

# w·i·z·a·r·d·s

*Worcester Incorporated Zymurgists Advancing Real Draughts*



**Homebrew Club  
Worcester, MA**

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## Highlights from the year that was 2022

The club had another strong year despite the pandemic continuing to wreak havoc all around us. We started the year meeting on Zoom, then had a few in-person meetings, went back to Zoom and are now finally meeting in-person on a regular basis. Along the way we kept up the barrel project, rebuilt the club jockey and cauldron, did a bulk grain buy, started some mini-comps, went to the NE Home Brew Jamboree and ended the year with another Advent calendar beer swap. All this on top of our weekly Thursday night social call where we're now up to 145 in a row with only a few holiday breaks.

### January Club Meeting

2022 started where 2021 left, meeting on Zoom. We talked mostly about the holidays, the lousy pandemic and a little bit about our plans for the coming year.

### Barrel Brewing at Duane's – March 2022

The club met at Duane's house in Worcester on a cold chilly winter day to brew another twenty-some gallons to top up the sour barrel.

To learn more about the brew day and for the complete barrel project story, see the website at <http://www.wizardshbc.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/The-Sour-Barrel-Project.pdf>.



## WIZARDs 2022 Year in Review

### [March Club Meeting](#)

For the first time in just over two years, we were back at Deja Brew and meeting in-person! Everyone was enjoying being face to face and sharing a few brews so much that we never did get around to conducting any important club business.

### [Barrel Filling at Bill's – April 2022](#)

April came and it was time to distribute the sour beer and top up the barrel. After the barrel was refilled with the beer brewed at Duane's in March, twelve kegs left Bill's house with the participants for the final step. Rob got us eleven different honeycomb wood samples to treat the soured beer. The plan was to age each of the first eleven kegs on a different wood sample for six to eight weeks. The twelfth keg was left untreated as the base beer control. Tasting the finished product would have to wait until November...

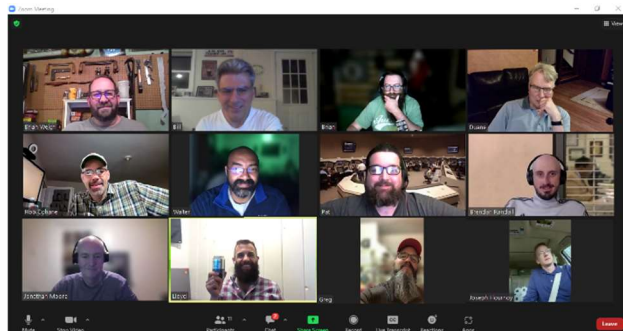
### [April Club Meeting](#)

Wow, two months in a row and we're still at Deja Brew. Maybe the pandemic is winding down. The big accomplishment this month was making plans to rebuild the club's jockey box and cauldron. They've had a tough life and are starting to show some wear and tear. For the first step, Brian G took on the task of disassembling and cleaning the jockey box and Greg did the same for cauldron. Kudos to them for getting the project started.

Annual elections were held. Eli was elected president, Bill M vice-president and Bill N as treasurer.

### [May Club Meeting](#)

Oh no, covid worries kicked back in this month and we were on Zoom again! Just when we're getting used to all being in the same place, this happens. On the plus side, nobody had to drive home after a few beers.



### [June Club Meeting](#)

Covid worries faded away and we were back at Deja Brew for another in-person meeting. The plan for this month's meeting was to start the jockey box rebuild but in reality we talked more about rebuilding it than actually doing it. And with all that talk of the jockey box, what better time to start talking about this year New England Home Brew Jamboree?

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### [July Club Meeting – It's the Swill-Off Again](#)

We showed up at Deja Brew for our July meeting but were sadly locked out. Apparently, the landlord changed the locks without telling us. How dare he? A quick pivot sent us to Bill M's back yard fire pit in Shrewsbury.

It was a busy meeting. Now that we're starting to meet in person again, we brought back the opening toast. Each month one club member presents a beer for the opening toast in whatever way they want. This month Bill N. brought two versions of a new beer he's working on for a blind tasting and feedback without telling anyone the beer style in advance. Right after that we jumped into our annual Summer Swill-off. This year's theme was Eurotrash - any mass-produced European beer.



