



## Another tax scandal as the EU rules against Starbucks

The European Commission has decided that Starbucks must re-pay over twenty million euros in tax, after having been granted 'selective tax advantages' by the government of the Netherlands. The EU says that tax rulings issued by the Netherlands endorsed 'artificial and complex' methods that were used to calculate Starbucks' taxable profits.

The EU investigators say that Starbucks sold goods and services internally between its member companies, at high prices that did not correspond to market conditions. The result was that certain sectors of the group appeared to perform badly and made low taxable profits.

Examples of the alleged practices include the brand's coffee roastery in Holland, which sells and distributes coffee and ancillaries to Starbucks outlets in Europe, the Middle East and Africa. The investigators reported that Starbucks Manufacturing pays a 'very substantial' royalty to a UK-based group company for 'coffee-roasting know-how', and also pays an inflated price for its green coffee beans, which it buys from another group company.

The investigators alleged that the royalty for 'know-how' could not be justified, and that the unrealistically high price the roaster was expected to pay for its green beans from another group company meant the roastery appeared to generate insufficient profits even to pay the 'know-how' royalty.

The European Commission has ordered the Netherlands to recover the unpaid tax from Starbucks, and to cease the tax benefits the group previously enjoyed.

The government of the Netherlands issued a statement saying they were 'somewhat surprised' by the ruling, and Starbucks said it would appeal, on the grounds that it had followed guidance from the Dutch tax authorities.

## Edinburgh - the cafe capital of the UK?

A rather surprising finding from the Local Data Company, the organisation which surveys shop occupancy in high streets across the UK, is that Edinburgh has more coffee shops than any town in the UK outside London and one of the highest numbers of cafés per head of population.

The Scottish capital has 232 cafes, which is one for every 2,082 people - the only town with a more impressive cafes-per-person count is Brighton, at one for every 1,605 people.

The Local Data Company say Scotland overall has seen a 7.4 per cent increase in the number of coffee outlets, and now has a six per cent share of the UK's dedicated cafes. Glasgow has a hundred dedicated cafés, but Aberdeen has only 29.

Meanwhile, LDC's Matthew Hopkinson has written that in overall numbers, there has been a 17 per cent net increase in the number of coffee outlets in the last five years.

This would equate to nearly two new coffee shops opening every day for the last two years, but he is careful to point out that the sector has an almost incomparable amount of 'churn' - in five years 24,230 coffee shops and dedicated coffee cafes have either opened or closed.

The amount opening is not very far different from the number closing, which may show just what an uncertain sector it is to work in.



The pertinent A-board comment is by Street Coffee - as they so often are!

## INSIDE

### The COFFEE HOUSE years

After twelve years of the coffee trade's main news magazine, this is Trudi and Ian's retirement issue.

Although this issue has our normal news pages, the rest of it is devoted to the topics we have covered over the years.

And yes... there are 45 pages in this issue!

Throughout this issue we have a series of panels with comments from members of the industry. These were all received in response to the news that we are retiring... and we found them very touching. We are grateful to all who made such kind remarks.

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# Rare Peru hot chocolate to come from Beyond the Bean

**Beyond the Bean has entered the currently-fashionable world of single-origin drinking chocolate, by direct-sourcing from Peru. The company has already bought an entire container of the cocoa, which has many unusual features.**

"We wanted to source cocoa directly," says Beyond the Bean's Gary McGann. "The trend in coffee has been about single-origin and buying direct, and up to now, that hasn't really happened with chocolate. This will give the trade the kudos of a Fairtrade organic chocolate with traceability.

"The problem had been finding someone in Europe who would process it, because there's only a few companies doing it, and they do tend to put forward all kinds of obstacles.

"We didn't start out looking at Peru, but through a lot of conversations with brokers and people who source coffee from Peru, we finally found a co-operative there which had invested several million in its processing plant. It leaves Peru as a powder, which we blend and pack. We are now bringing in our first sixteen tonnes, and are paying a social premium for them to invest in their farms. This all means we keep more of the money at origin, not going to middlemen."

The variety bought by Beyond the Bean is Nacional cacao, which has a story behind it - it was first discovered in Ecuador in the 1600s, and was Europe's favourite chocolate for hundreds of years until the first world war, when virtually all of the crop was struck by disease and destroyed.

Four or five years ago, it was discovered still growing in a remote river valley in Peru, and apparently this caused absolute uproar in the chocolate world. The Nacional cacao beans were growing at an altitude higher than expected, and had now become pure white, a mutation that occurs when trees are left undisturbed for a long time. A renowned Swiss chocolatier said at the time: "This find is bigger than anything I have known in chocolate," and described visiting the growing area as 'a Jurassic Park experience'.

Why do you need such a chocolate, or why are you interested in it?

"It is quite malty and earthy," Beyond the Bean tell us. "At first we shall be using 40 per cent cocoa and 60 per cent Fairtrade sugar, and we'll bring in a 100 per cent one next year, for those who want it.

"We shall launch in January as a drinking powder, under the Zuma Direct brand. It is distinctly different from all the other Zuma chocolates. It works well with milk, and well in a mocha - a slightly lighter colour, but goes well with coffee."

The operator of a coffee-house in Brixham, Devon, has issued a terse response to police who suggested that a vandal who broke his windows should be taken on the staff to work off the cost of the damage. Over £700-worth of damage was done to the Breakwater coffee shop and the culprit was readily identified through CCTV. However, the police hoped that they could clear the matter through the policy of 'restorative justice', in which the perpetrator of a crime makes it up in some way to the victim. The café owner said he would accept payment of the cost of the damage, but would not have the vandal serving his customers, and criticised the police suggestion for sending out a message that you can do what you like to other people's property, so long as you are prepared to pay up later.

Teapigs will be using a branded Routemaster bus to operate a 'free tea day' to mark its ninth birthday on 4th November. The branded bus will be making its way around London, with representatives handing out free samples. Teapigs will be at main London rail stations in the morning rush hour, and also at stations in Birmingham, Leeds and Manchester. There will be a Teapigs Tea Bar in Finsbury Avenue Square, London, over the lunch period, and a mobile tea party on the bus in mid afternoon. Teapigs will give away over 100,000 cups of tea on the day, and 200 of its stockists are expected to take part.

Zoe's Coffee Shop in Great Dunmow has been voted 'best coffee and tea shop in Essex' by readers of Essex Life magazine. The owner opened two years ago after leaving banking to fulfil the dream of running a café.

The Pursells coffee brand has launched in London, with the aim of providing an ethically-sourced collection of single-origin coffees for the hospitality trade. The company is run by Chris Jennings and Michael de Renouard, and is named after a 19th century city venue in which professionals who would debate issues over coffee and chess.

The latest in a series of surveys by UCC Coffee, which we confess we find tend to repeat subjects which have been looked at many times over the years, now 'reveals' that two thirds of consumers judge the quality of a hotel, restaurant or pub based on the quality of its coffee. Apparently 77 per cent of consumers think a good coffee makes the difference between a mediocre and an exceptional dining experience. Coffee quality is deemed highest at fine dining restaurants, followed closely by independent restaurants, then branded restaurants and hotels with pubs deemed the lowest quality by consumers. Less than half expect a 'great' cup of coffee when dining out, and eight out of ten have chosen coffee over dessert, with five per cent always doing so.

Yet another Scottish single estate tea has appeared. This is Kinnettles Gold, grown and hand-rolled on Kinnettles Farm in Angus by Susie Walker-Munro, whose family says that an ancestor was responsible for pioneering the growth of the Indian tea industry nearly two hundred years ago.

Only two kilos of the tea has been produced this year, to retail in what the company describes, understandably, as 'limited-edition' tins, at £50 for 20gm. One café in Stockbridge, Edinburgh, is reportedly serving the tea at £15 a serving.

Phil Carter of Tamp Culture Coffee in Reading has raised £500 for Cancer Research UK by completing the London Three Peaks Challenge. This involves climbing up and abseiling down three of London's tallest buildings; he did the same at Reading's Blade building earlier this year.

The Bean coffee company is to open a new dual coffee shop and cocktail bar concept in Liverpool. Bean has taken a 1,600 sq.ft. unit in St Paul's Square, which will be a coffee shop during the day and become the company's first cocktail bar in the evening.

Costa proposes to open 220 new stores, aiming to have a 2,500-strong estate in the UK by 2020, according to speeches given at the announcement of Whitbread's latest trading figures. Costa like-for-likes rose 4.4 per cent, with total sales growth of 16.2 per cent. The chief executive said that Costa 'continues to win consumers' hearts', adding that he sees continuing growth opportunities for the brand, particularly in retail parks and drive-thru stores.

The first of our readers' farewell messages was this...

**Nooooooooo!!!! I love Boughton's!**

– Guy Wilmot, Sea Island Coffee



Welcome Break has said that coffee is a key reason for its success, being a reason why drivers stop at its motorway service areas - every customer recently questioned at its drive-throughs had never previously stopped at a Welcome Break before the arrival of the facility. The introduction of Starbucks has produced a 35 per cent growth in coffee sales 'overnight' according to top man Rod McKie, and the introduction of nine drive-through Starbucks has proved to be 'a phenomenal success'. Welcome Break is now selling 17 million cups a year and still growing that figure.

Taylor's of Harrogate is spending £800,000 on a marketing campaign behind its coffee over the next two months. It has hired TV farmer Jimmy Doherty, who will be shown visiting coffee farmers in Colombia.

Union Hand-Roasted is supplying the coffee for another new 'vinyl' café, a coffee house that is themed along the new enthusiasm for vinyl records. This is Rhythm and Brews in Chiswick, which features bare walls and tables made from reclaimed wood, and benches from railway sleepers. The café has already been visited by one half of Ant and Dec, and the Wasps rugby team.

There are big plans for Strangers, the well-known artisan coffee bar in Norwich. It has opened a second site with an on-site roaster, featuring beans acquired through direct trade from Ethiopia and Guatemala. There are plans for further sites, and online sales.

Krispy Kreme has begun American trials of a coffee shop format which concentrates more on coffee sales. Coffee is reported to be about four per cent of Krispy Kreme's sales in America - Marco Olmi of Drury, who supplies the British operation, tells us that KK already has a 'very good focus' on coffee here, with sales far more than four per cent.

Another Insomnia café from Ireland has opened inside a Spar retail store in the UK. This is in Market Harborough. The next will be in Cardiff, probably before Christmas. A Spar operator in the south-west already has Insomnia in 11 stores.

The Press'd product, which was demonstrated at the London Coffee Festival this year, has now launched. This is an Arabica coffee concentrate in a squeezable pocket-sized bottle; each bottle contains enough to make 16 cups of coffee. There are three varieties, a straight Colombian, and caramel and vanilla flavourings. The inventors say that the taste of Press'd is superior to other instant coffees and is part of a new trend of portable super-concentrated drinks.



## Origin applies to build roastery in a fishing village

**Origin Coffee of Cornwall, which has for some time enjoyed 'local hero' status as a successful artisan company, has now divided opinion in the coastal village of Porthleven over plans for a new roastery.**

Origin has for some time roasted in the inland town of Helston, but in recent times has opened a harbourside coffee house in the seaside holiday village. The company has now unveiled plans for an expanded business there including a roaster, and the division of opinion has led to a pub consultation meeting.

In this, residents were invited to view plans for a three-storey cafe and offices facing the harbour, with a roasting facility and parking space in the old ship yard behind. The event was organised by the Porthleven Harbour and Dock Company, which sees Origin as a prospective tenant.

The complaints from residents concern the likely smells from roasting in a holiday village, which makes its income from visitors.

One resident said that tourists come to Porthleven because it is a 'proper Cornish fishing village', and development would change the appearance and feel of the place. Others pointed out that fishing villages already have smells, and suggested that a good Cornish business sited there would 'raise the profile' of the village.

Origin itself invited anyone concerned about the smell of coffee roasting to visit their existing site in Helston.

