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DRINX, Rudders and the Rare Bird Show - How Small Town Brewpubs Can Work in Atlantic Canada

Craig Pinhey



As we drove from Yarmouth to Sydney and back to New Brunswick on a recent holiday/work trip, I tried to make sure we visited as many brewpubs as possible. Not that there are very many in Nova Scotia, but at least there's one at the far West -- Rudder's in Yarmouth www.yarmouthweb.com/rudders/ -- and one close to the far East -- The Rare Bird www.rarebirdpub.com in Guysborough. Come on Cape Breton, it's about time!

Rudders is a regular stop for me as I have family in nearby Meteghan, and also because the brewer, Randy Lawrence is a long-time home brewing buddy. Randy is also a carpenter and was involved in the Paddy's Brewpubs in Kentville and Wolfville before brewing at Rudder's. Actually, he brewed when Rudder's was first opened as The Queen Molly, "way back" in the 90's.



Rudder's is located in the former Parker-Eakin's Building, built in 1867. Rudder was the nickname of both Captain George Washington Churchill and his mate, Aaron Flint Churchill, famous for the "Voyage of Many Rudders" on the ship "Research" which crossed the Atlantic in the winter of 1866-67.

The brewery has a 10 barrel gravity flow system, in which Randy produces a range of ales including a Blonde, Red, Brown and seasonal beers like Blueberry and Wee Heavy. When we were there I enjoyed the Acadian Amber, a fairly hoppy ale along the lines of an English style bitter.

It's a gorgeous old building, and the restaurant is quite good, specializing in seafood -- the fish cakes are yummy -- and other local fare, including decent rappeur (email me if you want to know what that is).

Now, a long drive along the shore, far past Halifax to historic Guysborough, will land you in the new Rare Bird Pub, owned by the same folks who run the lovely DesBarres Manor, also in town www.desbarresmanor.com.

The Rare Bird is right on the water, with wonderful vistas and a large, inviting patio. The view from the outside is very impressive, and inside it is quite modern, very spacious, and features a varied, but pretty typical, pub menu, highlighted by pizzas and planked salmon cooked in their wood fired hearth.

Beer is brewed inside at the Chedabucto Bay Brewing Company, which has historical significance since, according to their website, Nicholas Denys' Guysborough brewing operation dates back to the mid 1600's, believed to be the first commercial brewery in North America!



Beer wise, I tasted their Hummingbird Lite, faintly malty, with practically no hops, the Rare Bird Ale, a bit hazy and light in body and flavour for microbrewed pale ale, and the Hawk's Red, a slightly darker ale with a touch of malt sweetness, but still very low in hops and body.

It is my hope that in the next few years there will be a few more brewpubs in our small but beautiful (and

thus tourist friendly) towns. Mabou in Cape Breton should have one, as should Louisbourg – the historic site that currently serves a bitter and mean bottle version of Guinness – quite hard to drink. Why they do this, when they could have a historic styled onsite brewpub, is beyond me. Other tourist towns just dying for a brewpub are Lunenburg, Mahone Bay, Chester, Bridgewater, Antigonish, and Digby. There's probably more.

For now, though, I invite you to enjoy, and support, the ones we have!

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Author's Biography

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