



November 2007

### Dulle Teve 10° Tripel

De Dolle Brouwers, Esen, Belgium

10.0%abv \$5.75/330ml

After an absence of nearly four years, we have finally seen the return of one of our very favorite Belgian microbrewers, de Dolle, and we are so ecstatic about the event, we decided to use one of their beers as one of our November Club selections. De Dolle Brouwers – “the Mad Brewers” – have been brewing commercially since 1980, but their farmhouse brewery goes back much further. The oldest building on the property was built in 1835 by a medical doctor, Louis Nevejan, as a brewery and distillery. Upon Nevejan’s death, in 1882, the property was sold to the Costenoble family. The Costenoble Brewery was run by three successive generations of the family over the next century, until the last brewer passed away without an heir interested in the business, in 1980. Shortly thereafter, Joe and Kris Herteleer – brothers who are a doctor and an architect, respectively – purchased the buildings and brewing equipment just for the sake of maintaining a brewing tradition in their hometown of Esen, just north of Brussels. Both brothers were fairly accomplished home brewers, and they weren’t really looking for a commercial opportunity, but more of an advanced laboratory for their brewing experiments. Soon, though, the cost of maintaining the historic old buildings on the property meant that the brothers – who both still work full time in their chosen professions – decided to start brewing on a commercial level. To this day Kris, who is the head brewer, brews occasionally in the evenings, and both brothers operate the brewery on weekends, while their mother greets the visiting public and leads tour groups. Their total output is only about 900 barrels of beer per year – smaller than the capacity of a single Budweiser lagering tank!

The brothers produce six regular ales at their brewery, including four different seasonal offerings, the most famous of which is their Oerbier, a sour red ale that is their fall seasonal selection. Two beers are available more or less year-round (if they didn’t run out regularly): a Special Export Stout that they brew just for their American importer, and our Beer of the Month, the Dulle Teve. Dulle Teve (“Mad Bitch” in Flemish) takes its name from a long forgotten beer brewed by the Costenobles in the 1920’s and ‘30’s, several empty bottles of which were found by the brothers while cleaning out one of the old brewery buildings. When asked, though, they will tell you the name is homage to their hard working mother. The label art is by a local artist, and comes from a painting hanging in the local modern art museum. The beer itself is fashioned after the great Tripels of the Trappist and other Abbey brewers. It is brewed using pale malt and, according to tradition, pale candy sugar, to boost the amount of fermentable sugars and, thus, the strength of the finished ale. Kent Goldings hops from southern England are used for their balancing bitterness and lack of strong hop aroma, as the focus of this style of beer is the sweeter, fruity notes of the fermented malt. Their house yeast is one that was propagated from the original Rodenbach yeast strain, and it imparts a characteristic sour and slightly musty note in the finished product. After the initial fermentation, the beer is lightly filtered, then bottled with an addition of yeast and candy sugar to complete fermentation in the bottle. This results in an ale with the potential to age and evolve for up to five years if kept in a cool, dark place. It also means that the beer will pour into the glass slightly cloudy unless great care is taken to decant the beer from its sediment – but I prefer the more complex flavors of the slightly clouded brew. Serve your Mad Bitch in a classic Belgian Ale chalice or from a large wine glass that will allow proper head development, and serve it fairly well chilled, around 40°F.

The Dulle Teve pours into the glass a cloudy yellow-gold color, with an active, rocky white head that leaves a nice lace as it recedes down the glass. The aromas are crisp and citrusy, with a hint of pear drops, and a touch of wild funk from the yeast strain used in fermentation. It is not a particularly heavy beer on the palate, considering its sturdy alcoholic strength, and has very vivid fruit flavors that cross the spectrum from sour yellow citrus notes, to big, rich tropical fruits. There is a brief burst of pepper and clove spice before it disappears leaving a very nice, dry freshness in the finish. Try this one with rich, soft-ripened cheeses, flavorful seafood stews or steamed mussels – the Belgian classic.