The publisher of the proposed Coffee Shop North book, who turned to a Kickstarter crowdfunding appeal to fund his work, has reached his target - Dan Saul Pilgrim raised £10,000 from 134 backers, and now promises 'the first visually-led book that serves to document, explore and showcase the rising independent coffee scene in the north of England'.



**The trade wholesaler Beyond the Bean has created two 'firsts' this month - it is bringing in a new direct-import chocolate from Peru, and it has created a support programme in which one barista will win a remarkable amount of support for the next UK barista championships.**

Beyond the Bean has always done a lot of support work for the barista championships, and next will be hosting one of the regional heats. The new project is the Barista Bursary, which will allow the successful applicant to take part in next year's UKBC with considerable backing, both in training and expertise and in financial support.

Baristas are invited to submit a brief video, of no more than three minutes, explaining why they might be considered for the Bursary. Shortlisted baristas will be offered an expenses-paid trip to meet Beyond the Bean in Bristol.

The successful entrant will win an expenses-paid training session with an experienced competition judge, a place on the World Competitions Education Programme which will be held in London in January, and use of the company's training facilities. The barista will be given expenses for competing in their UKBC heat, and further expenses if they qualify for the finals, in both cases being given an extra credit for barista gear from the wholesaler's range. Should the BtB barista come in the top six finalists for the UKBC, there is an extra cash prize; if the BtB barista should win the UK title and qualify for the world championships, there will be a £2,500 fund for contest expenses.

The conditions are undemanding - the BtB barista has to wear a badged apron and attend press or promotional events on an expenses-paid basis. (This in itself is imaginative thinking - to the best of our recollection, no UKBC sponsor has ever done a promotional campaign at all!)

"We know the industry, we know the competition, and we know the financial costs that competing can bring, and how that can exclude some baristas," Beyond the Bean told us. "We want to find the best of the barista talent out there looking for support to enter the competition for the first time."

The entry video has to be submitted by November 30th. More details are on Beyond the Bean's website.

Brita, the water-treatment brand is to be the main sponsor of Allegra's UK Coffee Week, which runs in April next year. Last year's event is credited with raising £156,852.80 towards the Project Waterfall, which brings clean water and sanitation to coffee-growing communities. The event ties in with the London Coffee Festival which will again host the UK Barista Championship finals. The newly-appointed organiser of these, as national co-ordinator of the SCAE is Maxwell Colonna-Dashwood, the champion British barista who says he is looking at opportunities to develop the pattern of barista competitions.

AMT Coffee, the specialist in coffee kiosks at rail stations and other transport hubs, has reported a pre-tax profit of £432,333 for the year to December, compared to a loss of £179,092 the year before. This was despite turnover falling slightly to £19 million from £20.2 million, although like-for-like sales were up four per cent. A major contribution was said to be the closure of an unsuccessful venture in Belgium.

Costa has had a planning application approved for a site in Cowes, Isle of Wight, in spite of 355 objections lodged with the council, 380 signatures on an online petition, and a thousand people joining a Facebook group in opposition to the application. Campaigners argued that there are already 27 different businesses selling coffee along the High Street, but the planning department said that the majority of objections were that the applicant was a national chain, which was not a material consideration. Objectors said: "we are extremely concerned that such a small town like Cowes will not be able to survive the competition and corporate nature of Costa Coffee."

Caffe Nero has launched its first 'hot food' menu, arguing that one in ten customers do not take a lunchbreak, even though research proves that people feel re-energised, more focused and more motivated after taking a break. Caffe Nero's menu is largely based on pastas and flatbreads.

A Scottish café has started brewing what it calls 'totally Scottish coffee', inspired by a very strange habit on the part of one of their customers. He was seen adding Irn Bru, known as 'Scotland's other national drink', to his coffee. For those who have not experienced it, Scotland's main fizzy drink is best described as being rather close to traditional Tizer. The barista at Daniel's Café in Linlithgow was in need of a signature drink recipe at the last moment for a barista contest, and adopted the idea, adding a little amount of the drink to an espresso shot. He reported that it produces a strange sensation of tangy-ness changing to straight espresso... and it is now a menu item.



**The latest attempt to grow coffee in the UK is happening in Northern Ireland, and is being supported by the local roaster Johnsons, which has now achieved a couple of dozen thriving plants, with their horticulturalist partner now very confident that they will bear fruit.**

"It is not a commercial decision to start cultivating coffee, but a learning exercise," the company's Philip Mills told us. The general idea is for Johnsons' clients in the hospitality trade to see and understand the entire process at first hand of how a cup of coffee is produced. They expect to harvest around 35 kilos, giving quite enough for processing and brewing experiments, but not enough for commercial use.

Johnsons holds one of only two brands ever granted permission by the Irish government to feature the map of Ireland in its logo - the other is an Irish Whiskey. A local paper said that the company has now achieved everything possible for a coffee company in Ireland except the impossible - growing it.



**The concept of coffee houses in garden centres has been one of the growth sectors of recent years, and one has now taken a top prize in the International Restaurant and Bar Design Awards. The Ground coffee shop, part of the Wyevale Garden Centres group, has won the 'best restaurant or bar in another space' section of the annual awards.**

The Coffee Ground concept is only a year old, and says that it is the only coffee shop group in the UK to have rolled out micro-roasting. They have cafes designed to hold one-kilo machines, and roast in small batches throughout the day. According to the owning group, they have a unique technology which ensures they have a consistent roast, and have added that "soon, every single coffee shop on the high street is likely to follow us."

The food and beverage director for Wyevale is Jason Danciger, who formerly ran 300 in-house coffee shops for Marks and Spencer.



The Baxter Storey group, which is by some distance the company which has pioneered modern coffee in the corporate catering sector, has reported a record number of its staff entering the in-house barista contest. This year's champ is Derek Buckley, who won for the second time, and who will be entered into the UK barista championships next year. Rather unusually, the organisers allowed for a different kind of signature drink, without the usual requirement for it to feature espresso coffee, on the basis that they were recognising the demands of broader beverage business. Derek's signature drink was a hot toddy - 30ml gingerbread syrup, 10ml cinnamon syrup, 10ml orange syrup, 160ml cold water, combined and steamed, then garnished with star anise and a cinnamon stick, with lemon juice to taste.

# Cafeology wins a bird-friendly award

**The Cafeology brand has won an Animal Hero award for its contribution to the protection of a Central American rainforest.**

The awards are endorsed by the RSPCA, to recognise a business that has made animal welfare an important consideration for its way of working. Cafeology won the award for its Bird Friendly coffee project, which won a Guardian Sustainable Business award earlier this year.

The brand founder, Bryan Unkles, said that he decided to help protect migratory birds after hearing about how destructive some coffee farming can be to their natural habitats.

The coffee is a shade-grown crop from a co-operative in Guatemala, certified by the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Centre in America, and it is the first coffee to be endorsed by the RSPB, the UK's largest conservation charity, which receives a share of sales revenue.



This quite startling piece of sculpture is a filter coffee brewer. It is the likone pourover brewer, created by a Polish industrial designer who is also an amateur barista, and has competed in the country's barista contests.

According to the designer, the brewer has one 'most revolutionary feature', in the design of the uncovered cone filter. This is held in place partly by a specially-shaped ring, and partly by the weight of the coffee and water, and so the working section of the filter does not come into contact with anything 'other than the air' - according to the designer, certain other brewers dissipate the heat this way.

The brewer is designed to be 'a piece of industrial art on your kitchen counter top', and the designer says that watching it in operation is 'almost like observing a beating heart in an open chest'. For this experience, the American price will probably be \$599.



With best wishes to Ian and Trudi for a long and happy retirement from all at Drury.

[www.drurycoffee.com](http://www.drurycoffee.com)



Starbucks has now completed its Theatre of Reserve Coffee site at Covent Garden, London. The store appears to be heavily influenced by the chain's recent launch of its big Reserve site in Seattle, which is not so much a café as an 'experience' site about coffee roasting and brewing. In the Covent Garden site, customers are greeted by a host, and customers can place an order anywhere in the store through handheld devices. In a piece of wonderful Starbucks PR-speak, we are told that 'floor-to-ceiling walls of glass visually link the interior to the street outside'... which is indeed what windows generally do. The store is the UK's second Starbucks Evenings location, serving a 'curated menu', whatever that is, of wine and craft beer after 4pm. Quite delightfully, one of the London papers has said that Starbucks has 'picked up trendy brewing techniques from independent coffee shops'.

Starbucks has another ambitious move in mind - it will open in Italy next year. The first cafe will be in Milan, according to the Corriera della Sera newspaper. Although Starbucks has declined to comment, Reuters reports that a shopping mall entrepreneur is advising Starbucks on the creation of a 'unique formula' to attract Italian customers.

## Nescafe offers pubs their own 'coffee shop'



There is an extremely bold approach from Nestle, which is targetting pubs for its Azera instant coffee. The brand has claimed that 'a recent survey of landlords found that two-thirds of publicans would give barista-style coffee a shot', and that Nestle is 'offering the chance to create their very own coffee shop'.

This, we pointed out to Nescafe, is extremely interesting phrasing – Azera is promoted as a 'barista-style' coffee, yet is a powder, and Nescafe is not offering to create a 'shop' as such, but is offering a month's supply of instant coffee with point-of-sale materials. One month's supply is one 500gm tin of Azera, a hundred single-serve sachets of 'latte' and a hundred single-serve sachets of 'cappuccino'.

We have asked Nescafe about their survey of publicans and barista-style coffee, and learn that it involved pubs who were 'willing to take part in blind taste tests of barista-style instant coffee, of which Nescafé Azera was one'. Thus, the tests were of instant coffee versus instant coffee, from which two-thirds preferred Azera.

We have seen the survey questions, and particularly enjoyed the idea of a 'blind' taste test which started with the question: 'which one looks best?'

The other questions were not particularly demanding, perhaps on the assumption that publicans know little about coffee, and end with the bizarre question: 'do you think punters are seeing a move towards pubs for their high street coffee?'

## Scotch whisky tea from America

An American tea brand has worked with The Famous Grouse whisky to create two 'cocktail blends'. The Owl's Brew brand has created The Famous Mint Tea, a peppermint tea with lemon which goes with Famous Grouse on a 2:1 ratio to give 'a simple Scotch cocktail'. The Smoky Earl, is a lapsang sou-chong and Earl Grey blend with honey that combines with Black Grouse for a tea cocktail that can be served either hot or cold.



From our readers' farewell messages...

It's such a brilliant read

– Adrian Jones, Street Coffee and Jonestown Coffee

## Boughton's Coffee House

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# This has been the news...

For twelve years, Coffee House has been a genuine news magazine, which has been something of a rarity in an industry where publications have considered 'news' to be something provided by public relations agencies in the form of press releases. Those, we dare to point out, are not objective commentary!

However, this is a trade which contains everything a writer could hope for in the form of news - it has topics and issues, it has personalities, it has technological advances, it has crime, and on one occasion we can recall, physical violence at a trade event. It has everything but a sports page.

If you care to look at this brief selection of news items through the years, you might consider many of them turned out to be very significant stages in the trade's progress...

## May 2005

We announced on our front page the first Caffè Culture show, which would be in May 2006. Were we in at the beginning of this? Yes! We were in on one semi-secret advance meeting, and then at a 'steering committee' meeting – although, as one supplier pointed out, that was really 'a meeting for the trade to be sold at!' However, the first event was admirably well supported... and without that there may not have been the large number of trade get-togethers we know today.

## July 2005

An International Coffee Organisation heard that genetically-modified coffee was already in the development stage, and could be expected on the market in ten years... which, you may note, is about now. Speakers from growing countries pointed out that those opposed to GM were generally not those who were desperately seeking ways to keep themselves and their families alive – coffee farmers, it was said, are all in favour of it.

