



DYKES BREWERY

– WHEN EXPERIENCE WEIGHS HEAVILY

BY: WHISKY&BOURBON MAGAZINE, ROBERT DYKES. ROBERT@DYKESBREWERY.COM AND ANDERS KISSMEYER. ANDERS@KISSMEYER.DK

As a part of the Sweden theme in this issue of the SBR, we're happy to bring you a portrait of a very typical Swedish craft brewery, Dykes Brewery, located on Alnön, close to the town of Sundsvall in mid-Sweden. The article has been created as a combination of a portrait in interview format published in the magazine Whisky&Bourbon (www.livetsgoda.se), September issue 2018, supplemented with a couple of questions from the undersigned and, of course, Robert Dykes' answers to these questions. The result, in my view, gives a very good view into not only Dykes Brewery itself, but also into the DNA of the Swedish craft beer industry.



First thought that strikes one when trying beer from Dykes Brewery? This is so far from beginner level as it can be, and that is very true; Dick Dykes had been home-brewing for more than thirty years before the brewery was established on Alnön outside Sundsvall some 6 years ago. With his roots in the English countryside, he finds the inspiration for the various brews from the west and mixes it merrily with the highest quality water.

The results are among the most beautiful beers that consumers have tried from a Swedish microbrewery. Meet the brewer family Dykes on Alnön, Sweden!

Dykes Brewery was founded in 2013 by father and son, Dick and Robert Dykes. The experience of beer brewing, a knowledge Dick had accumulated for a long time, would now be commercialized, albeit on a smaller and primarily local scale. The first beers were launched at the local pub Bishop's Arms in Sundsvall, a town where beer brewing undoubtedly has its history all the way back to the second half of the 19th century when Sundsvalls Ölbryggeri was established, followed by Grönborgs. Perhaps best known was the Nordstjernen that lasted until 1950 before it was incorporated into AB Sundsvallsbryggerier, which was eventually bought in the 1980s



by Sweden's largest beer conglomerate, Pripps. Unfortunately, Pripps shut down the beer production in the city around 1992. With the exception of a few earlier brewpub projects in the city, it is Dykes Brewery that is now reviving the strong brewing tradition in the center of the Medelpad region, even though the brewery is in the archipelago and on the island of Alnön.

In today's increasingly brewery-tight Sweden, it is not always a dance on roses when it comes to being seen and heard. More than three hundred brewers are fighting for the consumer's attention, and it is easy to then jump to styles that are trending, 'in the now'. Somehow, Dykes Brewery has found its very own path, and it is, of course, Dick Dykes' origin that got to control, even if the door is left open in terms of curiosity and experimental desire. Something that the brewery's recently launched sour ales is a prime example of. Nevertheless, the various Dykes beers are well thought-through, and it is easy to find the common thread. The fact that the beers rarely become 'extremely extreme', with abundantly increased amounts of hops, for example, can certainly be explained by the brewmaster's decades of experience. Dick Dykes knows brewing like the back of his hand.

So, how did an Englishman end up in Sweden & why did he begin to brew beer?

Dick Dykes probably belongs to an extremely minimal group of brewers who can boast having produced their first beer at the age of 11. He then bought a small brewery kit at Boots in England with his grandmother and started making beer for his dad and his friends with the help of his mom's pressure cooker. 'Later in life, I met a Swedish girl, got married, and moved to Sweden. That was about 40 years ago. Sweden was fantastic, but when I moved here the beer selection was nothing to get excited about. There were maybe three kinds of ale at Systembolaget (the Swedish state monopoly stores for drinks holding more than 3.5 % ABV). So I did what I had to; I started brewing at home in my family's garage,' says Dick.

Robert, Dick's son, has many memories of his Dad's garage being something of a hangout for the neighbourhood men. But it wasn't the tinkering with cars that attracted them; it was Dick's beer.

'There were always a lot of old people there who threw darts, ate salt & vinegar chips and drank a beer or two. Their comments about how good the beer was contributed to the idea that we should package and sell it, but Dad said it was not the right time for it then,' Robert says.

But the right time came. In the mid-1990s, Systembolaget began to expand its beer offerings more and more, and, in



recent years, it has hardly been possible to miss how many microbreweries we now have in the country and on the shelves of the monopoly. Of course, the supply has also been correlated with a growing awareness of organic and locally produced beer. And if you have tasted a well-crafted craft beer with significantly longer production time than a commercial, then the knowledge is there, about the quality difference. 'In 2013, we felt it was time. In addition, I had been able to refine the recipes for 35 years. The technology and the ingredients had also become better and more accessible, so the time was right,' says Dick.

INSPIRATION COMES FROM THE WEST

Since its inception, Dykes Brewery has gone from a brewing capacity of about 200 litres per batch to what was inaugurated a couple of years ago and which can handle a brewing capacity of ca 1200 litres per batch. Self-designed, built by hand by father and son, and electrically powered. Today, the potential annual capacity is 50,000 litres. The inspiration is mainly from the USA and Dick's homeland, England. The influences from the west are also evident in the choice of hops and malt varieties where, for example, they are extra fond of hops such as Cascade, Northern Brewer, Fuggles, Centennial, East Kent Goldings, Citra and Amarillo.

AK: Does your local area somehow also give you inspiration for the brewing?

Yes, of course. We aim to work with local distribution directly from the brewery to local restaurants, pubs and Systembolaget in the region. Being close to our consumer is as important to us as the quality of the beer and its consistency. Our brewery's →



local roots are and will remain an important part of our identity.

AK: How do you decide what new beers to add to your portfolio?