Pat's usual witty write-up of the swill-off can be found on the website at <http://www.wizardshbc.com/2022/11/16/2022-swill-off/>.

And if all that wasn't enough, we actually started the jockey box rebuild. But if the pictures tell a story, only a select few actually worked on it while the rest of us watched. Thanks to Bill M. for finishing off the final touches after we left.



### [Bulk Grain Buy – July 2022](#)

Brendan organized our second bulk grain buy at Stone Path Malting in Wareham. Bill N, Greg, Rob and Brendan made the trek down south to pick up another fifteen sacks of grain for the club. Their tap room was closed for a private event that day so after picking up our grain, some of us visited the nearby Lucky Goat Brewery for a quick one before heading home.

One of the nice things about Stone Path is there is no minimum order, so you can buy as many or as few bags you like at a very reasonable price. Malts and prices are on their website – just call them if you're interested.

### [August Club Meeting – Mead Night](#)

Bill M kicked off the meeting with an American Pale Ale for the opening toast. This month's meeting was all about mead. While talking about making it we had

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plenty to sample. Rob brought a ginger mead, an apricot mead, a rum barrel aged mead, a Saison yeast mead from 2013, and another well aged from 2014. Bill N. brought his BlackBerry mead. Eli also had a couple for us but at the last minute he couldn't make it. We're not sure if the night inspired a lot of mead making but we had an informative and good time none the less.

### [New England Homebrew Jamboree, Tamworth Camping Area, Tamworth, NH](#)



The Wizards made another strong showing at the New England Homebrew Jamboree in Tamworth, NH. Jon, Walter and Bill M joined us for the first time this year. We shared a tent with FOAM and the Strange Brewers were right next door. The newly rebuilt jockey box and cauldron were pressed into service and worked flawlessly. Who could ask for more? All in all, it was a good time with FOAM, M4, the Strange Brewers and all the other clubs. And a decent sum of money was raised for Make-A-Wish to boot!

Here's the tally of what you missed, taken at 2:00 PM Saturday, starting at the stage:

- Winnepesaukee Area Brew Crew 2
- RIBS 18
- Seacoast 35
- MVHBC 22
- Southern Maine 10
- BFD 10
- CBS 20
- Northshore 33
- Knights of the Mashing Fork 14
- WORTS 8
- Strange Brewers 8
- FOAM 7
- WIZARDS 12
- Southshore 51
- Mash Holes 7
- Blue Line trailer, which included the CAHB 4

That's 16 clubs pouring 261 beers, wines, ciders and meads. It's three more clubs and 45 more beverage choices than last year. It also includes one new club. Interestingly enough, it's four clubs and only two beverages less than the pre-pandemic 2019 jamboree.



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Plans are already being made for next year's jamboree, the biggest of which is to spruce up our booth a bit!

### [September Club Meeting – Oktoberfest!](#)

For the first time ever, the opening toast was a mini-comp for a Celebration Ale Clone. Bill M, Eli and Brendan all brought clones for a blind tasting and Bill walked home with the crown.

Then it was time for our annual Oktoberfest tasting. President Eli put some authentic Oktoberfest music on and we got on with our twenty-beer tasting. Yes, I did say twenty. We had nineteen commercial beers and one homebrew from Eli. Pat's customary witty Oktoberfest write-up with all the gory details can be found at the end of this newsletter.



### [October Club Meeting](#)

Thanks to Jeremiah the opening toast with pumpkin beers. We also had a member of M4 join us. Hopefully we'll see more as the year rolls on.

This month's featured event was the first half of the Barth Haas aroma panel sensory kit. The kit consists of 12 vials containing 12 common aromas naturally found in hops. They are for smelling only, not tasting. After opening and smelling each aroma, we tried to identify the various aromas we learned about in the kit by picking them out in several different hops.

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### November Club Meeting

The opening toast was a Schwartzbier mini-comp. Brain talked about the style while we sampled Köstritzer Schartzbier, Germany's #1 Dark Lager, as a calibration beer. Brian took the top honors between himself and Bill M. As the winner, Brian picked the opening toast mini-comp style to be Best Bitter for the February meeting.