## September 2008

The JD Wetherspoon pub chain took on Lavazza, who then barista-trained virtually every-member of customer-serving staff in the business, including most of the board of directors - stopping short only before the chairman, we were told. Who would have known what was going to happen next? Wetherspoon, majoring on coffee (which they sometimes discounted to 49p) proceeded to turn the entire pub business around with a new emphasis on the breakfast and morning trade... other pub chains followed them, and coffee was at the heart of a major social change. (Later this was to mark a change in the way pub brands approached coffee in general - Wetherspoon stuck with the Lavazza brand, but the Fullers, St Austell and Shepherd Neame breweries all created their own in-house coffee brands. The Brains brewery of Cardiff took another course - it developed its coffee interest by buying the Coffee#1 chain.)

## January 2006

David Cooper, at the time the head of his own coffee company in

**TABLE 3.12 – MAIN WAYS OF OBTAINING NEWS ABOUT THE COFFEE INDUSTRY**  
 Response to question: How do you normally obtain news about the coffee industry? Multi-Number of Mentions

Industry Publications	Trade Shows	
1. Boughton's Coffee House	1. Caffè Culture	1. SC/
3. Caterer & Hotelkeeper	2. Hotelympia	2. too
4. International Sandwich & Snack News	3. Lunch	3. Go
5. Restaurant	4. The Restaurant Show	4. Bol

*First time we topped the charts! In an Allegra survey, we are noted as the main source of trade news*

Yorkshire, buttonholed us at a trade meeting to deliver a lecture on the revolutionary aspects of his newly-imported Dalla Corte machines, which we duly reported... to a remarkable response. The point of this launch was that it was the first time an espresso machine maker had argued the concept of temperature-stability, accurate to 0.1 degree, with individual group head temperature control. Some other makers were quick to come back with the 'me too!' response, arguing that they too could offer such facilities, and more makers began to change their machine design to allow for it... but essentially, Cooper had used one of the first rules of marketing: whether you are first in a field or not, the important thing is to be first to shout about it! Others moaned that fractions of a degree are not important – Cooper responded that one-tenth of a degree may not make that much of a difference, except to connoisseurs, but that everyone is going to notice the difference in taste that half a degree makes. The point of his argument was that precision temperature control enables you to find the sweet spot of a coffee, and temperature stability allows you to keep it there.

Without this, the trade would probably not have gone so quickly into the whole concept of pressure profiling and temperature profiling... whichever way, we were entertained two years later to be told by Cooper that so many machine companies were getting on the same technological bandwagon, there was now too much 'smoke and mirrors' in machine sales-talk!

From our readers' farewell messages...

**This is a real shame. You are unique in your approach, a true journalist in our market who will be missed**

– Steve Slark, European Water Care and Beverage Standards



## January 2006

The Bristol wholesaler Espresso Essentials re-branded itself as Beyond the Bean, which was seen as a gentle dig at its major rival, which used the slogan of 'everything but the coffee'. Jeremy Rogers, founder of the Essentials company, had been supplying coffee bar equipment since 1994, which puts him well among the early pioneers, and he foresaw a future in the development of many ethically-sourced products, such as hot chocolate and flavoured syrups. He also saw the idea of franchising his business around the world... and eight or nine years later, all that was in place.

## June 2006

Another landmark - Louie Salvoni, who had spent some years as the importer of Gaggia espresso machines, made a very sharp turn away from selling the things, and created the Espresso Service network of engineers. His logic was that the future would probably not be in sales of espresso machines, but that there certainly would be a continuing future in the servicing and repair of them, and that coffee operators would be needing a reliable 24-7-365 nationwide service back-up to minimise downtime of machines as the speciality coffee trade got busier. "We are at the beginning of a transition," he said. "The UK is at a level where most operators have seen the need for real coffee, and as in the more mature markets of Italy, Spain and France, there is a slowing down of machine sales and an increase in support required for the ageing machines. In engineering, the emergence of local 'one man bands' will occur, and for national catering operators, the need will be for uniformity of service provision." Events appeared to confirm this - at the Caffe Culture show, the BSA reported a number of people enquiring about how to start in business as espresso engineers, and soon other co-operative groups, such as the Association of Independent Espresso Engineers, began to appear.

## August 2006

We reported that someone in the Philippines had applied for government permission to farm the civet cat, the luwak. At the time, kopi luwak coffee was considered a novelty... nobody foresaw the factory-farming scandal which was to come.

## June 2007

We reported the formation of the Paper Cup Recovery and Recycling Group, to research the possibility that millions of disposable takeaway cups could find their way back into the paper mills to provide the base material for new cups. Rather disappointingly, for the next few years, they promised us that they were about to do something... eventually disappearing entirely. The Americans (as pictured) approached the subject a little more dramatically...



The Film Black Gold, which told of the situation of coffee-growers in Ethiopia, began to be seen by general-public audiences. The film is essentially a documentary, following Tadesse Masekela, head of the Oromia farmers' union, as he travelled the world presenting his case for a fair price. We asked if the film told the story well, and if so, how might the trade best use this film? Opinions were divided - some said the story was slow and tedious, involved too many 'lifestyle' shots of

cafes and some inane comments by baristas, and that the average consumer would not understand what was going on. We said that at a time when too many TV programmes have unnecessary narrators, this was a film which really badly needed one, and ideally, someone from inside the coffee trade. Some operators, notably Java Republic of Dublin, Cafedirect, and Atkinsons of Lancaster, put on public screenings followed by question-and-answer sessions. Cafedirect suggested the film would become as important as An Inconvenient Truth, in which the American politician Al Gore presented the argument on the existence of climate change. Others asked whether showing the division of income through the coffee trade would merely suggest to the public that café owners are carpetbaggers. Java Republic suggested it would shake many Fairtrade fans, who were under the impression that their purchases were leading farmers to the good life. This was another subject which would come back to haunt us...

## November 2007

Java Republic of Dublin announced plans for its world-first coffee roaster - a totally energy-efficient roaster, fuelled by solar power and wood-chip burners. In this, it was eight years ahead of the big current talk about the same things. Rather entertainingly, the other Dublin roaster, the bigger and older company of Bewleys, had recently said it would have the first carbon-neutral roaster in Ireland... by mid-2008, Java Republic was talking about having the 'first carbon-neutral roastery on the planet!' Java Republic's David McKernan was upset to hear that the naturalist David Bellamy, of whom he had previously been a fan, had derided global warming as 'a scam'. In spite of this, the Dublin company said that its work had proved one big lesson that all cafes could usefully learn for their own economies - when to turn things off! McKernan offered to share what he had learned with any other trade company.

## January 2008

Edward Bramah, one of the great old men of the beverage trade and the founder of the Museum of Tea and Coffee, died. This was a subject which would reappear, some years later...

## April 2008

The London School of Coffee, which had opened in 2004, had now begun speaking about roasting courses. By coincidence, at more or less the same time, Steve Penk of the La Spaziale espresso machine company spoke of two future trends - he advocated the rise of grind-on-demand (in which the bean is ground just before the drink is brewed, instead of ground coffee sitting in a grinder waiting to be used) and predicted the rise of localised roasting, remarking that cafes in Italy would consider it bizarre for their coffee to come from hundreds of miles away. Both were correct - the rise of grind-on-demand did indeed start fairly quickly, and although the massive boom in local roasteries was still five or six years off... it happened.

## June 2008

It is an easy cliché to say that people are 'stunned' by the death of someone familiar, but we really did receive a number of messages from readers saying how they were shocked by our newflash reporting the death of David Williamson, managing director of Matthew Algje and Espresso Warehouse, at just 42. He was



From our readers' farewell messages...

**Thank you for all the informative and entertaining news over the years. It has been a fantastic resource.**

- Andrew Tolley, Taylor Street Baristas



widely regarded as a visionary – he was one of the first of the British trade to go and see what was happening in Seattle, following which he predicted a speciality coffee boom here; later, he was the first to tell the UK about several new product ideas, such as the Clover one-cup brewer, which was later acquired by Starbucks. He also created a partnership with Oxfam for a proposed chain of cafes which would directly benefit coffee farmers in Honduras, who were to be given a share in the business.

### January 2009

In a surprising move, the managing director of one of the major wholesalers joined his big rival. Gary McGann moved from Espresso Warehouse to Beyond the Bean. Good heavens, we got into some trouble simply for reporting this – and for many years afterwards, this became our prime example of reporting the truth, not what advertisers wanted us to say.

### May 2009

Coffee Nation, under Scott Martin, completed a management buy out and began seriously to promote the concept that a coin-operated machine on a motorway service area actually could produce gourmet-standard coffee. At first, the idea was not taken seriously, and he even had to have staff standing by the machines showing travellers how to use the machines... but within a few years, the concept had taken off massively, Coffee Nation was taken over and re-named Costa Express, and the concept of decent espresso-based coffee from an unmanned machine became accepted.

Another machine arrival, at least in prototype, was also to make a bigger impact on the entire coffee-house world than might have been expected... it can be argued that this one changed the whole nature of the modern coffee house, leading to the rise of filter coffee, and the whole brew bar concept. It changed the image of the brand behind it, as well. The product was the Uber, which was brought out by Marco Beverage Systems of Ireland, which had been previously known, rather inadequately, as a maker of 'water boilers'. The company has long had far more expertise than that description suggests, and it reacted when barista champ James Hoffmann moaned (his own words!) that it was difficult to control the temperature of water for filter coffee with any precision – why couldn't he simply have a tap he could set to the right temperature? Marco responded with the Uber, and by 2010 Hoffmann had used it in the creation of the short-lived Penny University coffee house, which in turn began the whole brew-bar trend. It was fitting that a coffee conference at the time was introduced by Barry Kither of Lavazza, who said: "for so many years, people in coffee have been saying 'look at the big brands'. Now, it's the big boys who are looking at the independents. This is probably the most exciting time since this all started."



The Uber

### November 2009

An Allegra conference was addressed by several major speakers who predicted a new kind of coffee house – their theme was: 'it isn't all about the coffee any more'. One of them, designer Lewis Allen, told the café trade: "you people keep talking about the perfect coffee, but the customers who cross your doorstep have a different perspective – this is a generation who have realised they can go out and meet the

people they talk to on Facebook, and so we have a fusion of online and offline activity. This gives you an issue about the role of the coffee shop, and only part of that role is about enjoying coffee - the rest of it is to provide a place where the customer can do what they want to do. Across Europe there are now flower shop cafes and cycle cafes... the offer from the new kind of café is 'do what you want to do... and do it here!' This is what customising your offer really means - it doesn't mean 6,000 choices of coffee!" It did not take long for this to take effect – different kinds of themed café began springing up over the next few years. Look how many cycle-themed cafes are still opening!

### November 2009

An attention-getting arrival in the UK was the Loring Smart Roast, the eco-friendly roaster from America which made its debut at the James Gourmet roastery, with several other roasters turning up to see it. Inventor Mark Ludwig told us that as an engineer, he didn't like the way conventional roasters were built - they wasted all the hot air they created, and the manufacturers all said that recirculation of air would not work. Ludwig proved that it could, and set off a whole new train of thought in eco-roasting.

### June 2010

As the theory of pressure-profiling, and what this could do to affect the taste of espresso, began to be taught widely, the revolution in filter coffee also began to gain ground, and the Aeropress appeared – this was first imported by the Cream Supplies wholesaler of Portsmouth, whose director Jon Money offered artisan cafes a month's free trial so they could get the hang of this new idea. Now, of course, Aeropress has its own world championship!



Poster for the Scottish Aeropress championship

The new breed of regional artisan coffee roasters was beginning to become established. Tom Sobey of Origin, in Cornwall, told us: "we have certainly brought more transparency, in that we are more willing to share information, where more established roasters seem to be secretive and keep everything behind a curtain. The difference this made in our own trading area was that when we said we had started roasting for ourselves, our customers said 'that's really good, we'd like to come and see'. They appreciated that we had done something ourselves, in an effort to upgrade the quality of their coffee trade, without waiting to be asked to do it." Some of the big roasters were at first dismissive of the new independents, and suggested that all the activity on online coffee forums and on Twitter was giving the idea that the 'artisan' roaster trend was bigger than maybe it really was. Steve Leighton of Has Bean, by now a very established independent roaster, responded bluntly, telling us: "we get called upstarts, and we get complaints about us getting all the publicity, and we know why... it's because we work ten times harder than anyone else, and because the market just doesn't want the same old stuff... and we ourselves aren't the same company that we were last year. We are the ones keeping up with industry standards, and we go out and share good information about coffee, more than suppliers did in the past... the older roasting companies liked to keep blending as a dark art." Giles Dick-Read, once of Pret a Manger, Whittards, and a consultant to FirstChoice (later UCC) had begun roasting in a converted milking parlour in Dorset, and endorsed the argument: "I bought my 15-kilo roaster to roast really

From our readers' farewell messages...