We always focus on brewing authentic beers that reflect our heritage as brewers but also challenge local conventions. We do not have shareholders who tell us what to do, allowing us to work freely with the public and listen to comments aired on our ideas. We oftentimes turn to beer connoisseurs for discussions on which new beer we should bring to market. We value uniqueness and identify with breweries that focus on quality, so it would be a lie if we said we didn't look at what other breweries are doing. We like to think that each of our beers has a vibrant personality with confidence, enough confidence that even the most discerning beer connoisseur will find room for our beer in their glass.

AK: How many beers do you aim to introduce per year?

It all depends. We don't want to stress innovation, but if we feel that our brewing capacity and time allows it and we feel that the pilot we've brewed (we brew 10-12 small pilot batches per year) fits our portfolio and our taste buds, we'll start the process of introducing it to the market. Since we're very keen on keeping a close connection to our consumers, we are always interested in knowing what 'the locals' think of our beers. We will do the utmost to make sure all opinions are heard. People who buy our beer and not only consumers looking for something nice and fresh to drink, but they also oftentimes become our good friends.

THE IMPORTANCE OF QUALITY WATER

The brewery is located on Alnön, an island in the Sundsvall archipelago. Surface-wise, Sweden's 16th largest even if we only talk about 65 square kilometres. The buildings are scattered but have their greatest concentration along the Alnösundet, especially near the bridge bracket around the Alnön centre. This is also where the brewery is located. Sundsvall and the

associated island of Alnön have a unique nature that provides naturally pure groundwater in rich quantity via the large flows of the Indalsälven and Ljungan. It is classified as natural mineral water. It is one of the world's finest waters, directly from the source, and forms the basis for the brewery's products, and it together with Dick's experience are the single most important explanations for why this is a high quality brewery with a portfolio that breathes class throughout.

WHAT'S IN THE FUTURE?

Plans for growth are always in the back of their minds, but Dykes Brewery has chosen to focus locally at the moment and to grow organically based on demand. These days, Dykes Brewery are also included in Systembolaget's webshop, so Dick and Robert's beer can be ordered around the whole country of Sweden. The father and son also attend various festivals and trade fairs and got invited to attend the popular Barcelona Beer Festival earlier in the year. It was the first time that the brewery exhibited outside the borders of Sweden, with good results.

AK: What is your view on the cooperation amongst craft brewers in Sweden?

The cooperation amongst brewers in Sweden is very good! All our interactions have been positive, whether it is supporting each other in anything from borrowing a bag of malt on brewing day to doing a full-on collab. From my perspective, we identify more as industry colleagues than competitors, which is very refreshing. It's us against the big breweries, a classic David vs. Goliath situation, meaning there's a silent understanding and consensus in working together.

AK: What is your view on the tough political limitations - the advertising ban and the sales monopoly, Systembolaget - in Sweden?

The political situation regarding alcohol in Sweden is a sensitive topic with a lot of history behind it. Without diving into the world of politics, I can simply state that we've been lucky enough to have been approved as a supplier to Systembolaget (alongside working with local pubs, restaurants, and low-ABV retailers). Sure, becoming a supplier demands a bit of work, a lot of time, and a plethora of permits. But, being a supplier to one of the world's largest purchasing organisations of alcohol certainly has its benefits - having your bottles on the shelves at the local stores and for order nationally on their webshop does generate sales. Sure, we would have loved to sell some of our beers from the brewery directly to consumers, like they did way back in the day, but then again, we're not equipped for that kind of business.





BEERS FROM DYKES BREWERY

Below is a selection of beers from Dykes Brewery that have been blind tested on the Swedish Whisky&Bourbon editorial board. (Anders Enquist, Erik Dahlström, Christoffer Enquist and Niklas Jörgensen.)

RASPBERRY SOUR

'A sour beer that has been married with organic raspberries. Takes up the fight right away with some of the country's foremost sour ales with its fresh raspberry acidity and spiky nose. On the palate a beer that snuggles up nicely and that almost gives a sense of saltiness. Raspberry, citrus and discreet bread in complex style. This one had been a hit during the hottest days of the summer, but it still hardly disappointed us during the onset of autumn.'



STEAMER

'Northern Brewer, an originally English hop variety, donates this Steamer's distinctive character along with the malt varieties Maris Otter - something of a signature for brewing classic English ale - the caramel malt Crystal Cara and a little rye malt. The result? An oh so elegant beer that makes the editors happy in the soul when we try it. Apricots, caraway, tobacco and citrus fruits in a nice creamy style. Like drinking a panettone.'

INDIA PALE ALE

'An IPA that never goes to exaggeration with obscure amounts of hops, but here balance in the tropical fruits prevails, getting a little crispy company and occasional apricot peeks also. Nice spice in the palate, lively carbonation, clean and with balanced bark. Yes, a beer you like to drink more than one of, maybe also due to the slight caramelly maltiness that balances the Hawaiian feel that easily takes over the stick in many IPAs.'

BROWN ALE

'A Brown Ale that would make many Londoners happy. Fine dark roasted nuances make us think of both cocoa and caramel flavoured candy, while there is a charming feature of stone cellars. Fresh, spicy flavor, some tobacco and caramel on it and then also that purity that seems to be a signature of Dykes. One of the better ones in the category we tried.'

LAGER

'For his lager, Dick uses the two noble-hop varieties Hallertau and Saaz where the former stands for the aromas while the latter offers herbs. Germany meets the Czech Republic type. Here we get an herbal fresh layer that also offers freshly baked loaf, citrus fruits and a splash of honey in a fresh dry and creamy style. The hops are extremely balanced and only add to the perceived freshness.'

