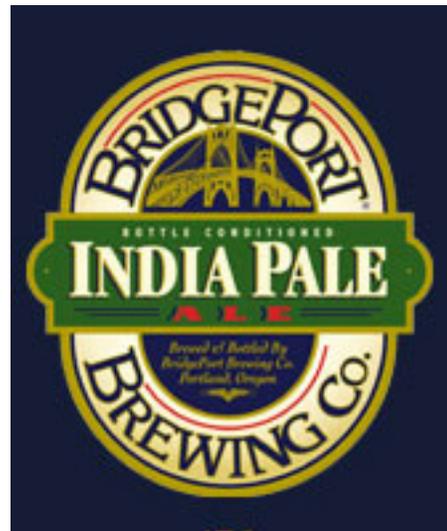


ULLAGE AND SPILLAGE

by J.Random

As with most of my ramblings, this was stimulated by a sequence of separate discussions, this time around the subject of India pale ale, particularly British style IPA. In my estimation the IPAs brewed by the major brewers of England are pale imitations of what might have been. The so-called British-style IPAs brewed in B.C. may be brewed with Goldings and Fuggles but I would not demean them by putting them into the same type category as the 20th and 21st century UK brews. At the pub nearest my workplace in early 1980s London, Charrington IPA was hardly more hoppy than any other bitter available at the time. Last year, we went into a pub in Cornwall and asked for St Austell IPA. The guy at the bar next to us said, “You know they do have Tribute,” (the best bitter) meaning, they also have the good stuff. There may be craft breweries in the UK making better IPAs but I have not been fortunate enough to encounter them.

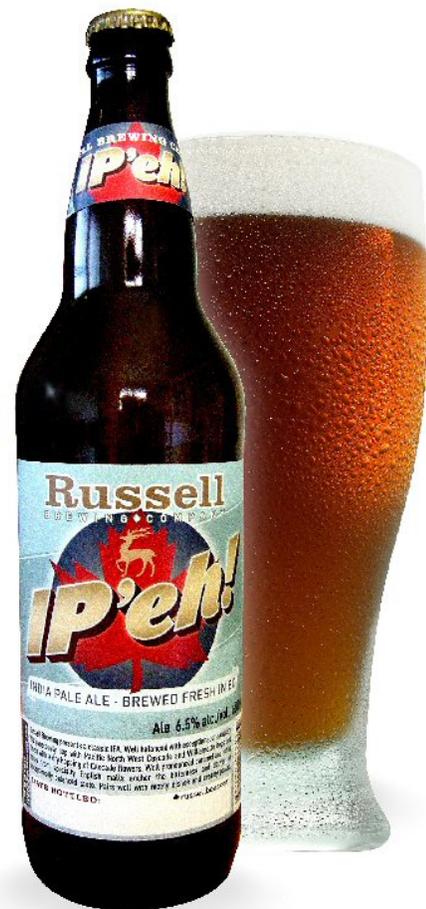


Unfortunately, the term IPA has become one of the least precise in brewing. It is now being applied to everything from a basic domestic Canadian beer (AK) through English best bitters (UK) to North American interpretations of the original descriptions (NA) and finally the Pacific North West (PNW) style including double or imperial IPAs. Despite reproduction ad nauseam of the story of IPA on labels, beer mats and web sites I suspect none of these comes close to the beer that might have been shipped to India in the late 1700s and early 1800s to keep the squaddies happy. It would have been very highly hopped to survive the long journey and high temperatures of two Equator crossings, which pretty much excludes the AK and most UK types. It would have had higher alcohol content than the average, and the average was about 6.5% (lower alcohol “small beer” drunk at breakfast was brewed from further sparging of the mash) before Lloyd George forced brewers to reduce beer strength (and opening hours) to stop WWI munitions workers blowing themselves up after lunch in the pub. That excludes the remaining UK types. Given the malting, kilning and brewing technology of the time the original IPA must have been similar in colour to a British pale ale which is considerably darker than AK or many of the pilsner-coloured NA types. East Kent Goldings would likely have been the main variety used for dry hopping which excludes many of the NA and all the PNW types. It would have been thoroughly fermented out on voyage, which drops out any of

the NA or PNW types with residual sweetness, though some say it was refermented in bottle when it reached India. The 1700s and 1800s IPAs would certainly not have been citrusy since such flavours were not noticeable in the hop varieties of England prior to 1916 (see below) and that pretty much excludes the entire PNW type. It may have been somewhat fruity from periods of warmth during secondary fermentation. Finally, I strongly suspect that the charred interior of the barrels might well have adsorbed some flavours and imparted others, such as a hint of oak.

Like any successful technology, IPA has diversified and evolved in different directions in different regions. Anybody that has a beef about terminology just needs to be told that there was a time when beer was hopped and ale was not. Typically the next stage in evolution is for one regional variant to clearly stand out as superior and be gradually adopted by the other regions. Judging by the rate of spread of the PNW type, I suspect this will end up driving the other variants to extinction, given sufficient time.

Though others may disagree, I would put most B.C. IPAs into a broad NA category. Only in the last five years have we really seen the PNW-IPA make significant gains in B.C.. Tony DeWalt led the charge when he was brewing at DIX and Derrick Franche took up the flag, however Dave Woodward at the Whistler Brewhouse and Gary Lohin at Central City/Red Racer are now in the vanguard of the movement. There is good reason why Canada should not



resist assimilation. According to Don Van Valkenburg, (www.calferm.org/edu/hops/Pedigree.htm) “Apart from Cluster, the most significant influence in the development of North American hops was the work carried on by Professor E.S. Salmon of Wye College, England. In 1916, seeds collected by Professor Macoun near Morden in Manitoba, Canada, were sent to Wye College. From these seeds, Salmon obtained a plant he referred to as BB1.” This strain and those bred from it were re-introduced into North America and further developed to create many of the varieties used today. Could it be the modern IPA is coming home to Canada? I’ll drink to that.

Much has been written on this subject and two seriously well researched articles are:

www.brewingtechniques.com/library/styles/2_2style.html

www.brewingtechniques.com/library/styles/2_3style.html

Cheers! §