**Yours is the only trade magazine that I look forward to reading... humour, integrity, etc...**

– David Warr, Coopers & Co, Jersey

good quality, ethically-sourced single origins, and to get through the mystical 'smoke and mirrors' that coffee buyers are faced with from big suppliers." Mercanta, the 'coffee hunters' said that the gulf between the two kinds of roaster was widening: "the speciality roasters are recent start-ups, by people no older than 35 years, who are likely to have graduated from several years as a barista. They buy from specialist niche importers like us, on the basis of quality, and present their coffee on a basis of provenance traceability and single farm credentials; their use of certification (Fairtrade, etc) is largely absent and increasingly irrelevant. They have close connections with baristas and competitions. The traditional roasters buy from traditional large importers, and price is a large part of their buying. Blends dominate their offerings, and the use of certifications (Fairtrade, Rainforest Alliance) is popular with them. They have very little connection with the barista scene." The importer Simon Wakefield told us he was genuinely excited by the arrival of the new independent roasteries: "The new roasters bring a different perspective, in new ideas and blends and in talking and creating a noise about coffee. We need those new roasters because they approach roasting from a new and non-traditional angle... it is exciting that they come up with questions that some traditional roasters just do not."

And that was in 2010, when Mercanta told us that they had totted up the number of roasters they knew, and were surprised to get to a hundred. By 2015, the number was nearer four hundred!

### September 2011

Suddenly the revelation hit us that kopi luwak coffee was not just a novelty, but could be regarded as ethically unacceptable. This is the coffee in which the cherries are eaten by the palm civet cats of Indonesia, who digest the cherries and excrete the beans, which are then roasted and brewed – some people say that the digestive process gives the coffee a distinctive taste. It was for many years considered to be a relatively harmless novelty, in the belief that digested beans were gathered more by luck than judgment, and their rarity value contributed to the extreme high cost of the resulting coffee. What had happened was that the farmers who had previously collected civet droppings by hand realised that their coffee was fetching astonishing prices in America, Japan and the UK – so they began farming the cats, and then factory-farming them and allegedly force-feeding them coffee beans. Mike Haggerton, a café owner in Aberfoyle, told us that he had actually seen caged civets on a trip to origin, and was annoyed to then see kopi luwak coffee featured in recent coffee events, which suggested that the trade approves of factory-farming practices. Others in the trade said that they now regretted ever having bought kopi luwak, and would stop doing so; some brands said they would continue if they could trust certification from their suppliers that the beans had truly been gathered in the wild and that no animal cruelty was involved.

Three years later, the situation became even more confused. The author Tony Wild, who claimed to have discovered the original kopi luwak coffee but later turned to leading campaigns against it, said that a bizarre series of affairs meant that although kopi luwak had become considered an unethical product, it could conceivably qualify for Rainforest Alliance certification.

The Alliance follows the Code of the Sustainable Agriculture Network, which had originally forbade certification to farmers who keep caged animals; however, Tony Wild said, an attempt by the SAN to simplify its own rules had actually weakened its own provisions, to the degree that a kopi luwak farmer could now probably get certification, and thus apply for Rainforest certification for a factory-farmed product.

(That same simplification also weakened rules on 'canopy density' and 'tree cover' requirements so radically that, in the opinion of one trader, they no longer meet the demands of what the average consumer would expect of a Rainforest Alliance coffee.)

Rather more entertainingly, café owner Jack Groot of Michigan ran a well-monitored test among professional tasters, to find out whether kopi luwak, at \$500 a pound, really was considered superior to everyday Indonesian coffees. A team of cuppers was presented with six coffees – two were top-price kopi luwaks, three were good-quality Sumatrans, and 'a crap coffee grabbed from a poor Indonesian area'.

Did the high-priced kopi luwaks outrank other Sumatrans in taste? One came top, the other third. When the test was repeated with 'regular customers', nine out of eleven preferred the luwak. But when told the price, none of them would pay it!

### December 2011

To the puzzlement of many, the British arm of the Coffee Kids charity decided to go on its own, headed by Brian Chapman of Percol, who had been one of the original drivers of the cause in Britain. This came as a surprise to the British trade - Coffee Kids had long been regarded as the trade's major cause of its own, having been started by American coffee buyer Bill Fishbein in the late 1980s. Bill had been a coffee buyer who had not realised the situation of coffee farmers until he went to origin, was shocked by what he saw, and created a support model through which farmers and their families could create additional income from sources other than coffee. It was the first non-profit organisation to work for small-scale coffee farmers. In 2008 Bill had left Coffee Kids, 'to make room for a younger generation of leadership', and went on to create the Coffee Trust, doing similar work. British companies who had supported Coffee Kids were surprised by the new move – Brian Chapman explained to us that "Coffee Kids decided they didn't want to support a UK charity any more, so they upped sticks and moved their admin." The executive director of Coffee Kids confirmed to us that she had closed the British office to save the costs of maintaining two organisations. Brian Chapman immediately formed Good For Life, a registered charity which began with coffee-related projects in Cameroon, Nepal and Honduras, and supporting Fishbein's Coffee Trust. Only three years later, Coffee Kids was to issue a curiously-phrased notice saying that it would 'cease programming', which was taken to mean that it would stop its work. The charity later told us that it no longer had the structure to continue, but would look for another charity with which to merge... but the name still continues, and very recently did merge with an American organisation, the Neumann Foundation.

### August 2012

Just three years ago, the big summer news was of Tesco getting into artisan coffee, and their corporate people said vaguely to us that their coffee consultant would be someone called Taylor Street. We confess that it took a few seconds to click... and yes, it turned out to be the partnership with Taylor Street Baristas that became the Harris and Hoole chain. It is always fun when such a story energises the



From our readers' farewell messages...

**I'm sorry to see you guys go**

– Cathal Burke, Marco Beverage Systems

entire trade, and this one polarised opinion wonderfully. On the one hand, we had self-righteous complaints about artisans getting involved with the kings of the high street moneygoround; on the other, we had a number of similar people acknowledging that if they were approached by Tesco waving a cheque book, they too would have joined up! The general trade opinion was that if Tesco wanted to get into the coffee-house business, then it had made a wise move in seeking a partnership with someone who had a reputation (and, indeed, Taylor Street Baristas brought with them the coffee supply of Union Hand-Roasted).

However, the general news media went completely over the top. It was probably the Guardian which seized on the matter and refused to let go for several months, alleging that the new Harris and Hoole coffee business had been pulling the wool over people's eyes, by trying to give the false impression of being an entirely independent artisan coffee shop. In one somewhat over-the-top piece, a writer claimed 'a growing number of customers discovering that the new, independent-looking, stripped-back coffee shops popping up on high streets across London and the south-east are part of a chain that is up to 49 per cent owned by Tesco'. The writer found several customers in Crouch End apparently willing to say they had been 'duped', and reported protests against Harris and Hoole in Whitstable.

The coffee trade was not bothered – a string of managers went along to try Harris and Hoole for themselves, and came back with generally approving reports. Interestingly, some general media were dismissive of the complaints – the Spectator was sarcastic, saying: 'it's official, this country is going to the dogs... Tesco has been insidiously infiltrating the coffee shop market'. The same magazine went on to argue that Harris and Hoole were creating skilled employment, and added: 'there's no rule that says you can't pack out your local independent coffee shop with customers if you serve better coffee than a chain can'. The New Statesman got nearer the point by saying: 'Harris and Hoole didn't mislead – making yourself look like an indie coffee shop is not the same thing as telling customers you are an indie coffee shop. This will get more common'.

Curiously, of course, none of the mainstream media realised that the family behind Harris and Hoole, the Tolleys, are indeed a perfectly legitimate 'artisan' business in their own right. Nick Tolley told us that one interview with an aggressive reporter was 'a most unpleasant experience', and that by keeping quality coffee at the heart of the new company, by training baristas 'beyond anything dreamed of by the current crop of high street multiples', and by using directly-traded, specialty-grade coffee, Harris and Hoole was doing everything that the big chains and corporates are always accused of not doing. By taking this approach, he said "we're now being accused of 'deception'!"

### July 2013

The judges of the Beverage Standards Association upset a few people by complaining that most espresso served in the UK is not good enough. Of those judged, just over half failed on extraction time, the majority pouring too fast, or too hot or too cold, or an incorrect amount of water. The others were regarded as 'acceptable', with only five per cent thought to be good. Some trade observers optimistically gave the example of the Cask Marque project in real ale pubs - when they began, they rated 90 per cent of real ale as under par, and started a revolution in beer quality.



*The BSA complained of the poor espresso served to their judges - but they took our spoof report in good humour!*

### December 2013

We now found it necessary to take up a problem which had been growing ever since the idea of 'review' websites hit the internet - the problem of fake and malicious reviews. The major site involved in this has always been Trip Advisor, simply because it is the biggest such site on the internet. Its own slogan has been 'get the truth, then go', and the operators of the site agree that the practice of posting fake or deliberately harmful reviews is indeed illegal. One coffee house began getting bad 'reviews' immediately after winning a trade award, with seven on one day, five the next day, and four the day after. Trip Advisor said that it had systems to spot suspicious activity; the cafe operator retorted that all his adverse reviews, while under different names, shared the same writing style and had all been posted by mobile phone, and that Trip Advisor was inadequately monitoring the system it had put in place. An American organisation claimed that ten to fifteen per cent of all reviews are fake, being either malicious bad reviews, or good ones which have been paid for.

### January 2014



*The brew water experts – Maxwell Colonna-Dashwood and Chris Hendon*

We did a big report on the problem of British water quality in the brewing of coffee – it is, we noted, the puzzle that worries everyone in coffee. The accepted wisdom for many years was that 'hardness' in water, caused by mineral deposits, was responsible for poor tastes in hot beverages. The majority of the UK has relatively hard water, which is believed to be responsible for the scale which clogs up pipes and machines. London generally has water of appalling quality (barista champ James Hoffmann once commented to us that 'London water wants to kill coffee machines!') and water in some parts of East Anglia is almost double the hardness of anywhere else. By contrast, there are one or two areas of Britain where the water is surprisingly 'soft', and that can cause an entirely different kind of problem. An entire industry of filtration-equipment makers has developed to make and sell machines which will filter water to what is reckoned to be the right 'hardness' for hot beverages. And then the whole subject was turned on its head, by one of our most recent barista champs, Maxwell Colonna-Dashwood of Colonna and Small's coffee shop in Bath.

Maxwell had been dissatisfied with conventional filtration arguments, and wanted to know why the same coffee, when brewed with waters of what were reckoned to be the same hardness, in various parts of the country, tasted different. He worked with Chris Hendon of the department of chemistry at the University of Bath, and they published to the scientific community a paper which suggested that the coffee trade's general assumptions about water and coffee might be too simplistic.

In general, the beverage industry believes that very hard water is a bad thing, and that a reading of 150 parts-per-million of hardness is right. However, said the barista and the scientist, this is mistaken - it is not the 'amount' of hardness that matters, Maxwell told us, but the 'type

From our readers' farewell messages...

**Boughton's coffee news has undoubtedly been a great source of information**

– Andrew Knight, Andronicas

of hardness'. "The discussion of hard and soft water is flawed as it doesn't recognise that two waters of a similar hardness or softness can still be very different. This explains a lot of the mystery of why coffees taste different with seemingly similar waters. The project that Chris and I are doing will culminate in a book on water and coffee which we hope to release later this year."