The sour swap and tasting was the main feature at this month's meeting. We had eleven different beers treated with wood plus an untreated control (which sadly has not survived the test of time). The club favorites were Yellow Birch, Cedar, Hickory and White Ash. The most interesting were White Ash, Bald Cypress and Sassafras. We were also able to compare White Oak versus Red Oak (red wins) and Soft versus Hard Maple (hard wins). The complete barrel project story is on the website at <http://www.wizardshbc.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/The-Sour-Barrel-Project.pdf>.



### WIZARDS Advent Calendar 2022

We met in the old Bed, Bath & Beyond parking lot for the Advent calendar beer swap for the second year in a row. Here's where we started:



And here they all are unwrapped:





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*1 Swapping beers for the Advent Calendar*

### [December club meeting – Wormtown Brewery](#)

For the second year in a row, we kept with tradition and took our December meeting on the road. This year we headed to Wormtown Brewery in Worcester and were joined by a few of the members of M4 and the Strange Brewers. After closing out Wormtown, the party got moved to The Pint just down the road. Not much club business got discussed, but we did discover Shuffleboard!



### [WIZARDS Tasting Glasses](#)



Good news – even though we sold some at the jamboree, we still have plenty of them.

Any member in good standing (ie, dues paying) gets two for free and additional glasses can be bought at the bargain rate of 2 for \$5.

***Till next year, see you at the monthly club meeting, always held on the third Tuesday of the month.***

[Oktoberfest 2022, courtesy of Pat](#)

Guten Tag Wizards!

Fall is in the air. The nights are getting cold. The leaves are turning colors. The kids are back in school! Yes, the seasons are turning indeed. This also means that it's time for us Wizards to get together and enjoy (or degrade) some Fest biers. That's right, it's time for the Wizard's annual Oktoberfest.

This year's tasting was special for a couple of reasons. The first reason being this is our first in-person Oktoberfest in two years! With most pandemic protocols ending we were finally able to hold this event in person. Next year we may even be able to do this in Canada!

The second reason this event was so special was people REALLY wanted to share beers this year. My God, this was the largest volume of beers we've seen at a meeting in quite some time. We had nineteen (19!) beers to review. I love the enthusiasm; I really do but next year we may have to limit the beers to 1 selection per member.

Besides the fest beers we needed to drink we also had our first nano-comp between three Wizards. Bill M, Eli and Brendan went mono e mono e mono in a battle of Sierra Nevada Celebration Ale clones. This was a simple comp of the present Wizards voting on which one they liked the best. In the end Bill M carried the day and took home the gold. Well, he wasn't even there so I guess the gold is still at Deja Brew waiting for him. Congrats Bill M!

Now before we begin let's get the ground rules out of the way. The theme: Oktoberfest! Basically, any Fest beer or Marzen style lager from either side of the pond is considered acceptable. As usual the scoring was done by the Wizard's time-honored tradition of finger rating (1 being awful 5 being sublime). I've rounded to the nearest hundredths (.00) because people just don't seem to believe me if I round up any higher. At the end we'll crown the winner of the night.

That's enough talk. We have too much beer to taste to waste any more time with words. For me, I found it faster to read about all these beers by using a John Moschitta Jr voice in your head.

My fellow Wizards, I give you the 2022 Wizard's Oktoberfest.



