be downtown for a conference recently, I did a quick survey of craft beers among Vancouver hotel bars and I was pleasantly surprised. The Metropolitan had R&B Red Devil and

Dark Star stout, the Westin Grand had Lighthouse amber, OK Springs pale ale and 1516 Bavarian lager. Some hotels had Grandville Island lager and pale ale, usually with one other, including the Four Seasons with Crannog Back Hand of God stout, the Waterfront with R&B Raven cream ale, the Pan Pacific with Sleeman honey brown (not exactly B.C. but give them some credit) and the Renaissance Harbourside without a third craft beer. The Delta Vancouver Suites just had Granville Island lager. The Fairmont Hotel Vancouver had Whistler lager and pale ale plus Russell honey blond. The Marriott had OK Springs pale ale, 1516 Bavarian lager and Black lager. The bar of the Hyatt was unaccountably closed but peering through the glass door, it looked like they might have had something tolerable. By no means an exhaustive survey, but not a bad compared to just a few years ago.

Another positive move on the tourism front would be to improve and continuously update B.C.'s listings on various beer-related web sites, such as brewpubzone, ratebeer.com, beermapping.com etc., a job for somebody more comfortable than I with web site input. I do smurf the intraweb when travelling, and find these websites way out of date. I believe it was Keith Lemke's idea to promote B.C. as Beer Country. We still have a way to go to match Washington, Oregon or California, but demand creates supply. Whistler Brewhouse's Dave Woodward says it was the Americans up from Washington State that bolstered the demand for IPA allowing him to put one on tap year round. Ya gotta love those tourists. Cheers. §



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