As we write this, that book has now just appeared. Rather noticeably, the water-filtration industry has yet to comment on it!

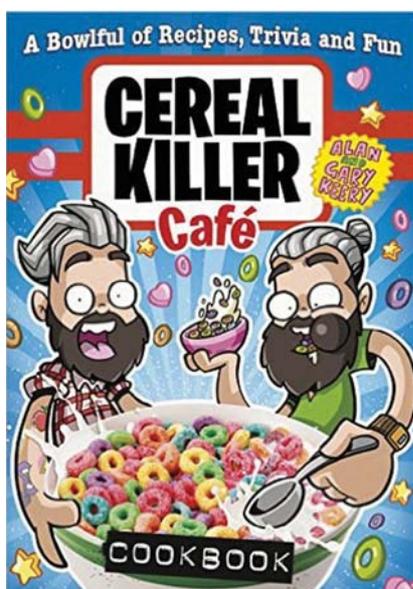
## The surreal side of the cafe world...



We have always loved the sometimes surreal nature of the cafe trade. This always makes us look twice - that chair back is actually mounted on a window sill in Eespressini, in Falmouth!

## Cereal cafes and comic books

We have also always loved following the trend for themed cafes. We shall spare you the picture of the My Little Pony cafe which we have just discovered, and concentrate on the well-known recent appearance of the cereal cafes. The operators of the Cereal Killer cafe in east London, the one which serves nothing but breakfast cereals, and which was recently vandalised by protesters against the supposed 'gentrification' of Brick Lane, have now created a cookbook. We haven't seen it, but are told that the ideas involve sausage-stuffed shredded wheat, coco-pop brownies and honeynut popcorn shrimp. The book has been designed as a 'nostalgia comic', and at £12.99, is timed for the Christmas market.



Perhaps unsurprisingly, the story of the rudest coffee name in the world has come to an end - the owner of F\*\*\*offee in Bermondsey, London, has agreed to change his signage after receiving a threat from his landlord's agents.

The newly-branded site, one of the Street Coffee chain owned by Adrian Jones, became something of a sensation over the past year, and the owner pushed the joke as far as he could - at one time, he even applied to trademark the word, but received a blunt response from the authorities. There were remarkably few complaints about the name - although police did call to look at it, the owner told us that they just laughed and posed for 'selfies' outside the café.

It appears that the success of the name was accidental - it was put up as a joke, but the owner found that business shot up by twenty per cent.

Fans of the cafe have begun a petition in protest.

A local councillor has declined to criticise the shop, although he suggested that if the café owner had created a more clever spelling of the word to simply suggest the meaning, he might have got away with the name. As it was, said the councillor, the owner had been 'uncompromising' in insisting that the word be spelled out in full.

Whatever you think of the cafe name, there is no doubt that through the years, Adrian and Street coffee have been consistently responsible for some of our favourite A-boards. These two are among our favourites (and they are the polite ones!)



From our readers' farewell messages...

**I am sad to hear you are retiring. I have enjoyed reading your magazine and your work and also your investigative nature. I think you have been a voice of reason, or at least you asked some good questions of people and of the industry**

– Tim Sturk, Baxter Storey

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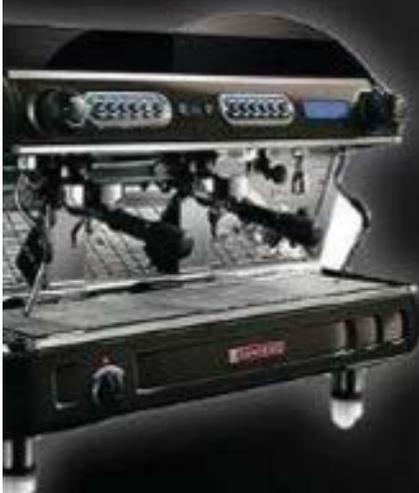
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**A HEARTFELT THANKS TO IAN AND TRUDI FOR ALL THEY HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO OUR INDUSTRY**

**TRUE, IMPARTIAL AND PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM IS VERY HARD TO FIND BUT BOUGHTON'S COFFEE HOUSE HAS EPITOMISED THOSE ATTRIBUTES CONSISTENTLY AND CONTINUOUSLY EVEN WHEN THE SUBJECTS HAVE BEEN DIFFICULT AND OTHER JOURNALS AND TRADE BODIES HAVE SHIED AWAY FROM COMMENT.**

**THEY WERE NEVER DRIVEN OR CONTROLLED BY THEIR ADVERTISERS AND REPORTED ON WHAT WAS PERTINENT TO THE READER.**

**WITHOUT THEM OUR INDUSTRY WOULD HAVE BEEN THE POORER. THEY ENSURED THAT COMPLACENCY AND ARROGANCE WERE ALWAYS CHALLENGED, BUT CHALLENGED IN THAT GENTLE WAY THAT REALLY MADE YOU THINK AND SOMETIMES MADE YOU CHANGED YOUR OPINIONS DRAMATICALLY**

**WHAT WILL WE DO WITHOUT THEM?**

# Speaking up for the trade

Who will stand up for the coffee and the café trades, when it's needed? Will the big companies now put some money in to fund a promotional body?

**Who speaks for the coffee trade? And indeed, who speaks for the café trade? This is a puzzle which has been occupying our thoughts for the past twelve years... and it hasn't been resolved yet!**

Does it matter?

Yes, it does... because there are occasions when something big happens, positively or negatively, which can affect the reputation of the trade. If it is something positive, then we need a body to speak out about it, for the promotion of everyone in the business... if it is something negative, then we need a body to speak out in defence of the trade.

And so far, there isn't anybody doing it!

Here are some examples. In July 2007, something unprecedented happened – James Hoffmann, who had been working for La Spaziale machines and was just on the verge of setting up his Square Mile roastery, was the UK's representative in the world barista championships... and won.

Now, we got told off for our coverage of this, because certain people didn't think we had reported such a cataclysmic event adequately - heavens, we only gave him our front page!

But our interest was in something deeper, and James, to his great credit, saw what we were doing and agreed with us.

We said: "quite rightly, James has come in for applause and congratulation on his great achievement... but what does it mean for the rest of the trade? Should our entire trade be capitalising on his success, and using it to raise the image of quality coffee in the minds of the consumers?"

And this, we reckon, was the real matter in hand for the good of the entire trade. So, what were we all going to do to capitalise on a Brit becoming the world's top barista? We asked two very important questions - first, how does the trade use this to inspire interest in the subject of coffee among consumers, and second, how do we use it to inspire interest and ambition among café-owners and their staff?

We dared to suggest that if an American had won, that country's

press and TV media would have been completely buzzing with it within 24 hours. Our media was not, and we were told 'it's all about money'. We disagreed - we think it's all about enthusiasm.

"You are correct to say that other nations would be far quicker to leverage 'their win' to a much greater extent," remarked Stephen Hurst of Mercanta. "The Americans are using their second place finish in just such a way, and the Japanese spent ten of thousands in sponsorships to get their contestant to number one." (The Japanese actually got fourth).

"The British reaction to James' excellent win only highlights what we already know - that the vast majority of UK 'coffee people' are nothing of the sort - they are 'distributors' and 'caterers', whose attachment to, and knowledge of, coffee is cursory. James' win will not have a mainstream impact, because the UK mass media don't yet know what a barista is!"

Other world champs took our question seriously. Klaus Thomsen of Denmark, the previous champ, told us: "it's important for the coffee industry to understand that the media need to be told about it. The only way you make this buzz is by handling the PR professionally.

"The speciality coffee industry in the UK should see this as an opportunity to get the media much more interested in coffee. They should make use of James and try to promote him all over the UK as an 'official speciality coffee spokesperson' in the UK. Together, the speciality coffee sector could muster some resources to actually make this a big deal."

The 2003 champ, Paul Bassett of Australia, told us: "You have to beat your own drum. If you go out, even if you're world champion at tiddly-winks, you can get on a morning show or even appear with the weatherman. We created awareness with the documentary and my TV series, but it wasn't easy - we had to find the funding, and Sunbeam

From our readers' farewell messages...

**Your insights and dynamics will be very much missed by the industry; I will miss Coffee House, as it is one of the few magazines I read from cover to cover and then start again. I have a neat pile of them going back, ready to be looked through if I need inspiration or a great idea to build upon.**

- Martyn Herriott, Complete Beverage Solutions and Beverage Standards Association.

(an Aussie coffee machine brand) gave me sponsorship, a milk company dropped in some money, and a production company put some in. It did get a million viewers, my series was played four times in three years here, and after it was sold to the Discovery channel, I got emails from all over the world - and consumers told me yes, it has changed their view of coffee."

Steve Penk of La Spaziale, whose backing had supported James through the British and world contests, was quoted in this magazine saying that everyone in our trade can be part of this, so why not plaster signs over café windows saying 'the UK is the best coffee-making country in the world - come in and try it!'

Did any trade body grasp the opportunity? No. And when Gwilym Davies repeated the achievement two years later, we still had not learned - two opportunities to promote the entire trade, wasted.



**Another illustration that no association speaks for the coffee trade came with the matter of the Portas report of 2011. This was a populist move by the government, who hired the 'shopping consultant' Mary Portas, famous from her TV shows, to report on the retail mix of Britain's high streets.**

Now, at the time, everyone was bellyaching about the national high street being filled up by coffee shops, to the detriment of the 'retail mix'. It was said that Mary Portas wished to halt the 'clone town' phenomenon, in which all high streets are filled with the same kinds of business, and we reported on a vast number of local authorities who had recently commented in planning decisions that they saw the coffee-shop trade, either in big-name chain or independent form, as a major threat to the desired 'retail mix' of their shopping areas.

This image was not helped by a report from the Simply Business insurance company, which said that coffee shops now made up 11 per cent of high street businesses. A study by the world's third-largest commercial estate company said that over a third of high streets in the UK are either 'degenerating' or 'failing', with high streets being 'dominated by takeaways'.

Well, it was quite evident that the café trade had to be defended.

Mary Portas herself said: "I am calling on business, local authorities and shoppers to contribute their ideas on how we can create town centres that we can all be proud of." We spoke to the appropriate government department, who confirmed that they were interested in 'evidence, analysis and figures' presented by special-interest groups. An association in the pub trade told us they were submitting a report on behalf of their members, to argue the value of the pub in the high street mix, and the British Independent Retailers' Association said they were submitting a case. The Association of Convenience Stores created its own campaign in support of its members, and both the Association of Licensed Multiple Retailers and the British Beer & Pub Association were working on submissions to 'provide evidence on the strong role their members bring to the high street'.

We had a niggling suspicion that our trade might not come out of this report well, and suggested that the beverage trade should put together a concerted submission to prove its value to the high street...only one company has said it would wish to be allied to a trade submission, and that was a supplier of a fringe product. Of the big chains, only Caffè Nero commented, to say it would 'perhaps' associate itself with a trade submission.

The week after the deadline for submissions, one of the beverage trade associations telephoned us and said: 'do you think we should be doing something about this...?'

Afterwards, we read her report and discovered that only Starbucks and two independent one-site cafes were acknowledged as having helped her.

One trade player remarked to us: "Portas had already said that she wanted the high streets to become more 'social space', and as the coffee-house industry believe they already offer that, the trade did not respond because it thought it had already won".

Interestingly, in her presentation to the Prime Minister, Mary Portas recommended the kind of high street setting in which cafés and café-bars can play a vital role. She wrote that in her vision of the new kind of town centre, 'the new high streets won't be selling goods - they should be social and cultural meeting places, where shopping will be just one of a mix of activities'.



*Mary Portas, wanting to know where the coffee trade presentation is!*

One independent café named in the report was Lisa Hemingway's Cupcake Café in Margate. She collared Portas, who was doing a walkabout, and sat the consultant down in her café for a chat. Heaven knows why no major trade body did that.

(It was a big few weeks for the Cupcake café at that time - they actually had the Queen visit them, followed by the Queen of Shops!)

