

Book Review: Raudins Publications' reprint of W.H. Roberts' Third Edition of *The Scottish Ale Brewer and Practical Maltster*.

by Neil Spake

Whether a serious researcher or simply an avid enthusiast of the art and science of brewing, accessing or obtaining historical brewing texts can often be a daunting task. Many long out-of-print texts reside only in very specialized libraries or collections throughout the world, such as at the Scottish Brewing Archive. Raudins Publishing, a small publisher in the United States, is doing its part to assist in making some of these rare resources available once again. Their latest offering is the third edition of W.H. Roberts' *The Scottish Ale Brewer and Practical Maltster*, originally published in 1847. It is regarded as the most important text on historical Scottish brewing practices ever written and has served as a reference for nearly every work written on the topic since its publication.

The First Edition of *The Scottish Ale Brewer* was published in 1837. At the time, many treatises were in print on the art of brewing but Roberts felt they lacked in practical experience and further that the differentiation of techniques particularly Scottish in origin – versus that of English practices – needed to be documented. Every aspect of nineteenth-century brewing practices in Great Britain are discussed with Roberts taking care to not only provide his own insight as an experience brewer but also to present them in the context of the opinions of his contemporaries. The first uses of the Thermometer, a thorough history of the Saccharometer and details of the Scottish invention of the technique of sparging are a few of the highlights of this version. In particular, the descriptions and discussions of the introduction of instruments and equipment and their levels of acceptance and skepticism at the time give valuable insight into this time period in history. Discussions of ingredients and their origin of preference precede a thorough description of all aspects of the steps used in the brewing process. Every topic from grinding versus crushing the malted barley to the heats

of brewing liquor needed for mashing and sparging to the temperature and length of fermentation practiced by Scottish brewers of the time is addressed.

Roberts' Second Edition added the topic of malting to the text and "Practical Maltster" to the title as well as a chapter on "India Beers". The latter was a very hot topic at the time with brewers all over the United Kingdom wanting to get into the India export market. The Third Edition, the one offered here, was primarily a reprint of its predecessor with the addition of a discussion of the use of sugar in brewing that had recently been granted as allowable by the Government.

The book itself, printed in limited quantities, is beautifully crafted and professionally done. It has been digitally re-typeset to be as visually authentic as possible and is bound in a bonded leather hard cover.

The content of *The Scottish Ale Brewer and Practical Maltster* in conjunction with the uncompromising quality of its reproduction makes this publication a must-have for every enthusiast's library. In addition to being one of the most valuable resources in the area of historical brewing practices in the nineteenth century, many of its recommendations are as valid today as they were when Roberts published them. The book can be ordered worldwide at www.Raudins.com.