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1. Weihenstephaner Festbier- As soon as we opened this beer the sound of polka music came out of nowhere. I wasn't sure if everyone could hear the music so for the time being I decided to keep this to myself. Also, right off the bat we had our first snarky comment. "Just give it a 3." No sir, that's not how we do things here. The rest of the comments reflected the overall positive feelings towards this beer. "It's good." "What is the hop? Not hallertau, not tetenage." "Has some sweetness. Almost Heineken-esk." There was also a very good story about rabid skunks. That I thought was too much of a tangent to record here; but people found it rather amusing. Overall, the worst thing about this beer was having to type out its damn name. I need a stenographer. 39 pts = 3.55
2. Notch Festbier- Where the hell is this music coming from??? Seriously, this is freaking me out. Besides the mystery music I noticed Greg mumbling in the corner to apparently nobody but himself. His civil war era-style beard trembling as he spoke. This was getting to be a bit much. Besides my growing concerns I did have a job to do so I moved forward listening to comments. "I like the brewery, not the beer. Beer is dry. Has a caramel thing going on needs more hop presence. Pretty good." This beer underwhelmed some based on the expectations. 25 pts = 2.27
3. Foundation- Gretel Festbier- I finally figured out that the music was coming from a speaker and not just in my head, and Greg started talking to other people present at the table, so I started to feel a lot better. I don't need therapy! Besides this giant relief there were also comments about this beer. "I like this brewery. Nice body. Seems very American." The Brian's said some funny things that people enjoyed, and I missed. Besides that, Gretel performed decently. 32 pts = 2.91
4. East Rock Oktoberfest- From the city of my birth, New Haven, CT! Jeremiah had the first major pouring foul of the night. Apparently, he felt the beer was best shared by being poured directly on a tabletop. "We need mustard." Followed by lots of mustard talk. "I need to brew an Oktoberfest but it's September!!!" "Seems generic." East Rock Oktoberfest really seemed to make the crowd go "Meh" 27 pts = 2.45
5. Banded Brewing Oktoberfest- So this beer was the first one to land under the two-finger average of the evening. Whomever made this beer really likes crystal malts. "Nice aroma. A bit nutty. There's a lot of malt in there." "Some dark malt all up in here. Crystal 120? Cara munich? Too much roast." We had our first suggestion on what to do for next year's swill off! **"Next swill off early season/late season beers!"** Whenever we talk about the swill off it always fills me with warm fuzzies. 22pts = 2

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- Wait! We had our first post-pandemic voting correction! I don't always take people's objections into consideration with the voting; however, Brian W was adamant that one other Wizard's vote of a "5" should not be taken serious and reduced. I haven't seen him this pissed off since someone told him humus was better than baba ghanoush. Using his security council veto, we had to change that 5-vote vote to a 3. 20pts= 1.82 pts!
6. Captain Lawrence Marzen style lager- We continued our decent downwards with this next offering. We also started getting on each other's nerves a bit. "Stop smacking your dame lips! OH, I get it now." "This is the second Captain Lawrence brewery???" "What is that? Beta acid? It reformed the pretzel in my mouth. It's the dame bittering hop!" Not sure if it was the hop's fault, but this beer did not score well. 19pts = 1.73
  7. Weltenburger kloster- Well, we're seemingly in freefall now. The beers continued to not be up to our standards of what a festbier should be. "Lot of hops, what the hell?? Good color. Coco (not good). Unfinished unattenuated. Tastes like cinnamon. Oldest brewery? - not for this. Made with pool water." 16pts = 1.45
  8. Samuel Adams Octoberfest- While not a showstopper, SA Octoberfest did stop our descent into darkness. This mediocre beer helped to turn the needle upwards again. "Way too malty. Nice looking beer. USO5? They are consistent from year to year. Might be better cold." We also got our quote of the night from our commander in chief, Eli- "If you drink this by yourself it's good." We now know one of our president's guilty pleasures. 26 pts = 2.36
  9. Gneiss Roctoberfest- Gneiss didn't move us up or down from our current point. We did get some nice comments from it! "Rock this way!" "This needs a big ass head. Nice place. The beer of Gary Gnu. Caramelly. More of an amber lager. Do you want higher alcohol beers at festivals?" Besides these comments we had our first ever existential crisis at an Oktoberfest tasting. "Maybe we don't know what marzen should taste like- maybe it's a bad style?????" We may not be able to answer that question tonight, but at least we're drinking beer! 26pts = 2.36
  10. Brooklyn Brewing Octoberfest – Down we go again! Brooklyn brewing brought us back down below two fingers. "This is worse than the other one???" Too much crystal malt. A character of Marzen? Sweet, fruit flavor. I feel bad now. A good strong Vienna lager? Almost what I want out of a Marzen." 18pts = 1.64