In 2013, the Portas project was followed by Independents Day, created by the National Skills Academy for Retail, linked with Independent Retailer Month, which runs throughout July. Eleven trade associations were involved from cycle traders to goldsmiths, all pushing their high-street businesses... and the café trade missed it completely. The organisers told us that four cafes took part, three of whom supported the event because it coincided with their own business birthday. Sadly, three of them told us that the event had just not worked for them.

British Food Fortnight was the next missed opportunity. This speaks for itself, in promoting home-produced food, but when we asked to the organisers if coffee, blended and roasted in the UK, counted as 'British Food', they agreed enthusiastically. We reported for two years their invitation for British roasters to get involved... without any response.



**In terms of coffee trade awareness, the work of the ethical-trading organisations has often driven us to despair.**

In 2011, the Rainforest Alliance ran its first 'awareness week' in September, yet had no promotional back-up or support for the cafe trade to use. The Alliance had relied entirely on online promotion, with a 'toolkit', of suggestions, which were essentially fairly basic suggestions for local PR work, and was hoping that the event would be adequately publicised through social networking.

When asked by this magazine whether the coffee trade had been given enough time to prepare for the event, the Alliance replied: "this is the first year we have done this, and so are trying to capture as much learning as possible from our experience - for 2012, our 25th anniversary, we will be looking at the timeline very carefully."

A straw poll around the trade produced very little awareness of the event among suppliers of Rainforest-accredited products; Drury reported that they would be re-working their Rainforest blend, but the timing was coincidence.

And in 2012, the main aspect of the awareness week was that Rainforest forgot to make anyone aware of it! Despite having told us that "we are very keen to engage more coffee shops, but we confess

From our readers' farewell messages...

**I'm going to miss reading that magazine**

– Rick Tingley, Taylor's of Harrogate

that we don't know much about them," the organisation didn't reach out well at all.

By 2015, Rainforest claimed more than 319,000 Facebook 'likes' and more than 129,000 Twitter followers, but had still not really connected with the British coffee trade - one roaster criticised the reliance on social media, saying 'you cannot have a reasoned debate in 140 characters!'

And the same went for Fairtrade - we spent years trying to get them to work with the trade on Fairtrade Fortnight, until we eventually gave up and simply stopped writing about it - and some of the biggest distributors of Fairtrade-marked coffee agreed with us, too.

In 2013, Fairtrade said they would have a dedicated two-week campaign in support of coffee in which the spend would be twice that of the main Fortnight, (though they would not say what that was!) The awareness campaign was to promote the concept of Fairtrade coffee, and the coffee trade, in the eyes of the public.

"It is a consumer-facing campaign, but a tool for catering businesses, because it will be driven through point-of-sale at outlets," they told us. "For the public, the theme is to buy a Fairtrade product, get a code, go to the website, and win a trip to origin. There is a celebrity involvement - the consumer views online a film of the celebrity, and has to guess where they are."

This, said Fairtrade, would be a 'hilariously funny' look at how we all have the power to change the world through buying Fairtrade coffee, and involve the Finding Hannah contest, in which a consumer would be taken to a coffee co-operative somewhere, with clues as to the origin. A winning consumer would win a trip to that origin (we don't actually know whether anyone won it - there is a YouTube video which features a blonde girl saying such informative things as 'the Fairtrade Premium is, like, a bit of extra money...', but again, no active promotion.

In theory, two awareness events, running at the same time, should have been a great promotional period for the coffee trade - however, as has happened in recent years, both suppliers and café operators have complained that they either did not receive any information on the events from the two main bodies, or that information is too late - one major pub chain noted for its activity in coffee protested that it requires at least three months' notice of such events, to prepare in a businesslike commercial manner.

The suggestion, still to be acted on, was that before the ethical-marking organisations prepare another awareness event, that they should hold a general meeting with coffee suppliers, café owners, and the hospitality trade, and that instead of dreaming up their own slogans and posters, should listen to what the trade actually wants them to do, and plan accordingly.



**These positive opportunities to promote the trade are something which could be planned for; negative publicity requires crisis management on the part of the trade. An interesting example of this was the Waitrose free coffee scandal of late 2013, offering a free tea or coffee 'every day' on production of a 'my Waitrose' card, with no other purchase required.**

The matter came to public attention when a café owner in Buckingham complained to the Office of Fair Trading, saying that his coffee sales had fallen by 40 per cent since the promotion started, and a remarkable number of cafes then got in touch with us to share their

experiences. One in Saffron Walden said her morning trade had been 'decimated', and another said: "I have seen my customers in the Waitrose cafe - I wondered why they weren't coming back to me, I hadn't seen them, and now I know."

The campaign is not actually illegal, but Waitrose has two million cardholders, and if every one of them took up the offer every day, it would involve half a billion coffees a year lost to independent businesses. Coffee House put this direct question to Waitrose: 'it has been pointed out that Waitrose has always made a big thing of support to local communities. This claim cannot be supported in the face of statements by neighbouring cafes that they have lost 40 per cent of their trade due to Waitrose giveaways.'

The reply avoided the issue, giving a meaningless corporate reply, and the OFT told us that they considered the matter from a competition law perspective, and while they noted the possible effect on the complainant's business, the actions described would not appear to be unlawful.

Now, at the time, even the prime minister got involved, saying he saw nothing wrong in a free coffee. This was the ideal opportunity for a coffee lobby to stand up for the trade... but we don't have one.

Later, Waitrose made a partial about-turn, requiring customers to make a purchase of some kind before they qualified for their free drink in an instore café; they could, however, still have a free coffee for take-away consumption. The chain now said that its about-turn was 'a matter of manners'.



**Perhaps best of all, and most recently, the coffee trade was puzzled by the extraordinary late announcement that an International Coffee Day was to be held on October 1st this year. The event is the idea of the International Coffee Organisation, which apparently set the date back in March 2014... but said nothing to the British trade until the end of July this year.**

When advised of the event by this magazine, several senior executives were surprised. The Lavazza brand said: "this is the first we've heard of it," and Cafedirect said: "we don't know about it - and what a time to do it, with budgets all committed". Even the Fairtrade Foundation said "we weren't aware of it". The one body which appeared to know was the Speciality Coffee Association of Europe, which has created a logo and a poster which can be displayed by companies taking up the idea.

Now, bizarrely, there already is a Coffee Day, celebrated in some countries on September 29th, which led to the ludicrous situation of social media being clogged up with messages saying 'It's Coffee Day'... followed by exactly the same situation two days later!

The solution is relatively easy. Perhaps twenty years ago, the major companies in the tea industry, who had grown rich by peddling what was generally a not very exciting black tea product, all put in some money, which they could easily afford, to form the Tea Council, a promotional body. Their tea-room contests were, for many years, way ahead of anything the coffee trade has done before or since. They were the first port of call for all media enquiries on the tea trade.

It really is not beyond the bounds of possibility for the major coffee companies to stump up a few thousand each year and create the coffee equivalent...

And after all this time, we clearly still need it!

From our readers' farewell messages...

**Nooooo! I'm sad. Thank you so much for all the years of support you have given to my clients and for all the witty and entertaining e-mails that never failed to make me smile**

– Elke Passon, Talking Food

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**A WORLD OF COFFEE, LOCALLY ROASTED**

# Stories of the chains

We have always been grateful to Starbucks - not just for getting the whole coffee-house thing started, but for giving us so much entertainment over the years... even if much of it was unintentional!

**We have always paid a certain amount of respect to the big coffee chains... but not too much. On the positive side, we can all thank them for getting the modern coffee-house trade started. On the other hand, they consistently do things which have us rolling around with laughter.**

Starbucks in particular has always behaved with a kind of superior pomposity, believing itself to be regarded by the entire coffee trade as a kind of benevolent all-wise grandfather of coffee, and given to making grandiose statements. It may be our reluctance to go along with this that means that, in twelve years, Starbucks has never once given us an interview. (We once remarked that Starbucks are either too self-important to speak to us... or too nervous!)

Costa is not a great deal better, being restricted by corporate rules from its owner Whitbread, and making its own bizarre press announcements - we particularly love the way that whenever any local paper in Britain reports their local independent traders to be worried about the likely arrival of a Costa, the chain trots out exactly the same standard corporate response every time.

By sharp contrast, the other member of the Big Three is distinctive by its comparative irreverence - Gerry Ford, managing director of Caffè Nero, is a businessman who is perfectly ready to see the lighthearted side of the trade.

Truth of the matter is, we have given the top two as much credit as we have taken the rise out of them. Back in 2004, we admired the way that staff in one Starbucks branch learned sign language - word got around, and the local deaf community began to meet there. We later reported the imaginative way in which they managed a deaf barista to work without many of the customers even noticing.

And the company has done a lot of other good work - after the New Orleans hurricane, they took the company convention there, and everyone, including the top man Howard Schultz, spent hours helping to restore the city.

But they do give us some fun... the Starbucks announcement that they would enter the French market 'with the utmost respect' to Parisien café culture was met with a certain amount of local derision, some it using the delightful phrase 'jus de chaussettes' to describe the chain's coffee. That means 'sock juice', or what is wrung out of wet socks. Heaven knows what the Italians are going to make of the chain's proposed arrival there next year.

Back in 2009, the marketing world was intrigued by the appearance of 'knocking' tactics by Costa, having a go at Starbucks in its advertising. This was largely based on some of Costa's helpful research which 'proved' that customers prefer its coffee to the big green rival.

The two waved handbags at each other again over the silly matter of the flat white. The concept of this Antipodean drink was first debated at an Allegra 'coffee summit' conference, and we reported a barista from Sacred Coffee in Soho explaining it to us.

Shortly afterwards, Starbucks' press machine came up with the quite folksy story that the baristas in one of their Soho stores had noticed

## The COFFEE HOUSE years

people asking for a new drink, and that their 'highly-trained baristas' had taught themselves to make it... and added descriptions quite clearly lifted from what the Sacred barista had said in our story! This was followed by the equally unlikely claim from Costa that they had launched the flat white after 'more than 12 months of research, development and training of over 6,000 of Costa's baristas at a total investment of over £1 million'.

The trade laughed its head off - if one of the two high-street giants could supposedly let its baristas learn to make a drink by themselves and put it on the menu, why should the other spend a year and a million pounds on it? The two battled to be first to market with it, with Starbucks first by a whisker, followed by Costa holding its own launch, saying: "we are offering a premium, great tasting and authentic product that's not available at other coffee shop chains in the UK. Our unrivalled coffee expertise and highly skilled, talented baristas make us unique in our ability to offer an authentic Flat White".

The Muffin Break chain retorted that it had been selling the flat white for eight years!

And five years later, the entire American press was baffled by the appearance of this strange new drink which Starbucks had imported from the UK...

Not having learned from this, Starbucks then claimed credit for inventing the 'duffin' (the hybrid bakery item that followed the 'cronut'). Bea's of Bloomsbury subsequently turned up in the national press, reportedly accusing Starbucks of stealing the idea of a muffin/doughnut hybrid which Bea's had made three years earlier, and Starbucks reportedly responded, in an innocent tone, that 'since launching the Starbucks duffin... we have discovered there are other duffins out there'.

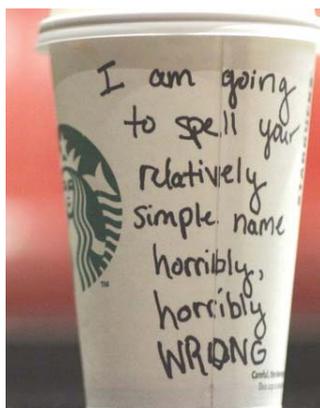


From our readers' farewell messages...