### Tomos Watkin OSB

**Hurns Brewing Company, Swansea, Wales**

**4.5%abv \$5.00/500ml**

In 1996, Simon Buckley – whose family had sold their Buckley Brewery just a few years earlier – purchased the Castle Brewery in the Welsh town of Llandeilo. Renaming the business Tomos Watkin, after a defunct 19<sup>th</sup> century brewery, Buckley began brewing a selection of real craft ales in cask that he sold directly to local pubs and inns. By the year 2000, Buckley had taken on enough outside investors to purchase a new property in Swansea, as part of an overall £10 million (\$20million) expansion. Over the next two years, Watkin purchased a local inn and a couple of pubs, and was well along the way to becoming the fastest growing brewery in the last century in Wales, which had been in a long decline, due to the overwhelming popularity of imported lagers. In 2002, however, as Buckley and his new board of directors were looking to sell off the inn and pubs in order to concentrate on expanding the brewing business, their new investors balked, and in the ensuing shake-up, the pub business was sold to one concern, while the brewery ended up being sold to the Hurns Company. The Hurns Co. was a well established firm, having begun in the mineral water and soft drink business in Swansea in 1888. Over the years, Hurns had become South Wales' largest distributor of beverages, now including wine, beer, and spirits – in fact, they had been the distributor for Tomos Watkin for a couple of years by then. Shortly thereafter, the new owners installed the first bottling line at the brewery, and soon the Watkin beers were being distributed in cask and bottle all over Wales, and in to the rest of the British Isles. Now the largest brewing company in Wales, they are exporting to Europe and North America, and have cemented themselves into the daily life of Swansea as one of the largest employers in the city.

The OSB in Tomas Watkin's OSB stands for Old-Style Bitter but, to be accurate, Bitter *is* the old style in the British Isles. From the time that hops first reached Britain (some time in the early 15<sup>th</sup> century), to the advent of refrigeration in the late 1800's, which allowed for the first time the production of lager beers, Porter and Bitter were the two main styles of British ale. Once the lager became popular, though, all else seemed to fall before it, and most of Europe forgot its heritage as brewers of great ales. By the late 1980's, a true ale – or 'Real Ale', as they came to be known – was as hard to find as a four-leafed clover. Then, a new movement began with an organization of beer lovers calling themselves CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ales, whose self-imposed duty was to revive the traditional styles of British ales that existed before the European lager invasion. By the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, CAMRA had succeeded at levels they had never dreamed of, and these days Real Ale is making a huge comeback in Britain – and around the world. The classic Bitter style is one that emphasizes the sweet richness of the malt used, while using just enough hops to provide a bittering balance to that sweetness. The really fragrant, pungent hops that we know of today – especially here on the West Coast of America – were not around at the time, so these beers were not exactly 'hoppy', but did achieve substantial bitterness from the large quantity of hops used. Tomos Watkin's OSB is brewed using a combination of pale, Crystal, and wheat malts. They are steeped and brewed in local spring water, along with Willamette and Fuggles hops for aroma, and Kent Goldings for bitterness. All of the hops are added during the brew, as opposed to being dry-hopped, where the hops are added to the fermenter for greater hop aroma and less bitterness. The beer is bottle conditioned, so it may throw a little sediment, which can easily be left in the bottle. Try your OSB from a pint glass at British cellar temp – about 45-50°F, to show it best.

Tomos Watkin's OSB pours into the glass with a rich, if slightly hazy, copper color, and a thin, beige head that fades quickly, and leaves very little lace on the glass. The nose shows a fascinating interplay between the roasty, grainy aromas of the malts used, and the sweeter, fruitier notes that are the by-product of fermentation. These qualities are apparent on the very well-balanced palate, too, which leads with crisp, fruity flavors of citrus and pit fruits, and finishes quite dry and toasty, with hints of roasted malt and freshly baked bread. The hops are apparent in the bitterness level of the beer, but there is no pungent hop perfume due to the types of hops used. This would be a nice pairing with any sort of traditional pub grub, from meat pies to bangers and mash, or, if you are adventurous, try making Welsh rarebit – kind of the Welsh version of fondue.