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11. Konstantin Marzen- We had our next great idea for a club project during this beer's turn. "Let's make whiskey out of the leftovers." Sign me up! We also had our first social media hacking during this beer as well. "My Instagram was highjacked!!!" We also had marital infidelity. "My wife ran off with my best friend." My gosh, we seemed to be lifting out of the mid-beer doldrums. We also had some comments about the beer. "It's bubbling on my tongue. More bitter than the others. I don't like it at all." "You're tasteless. Do you get corn out of that?" The conversation was sparkling, and the score was decent as well. 29pts = 2.64.
12. Thackery- Redemption Rock. People were not feeling this beer. "They make terrible beer. I like their brewery, less their beers. That's shitty too." Silence..... (for like 45 seconds, I'm not sure what happened here but people just ran out of things to say) "An artificial sweetness/ There's a weird thing in the middle. Too much caramel. Not enjoyable." 19 pts = 1.73
13. Whisper – Treehouse- Finally we got above the three-finger average for the first time in a while. "Nice color. There's a separate line for lagers at treehouse. Clean bitterness all the way through. Sharp. Finishes sweet. They used small words to make this beer. A lot of mosaic?" 35 pts. = 3.18
14. Founders Oktoberfest- Voted Best can design of the evening! This beer started with a lot of gloom. "This one will be bad. They hit average better than anyone." This was followed by more Wizard's creativity. "I want the barrel aged Oktoberfest. There's a guy in Glasgow that started brewing 5 years ago and now makes barrel aged stuff." I have no idea who the man in Glasgow is, but he apparently has quite the following in Central Mass. 30 pts = 2.73
15. Von Trapp- Oktoberfest-

Ok, let's hold up for a minute. For next year I think 14 is the limit for beers to drink. By this point we were full of beer and were now looking for violence.

"I love to hold a grudge; It feels great. I'm willing to let it go after like 20 years, but I was wronged!!!" This litany of hate was followed by strong feelings of possession. "Don't wash my glass!" This was followed by the only comment that may have been about this beer. "Sterling tastes like American soil." Less hate, more love next time fellas.  
20pts = 1.82
16. Revolution Oktoberfest – The anger started to wane but was still prevalent "You don't know who Gary Glass is (!?!?!?)" "Why is the can marked with red marker?" I'm not sure if the next comments were purely medical or



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bragging about their drinking prowess: "I could need 8-10 shots. That's the goal! Let's get this over with!" Great questions were asked as well: "Why are four packs more expensive than six packs." "Clean with a little bit of malt." Overall, a nice showing for Revolution. 36 = 3.27

17. Left hand Oktoberfest – (frustrated sighing sounds) This beer. This freaking beer. Every year. Every. Year. E.V.E.R.Y..Y.E.A.R. At this point I'm not sure if I should resent this beer as an unwanted antagonist or embrace it as an old friend that I only get to see on this one night every year. Well let's get into it. "The new guy always brings this." This is true, I guess. I should ask for a disclaimer to be put on our recruiting materials. "This tastes like a Novemberfest. How old is this." We did have some nice friendly comments "If you had made this, I'd drink it." Love>Hate 17 pts = 1.55
18. Home brew! – Mar-zen **by Eli**- "made with American!" "Aged in a freezer." "So, I had a half sac of Munich same as Sam Adams" I'm not sure if all of that is a recipe for continued success but Eli pulled off a very nice beer. 37pts= 3.7 average, Eli wasn't allowed to vote. But we all enjoyed his beer.
19. Wachusett brewing Oktoberfest. Our last beer of the evening. We had to hurry up and drink this because Rob was turning off the lights on us. "House yeast for sure. ugh. It's an ale I got nothing astringent. I wanted to bring the worst!" 23 pts= 2.09

Wow, so there it was. This was a marathon meeting of sampling and judging and voting on the fly. I'm tired. The funny thing is we could have stopped after the first beer, Weihenstephaner Festbier because this beer was our best non-homebrewed beer of the evening. Overall, though Eli did have a higher average as he wasn't allowed to vote on his own beer. 3.7 for Mar-zen, by Eli. Way to go, El Presidente! Next year we should just drink these two beers for the entire night.

What a night we had, Wizards. So many comps, so many beers, so much judging. It was great to be able to do this in person, and indoors with all of you. I can't wait for next year's swill off. I can't wait to start distilling our dregs. I can't wait for the next time we can get together and have a few brews! Goodnight my fellow Wizards!

-Pat