**No, I don't believe it – surely not retiring? You did achieve your objective of bringing interesting, well-written information to the industry**

– Alice Rendle, Edgcombe Tea and Coffee

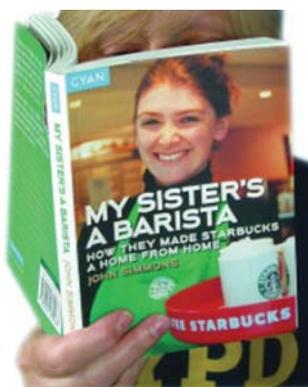
Trying to integrate itself with local communities, Starbucks left itself open to laughter in north Wales, where the chain attempted to create signage in Welsh, which is widely spoken in those parts. They attempted menus and blackboards giving Welsh precedence over English. However, local people said that sentences are left unfinished, some have words misspelled, and some 'make little sense' - a typical sign read: 'Starbucks blonde is light of body and taste our coffee to most easy to drink'. One complainant said they were puzzled by a sign which read: 'nourishing the human spirit, one person, one cup and'... but nothing else!



However, a local language campaigner has been sympathetic, quoting the phrase (and we hope this is correct!) "gwell Cymraeg slac na Saesneg slic". It translates as "better slack Welsh than slick English"!

It was seven years ago that Starbucks got into big trouble, from which it has never really recovered, for its use of the 'dipper well', constant running water in sinks for cleaning. It was reported that they use (or waste) 23.4 million litres of water a day - enough to solve the entire drought problem of one African country.

It is now three years since Starbucks decided that it would write customers' names on the sides of cups to help identify drinks at the pick-up counter... quite a sensible move, of course, but Starbucks press machine screwed it up by running a folksy worldwide campaign saying 'have you noticed how everything seems a little impersonal nowadays... we've all become user names, reference numbers and IP addresses. From now on, we won't refer to you as a latte or a mocha, but instead as your folks intended - by your name'. If they had kept quiet, there would probably not now be entire websites devoted to baristas' ludicrous mis-spellings of even the most simple names.



There have been several very illuminating books about Starbucks, some of them written by former staff. In *My Sister's a Barista*, we discovered the true origins of the Frappuccino - it was invented by staff in a local store, who told head office about it, and the chain's R&D people took it up, but couldn't make it as well as the local baristas, and said the idea should be dropped. Admirably, the local shop refused to accept this and kept on selling it, thus forcing the chain to take pay attention and try again... and it sold \$52 million in its first year.

This matter of Starbucks menus was discussed in detail by Kenny Brown of Massachusetts, who trained the chain's staff for years before writing a book about the age-old problem of 'Starbucks language', and took an extremely detailed look at how the company's drinks are made.

A notable aspect of many books written by Starbucks staff is their unshakeable loyalty to the brand - many of them do not realise at all that the rest of the trade considers Starbucks' practices to be a little odd. Kenny Brown was not blind to the bizarre aspects of the brand's language, and quite typically noted that a customer who wants a small

latte, and is told that in Starbucks-speak this is a 'tall', may leave in confusion and never come back.

He told us that: "I found a real disconnect between the company and some customers - one of the greatest obstacles is that customers truly don't understand what Starbucks is offering."

Here is a curiosity. Starbucks has always argued the need to deliver a drink as the customer wants it, and this leaves the chain open to some really bizarre orders. Kenny Brown recalls, from his own time behind the counter, these:

- a tall espresso shot from the left spout of the left machine, left to sit for twenty seconds, non-fat milk to within one inch of the top of the cup, whole milk for the top inch, 170F, no foam.
- a tall chai syrup, extra hot, light caramel drizzle, whole milk foam, seven Splenda sweeteners, and steamed apple juice.
- a venti, ten shots, light ice.

The results, he observed, range from the dull to the interesting, and from the crazy to the downright horrifying. (He also tells us of his customer who regularly took a drink with twelve Splenda sweeteners, until she decided to cut back... so she went down to eleven and a half!) The seven-shot venti no-dairy iced Starbucks Doubleshot should, says the author, be illegal - and it is hard to argue with him.

He also suggests that Starbucks will make a customer's drink 'partially decaffeinated' - that is, a quarter decaf, a half decaf, or three-quarters decaf. This appears to be done by combining shots of caffeinated coffee with shots of decaf.

A TV station in Texas took this farther, by asking local coffee shops about the orders they receive. Every one had experiences of bizarre requests, from 'three-quarters of an espresso shot' to 'a 20 oz. half-caf latte, with one pump sugar-free vanilla, no foam and one Splenda, Cubano style' (which apparently means the Splenda sweetener goes into the beans after grinding and before brewing).

And it can only be Starbucks who is responsible for all this!

It was in March 2007 that top man Howard Schultz first told the New York Times that Starbucks was 'losing its soul', and a year later he closed down the entire American operation for an afternoon so staff could listen to his pep talk. The was greeted with worldwide derision, but a little later the man wrote his own absolutely superb book, *Onward*, which charted the Starbucks journey into chaos and back out of it. It was a very honest tale, in which Schultz openly listed the various problems and failures that occur within a large corporation - at one point the infrastructure was so chaotic that store managers could neither handle spreadsheets nor could they email out. On the one hand, he did descend occasionally into the usual Starbucks self-righteousness ('the world is looking to Starbucks to set the new standard yet again...' really?) and yet often makes shrewd observations, such as 'if not checked, success has a way of covering up your failures...'

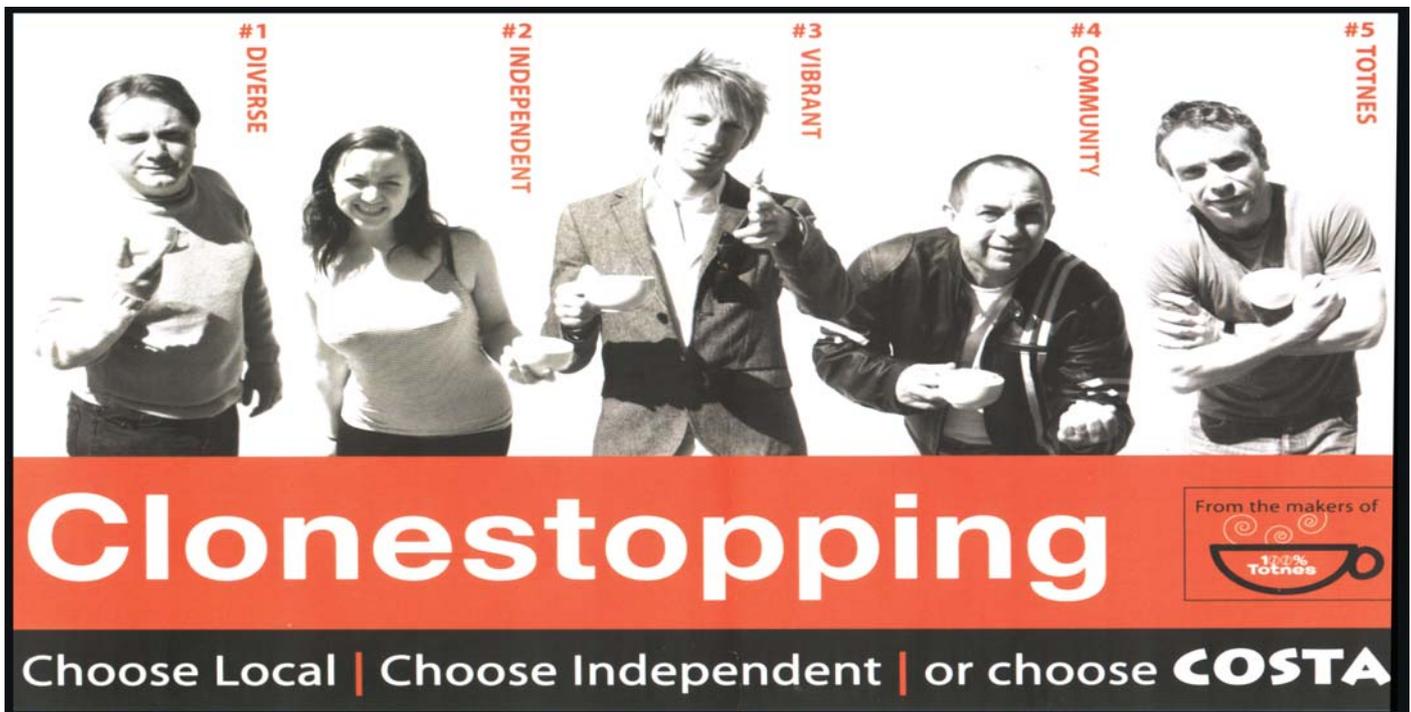
At one point, we had a brief exchange with Winter, the single-name identity of the man who created a project to visit every single Starbucks store in the world, for no constructive purpose that we can see. He was in the UK, and told us that British Starbucks staff are more polite than the Americans, but that the stores and washrooms are not so clean. Starbucks has never really recognised him, and on one occasion he did actually give a clue of what he really thought, to an American paper.

He told one reporter that his preference is to visit independent coffee bars: "I respect Starbucks for its business sense, customer service and amenities... but unless I am checking a new store off my list, I would not go there for the coffee." With regard to his own mission in life, he

From our readers' farewell messages...

I love your mag because of your almost Yorkshire-like approach to telling it like it is

– Mike Riley, Falcon Speciality Coffee



*The most remarkable display of anti-chain feeling ever seen in Britain - a poster for the Totnes campaign (these are real local baristas)*

once told the Wall St Journal: "pointless as it may be, a goal is a goal."

In 2007, Starbucks played a role, again unwittingly, in the launch of the i-phone concept (is that only eight years ago?) The founder of Apple, the late Steve Jobs, unveiled the i-phone in front of thousands of people, and demonstrated it by calling the local branch of Starbucks, and saying: "I'd like 4,000 lattes to go, please." Even now, the barista who took the call still works there... and not surprisingly, she hasn't forgotten it.

Of the big chains, it is not just Starbucks who has entertained us over the years. Costa has provided its share of entertainment, and often just as unintentionally.

During the great flat white story, certain senior members of the coffee trade played a wicked prank on Costa. The chain had promoted the drink on A-boards outside its cafes, showing a perfect drink with lovely latte art... but not all Costa baristas were that good at it, if they did it at all. These shameless executives would go into Costa, order a flat white, study the generally undecorated top and say: 'no, I want one like on the board outside...!'

Costa's managing director twice talked to us about baristas. On one occasion, he remarked that he expected to be the last MD who did not start his Costa career as a barista, and later he said that he wanted Costa's in-house barista champ to be entered for the UK barista championships. So far, neither of these predictions has come to pass!

In 2012, Costa was unwise enough to propose opening in Totnes, a

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*This notice really did appear in a branch of one of the Big Two!*

little Devon town known for its new-age and bohemian lifestyle - the coffee houses here were hip long before Shoreditch!

When it is reported that Costa is coming, most small towns experience complaints to the council from local businesses. Totnes did not stop at that - the independent traders of the town held a two-week coffee festival, complete with open-air demonstrations, a local barista contest with a difficult twist (everybody had to use a lever machine) and votes for best local café. The nearby roaster Owens of Modbury prepared a special coffee for the event. More than 3,000 people signed a petition against the Costa application, and a 'clonestopping' poster appeared throughout the town, featuring pictures of several local baristas.

The local Transition Town Totnes organisation said: "the Totnes Independent Coffee Festival aims to send out a clear signal to any chain coffee shops that Totnes is doing just fine for quality coffee venues, so their presence would not be appropriate in Totnes."

Costa's application, it has been reported, actually included details of other towns across the UK where it has successfully opened despite residents' objections. If this were true, we noted, it would be a quite breathtakingly arrogant declaration that it does not care about local feelings, and as such it had a predictable response from Totnes - the local chamber of commerce said that its response was a "a statement of 'take us on if you think you're hard enough!'

We visited the town and spoke to the winner of the 'best café' vote, Fat Lemons on the corner of the delightfully-named Ticklemore Street. They told us that the coffee festival convinced a lot of local people to make up their minds, and one-third of the population of 9,000 signed a petition threatening to boycott the chain. This was not an idle threat - the residents of nearby Tavistock caused the first-ever closure of a McDonalds, because no local customers would use it.

We asked Costa, and got a very unimaginative and possibly disinterested response: "nothing to comment on at this stage," said a spokesperson, "other than the usual general statement about bringing jobs to the area etc..."

But that did not happen. Costa withdrew its plans, citing 'depth of feeling' in the town.

