

## Part 4: The Sheffield Home Beer & Winemaking Show

On 7th June, 1997 I visited a home-brew show held in Sheffield. It was difficult to get firm prices, let alone buy anything, from many of the stallholders. They were there primarily to present their wares to home-brew shops. However, for a home beer maker with a strong bias towards full grain mashing, it was an enlightening view of the current state of the hobby.

Of the thirty-four stalls, about 20 were connected to home made beer. Following directly from my previous article on malt mills, I discovered on the **Brewferm** stand what must be one of the best malt mills yet offered to the home beer maker. The diagram shows the essential features. It consisted of two cylindrical rollers about 4cm diameter and 25cm long. Each had a knurled surface and one was turned by the attached handle; I tried it and the action was quite smooth. The second roller was driven by the simple expedient of a rubber O-ring around its circumference which pressed against the first roller. Because its effective diameter was slightly greater by dint of the ring, the rotation rates of the two metal surfaces would be different, producing the slight shear necessary for effective milling. I assume the gap could be varied by using different thicknesses of O-ring. Unfortunately there was no back-up literature, but I did manage to squeeze out of them that the expected retail price for the mounted version with hopper would be around £140.

On the same stand was a lot of very serious looking gear for the brewer. A seamless stainless steel boiler of about 10 gallons capacity sat on top of a large gas ring mounted in a sturdy steel frame some 2 feet square. There was a steel and brass bodied pump with a shaft that could be attached to your electric drill and much, much more. Again, no literature or prices. **Brupak** also did a lot of brewing hardware: mash tuns, boilers, wort chiller, sparging arms, mills, false bottoms, gas burners, fermenters and casks. Of equal interest is their extensive range of grains (over 30 types), vacuum-sealed hops (again, 30 plus) and special liquid yeast cultures (over 20 strains). For the masher who wished to try some unusual styles there were ready made all-grain kits including the appropriate hops: about 20 types including many continental styles.

The other beer-related stalls divided into malt, hops, yeast, hardware and malt extract based kits. Tots of beer (and wine) samples made up from kits were on offer and we did our best to taste quite a few. Generally, the wines were quite acceptable and some were very good indeed. I wish the same were true of the beers; they were all made from extract, and gas cylinders and pressure valves were everywhere. Whether this was to stop them 'going off I don't know, but most of the beers we tried ranged from mediocre to downright nasty. My colleague commented that even though these had been brewed by the makers themselves, they still tasted that way.

The noble exception was again **Brupak**. Although their offerings were brewed from the 'Fine Yorkshire Ales' extract kits, they were quite quaffable and had no hint of the dreaded 'home brew tang'. In the first part of this series, I said that some beer kits had improved in recent years, but back then, after visiting this show, I became a more entrenched 'masher' than before.

\* *Brewferm Products, Burg. Heymansplein 45 B3581 Beverlo-Beringen, Belgium. Tel. +32-11.40.14.08. Fax. +32-11/34.73.79*