Ever since, those protesting against the arrival of a chain cafe have cited the Totnes example... but no town has yet won so dramatically as Totnes did.



**Sincere thanks  
to Ian and Trudi  
for that unique  
perspective on the UK  
coffee trade, via  
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# The fairness of the coffee trade

Among the longest-running issues we have reported have been the problems surrounding fair-trading and conservation – again, this is an issue which other media have never dared to question. Nobody in their right mind would argue against the need for fair treatment of farmers... but why do the ethical organisations always get their message so wrong?

**Nobody wants to question the importance of fairness in the coffee supply chain, or the rights of coffee farmers and their workers. And yet, there are arguments against the practices of the ethical organisations which are widely known, but rarely raised in the trade press. And these issues have to be considered.**

It is a great problem that the ethical organisations are so unwilling to do so, or indeed are so unwilling to accept that there can be any other 'right' attitude than their own.

The Fairtrade Foundation does tend to conduct itself with a certain self-righteousness, and we once had a member of their team say to us: "we just can't understand why anyone would not want to buy Fairtrade coffee..."

Well, the reason was clear to the coffee trade, just ask any roaster – for many years, the standard of Fairtrade coffee was so extremely low that several roasters simply refused to touch it. When we first started reporting about coffee, a respected roaster remarked to us: "we do have a Fairtrade coffee... because we have to." He explained to us that for the sake of appearances, some of his clients wanted to see some Fairtrade coffee in a blend, even if the roaster was not happy about including it. We later discovered that many independent roasters were actively opposed to it on grounds of quality.

This goes back a long way – at a 2006 BSA seminar, a manager from the Mid-Counties Co-op recalled: "we have been selling fairly-traded coffee since before Fairtrade. We go back to Nicaraguan Freedom Coffee, which allowed you to show your solidarity with the suffering of the growers... by suffering every time you drank it!"

Questions about ethically-badged coffee in general also go back a long way. In 2004 the Smithsonian Institute, no less, noted that the amount of coffee sold as 'shade-grown' far outstripped the amount of coffee actually certified as that!

In the same year, the Adam Smith Institute complained that Fairtrade was 'a well-meaning dead end'. They added that such schemes 'are doomed to end in failure', and that 'those who advocate half-baked schemes to prop up prices may have the best of intentions, but are not really helping'. They also included the remark: 'the fact is, the quality of fair-trade coffee does not justify its higher price'. The work had been written some time earlier, and supporters of Fairtrade claimed that the publishers deliberately held it back to just before Fairtrade Fortnight for greatest media attention.

Some British traders were not pleased and appeared on radio to debate it. Cafedirect claimed to have been in the top six coffee brands by sales, and the Fairtrade Foundation argued that some Fairtrade products had won taste and quality awards.

The report's author told us that the Fairtrade model 'could not offer a systemic solution' and made a point which others have often commented on – that the sheer simple brilliance of the Fairtrade name is that it suggests that all other coffees are therefore 'not fair'.

## The COFFEE HOUSE years

This was clearly shown when we went with a group of roasters to visit farmers in Costa Rica, taken there by the importer Mercanta. These British roasters did not all approve of the Fairtrade model, but were still insistent upon fair trading, and surprised local farmers with the depth of their questioning about workers' rights.

One roaster said: "Our customers want to know where coffee comes from, and they want to know that we pay you enough for workers to be paid well, and for their children to be educated. I must have this information – I get customers asking me why your coffee isn't Fairtrade, and I have to go to great lengths to explain that it is indeed 'fairly traded'."

The biggest competitor of the ethical independent importer, he argued, is the Fairtrade brand, which is 'not a quality brand, they allege, but a conscience brand'. Selling the Fairtrade Mark is as easy as selling on price, remarked one – it's easier for some some salesmen to sell the brand than to be able to explain the issues.

"We know more about this issue than Fairtrade do," said another British roaster. "We know more about the situation of the people we're buying directly from – we know who they are, we know what they're paid, we know what they eat, and we know how they're housed."

Four years later, another in a long line of anti-Fairtrade reports was Unfair Trade, again from the Adam Smith Institute, which said that Fairtrade exists to 'keep the poor in their place' because 'it sustains uncompetitive farmers and holds back changes which could provide a richer future'. Although Cafedirect defended Fairtrade, that brand did note, in a survey it sponsored, that many consumers had become unsure about 'vague images of suited company executives shaking hands with rural workers'. These pictures, said Cafedirect very fairly, mean that four out of five consumers believe that those companies whose products bear the Mark actually do go out in person to source from farms. Similarly, Cafedirect found, most British consumers have no concept at all of how much money reaches the farmers.

This subject came up again, and ever more dramatically, at the Allegra coffee summit of 2009, when the organisers had quite deliber-

From our readers' farewell messages...

OMG – can't believe it

– Gary McGann, Beyond the Bean

ately pitched four of the coffee trade's best-known ethical organisations against one anti-Fairtrade economist. It was an unjustifiably unfair contest – and indeed, the economist won hands down.

This was Dr Peter Griffiths, the author of *Why Fairtrade Isn't Fair*, who works to use both marketing methods and improved working systems to better the lot of farmers, and who claims to have changed government policies and even prevented a famine with his advice. He issued a thundering and extremely emotional denunciation of the Fairtrade model, attacked Fairtrade's methods, the transparency of their figures, argued that Fairtrade actually makes things worse for farmers, and claimed that Fairtrade distorted the market, to the detriment of coffee-growers. And, he added, Fairtrade only responds to awkward questions with criticism or ridicule of the questioner.

Even members of the audience joined him with awkward questions of their own, particularly the matter of how much money gets to farmers – and the Fairtrade representative was unable to answer them. Not surprisingly, the next report to be published, *Fairtrade Without the Froth* from the Institute of Economic Affairs, suggested it was 'time for Fairtrade to show some humility...'

Astonishingly, Griffiths and Fairtrade locked horns in public again six years later, when the *Guardian* invited him to be part of a well-meant online forum entitled 'what's the best step coffee brands can take to support farmers?'

It may well be that the *Guardian* was not aware of his views, but he lost no time in alleging that while all ethically-sourced brands endorse the idea of better conditions for farmers, certain payments simply 'disappear' before reaching the farm gate. "The research shows that generous consumers around the world pay one to two billion euros a year extra for Fairtrade, with a minuscule proportion reaching the Third World, and none at all reaching the farmers in the form of higher prices. There is seriously big money going astray – the extra money that consumers think is going to the farmers is being pocketed by big business."

Much of this must have come as a surprise to the debate moderators, and Peter Griffiths later told us that some of his comments were edited out of the later summaries of the debate. "The *Guardian* deleted four of my responses as 'potentially actionable'...and I was being polite. My fully-researched, reviewed academic papers with loads of references are much blunter!"

Again, we were alone in reporting one of the most dramatic ethical-buying stories of all, when we spoke to Rick Peyser, of Green Mountain Coffee Roasters in Vermont, about his book *Brewing Change*. Our report of this horrified many people, because Peyser reported that even in 2013, the horror of starvation still exists among poor farmers, to a degree which many in the British and American coffee trades just do not realise.

His own travels in Central America, and his ability to speak the local languages, brought him the understanding of 'los meses flacos', or 'the thin months'. He was shaken to realise that this simple phrase did not mean just an inconvenient period at the end of the harvest, when the money had run out – it meant an expected annual period of starvation lasting four months, or even longer.

Having worked for the Fairtrade organisation himself, Peyser was shaken. "These were Fairtrade farmers who were supposed to be getting a reasonable price for their coffee – and they went hungry for three to four months of every year. I was furious I hadn't known about this... I felt stupid. How could I be in the industry for so long and not know what the farmers were dealing with?"

"I realised I had never thought to ask... nobody had."



Peter Griffiths, the anti-Fairtrade economist, harangues the ethical organisations at a coffee trade seminar

When we reported this, we received an immediate call from a well-known British roaster, who was just as shaken, and who had demanded an immediate review of his buying policies all the way down the line...



**Meanwhile, the other big ethical-sourcing organisation, the Rainforest Alliance, was regularly spoken of by our interviewees as working to a standard which many British roasters liked for its methods, but which just didn't have the same public awareness as Fairtrade.**

It was in 2004 that the Rainforest Alliance began promoting its frog logo and image, and ten years later, many of its supporters still wished the thing had reached wider general attention. "The Rainforest Alliance is good for many reasons, but they don't realise that the consumer doesn't have a clue about them," one roaster told us. "They have a far better message than Fairtrade, and Fairtrade walks all over them in awareness."

To our astonishment, in November 2012, we actually got to meet the guy who created the Rainforest Alliance. This is Daniel Katz, and we ran into him in Italy, when we were both guests of Lavazza. We couldn't resist asking: did he think we are winning the battle against environmental hazards?

"We certainly need to be actively pursuing solutions, fast, and so many governments are broken, making it extremely hard to get to quicker action," remarked Daniel. "Nevertheless, I remain optimistic. I did say that 'the people, plants and animals of the rainforest have no voice and I hope that one day I can help to give them a voice by speaking up for them', but back in the mid-1980s, I could not even get companies to meet with me to talk about conservation – today, it's a totally different world, and while I'm not expecting a miracle technological fix, I do think that the internet and social media are spurring a whole new way to come up with problem-solving tools. If the private sector takes a stronger position on these issues and lead with authenticity and transparency, then governments will follow."

From our readers' farewell messages...

**Thank you for the entertainment – Coffee House will be sorely missed**

– Barry Kither, Lavazza

## GM coffee in 10 years?

Genetically-modified coffee will be on the market within the next ten years, according to a speaker at an International Coffee Organisation seminar. Although speciality importers and roasters are against it, many seem to have accepted that it will happen, and the only question is when.

What surprised many at the seminar was the how far experiments have already progressed.

Professor Vivian Moses told the conference that GM is the fastest-growing agricultural technology ever known, and that the amount of



Dr. Peter Baker

the Ivory Coast, was the first to openly warn that a grower's plan for survival might dictate what coffee

hectare with a low caffeine content."

The Ivory Coast government prepared to invest in this work. Dr Peter Baker of Bioscience, UK, told the seminar that climate will play a part.

"The coffee-growing areas become warmer and subtropical. A study from Brazil shows that with a one-degree increase in temperature, and a likely change in the rainfall pattern, their coffee crop will be significantly less.

"This is why Brazil is spe

*From our report of an ICO seminar. Guess when that ten years is due? Right now!*

"We live in very fluid times, and that is not a bad thing. The planet is resilient and people are also resilient. I'm a believer in tipping points, and that if we do one thing well it can tip to another action, and collectively, this can have a mammoth impact on the planet. I think we live in an age where we all can work a little bit smarter, and collectively, that can make a world of difference.

"And the 'we' I am referring to are us coffee shop users."

And yet the danger to coffee as a crop continues. It was back in 2005 that we first reported on the possible extinction of Arabica coffee as a plant - and quite recently, the coffee trade still appears to have been taken slightly by surprise by an announcement from Kew Gardens that climate change alone could kill wild Arabica coffee well before the end of this century. The point of this, says Kew, is that the Arabica coffees grown in the world's coffee plantations are from very limited genetic stock and are unlikely to cope with climate change, pests and diseases. Until now, producers have been able to replenish diseased stock from healthy wild plants, but if the wild plants are lost then the world's coffee supplies could come under threat.

In 2005, we had reported a conference held by the International Coffee Organisation, where it was debated whether climate change would have such an effect that 'protection' of coffee by genetic modification would become common, and acceptable. (Work on genetically-modified coffee has been going on since the early 1990s).

Another researcher in environmental and agricultural matters, Dr Peter Baker, told the 2005 meeting that Brazil and Colombia were already spending millions of dollars on research, and the expected result would be drought-resistant and disease-resistant coffee. And there would come a time, he predicted, when Brazil would challenge the world - we're producing GM coffee, what are you going to do about it?

"Will the world's consumers accept it?" he asked. "Probably - yes!"

Seven years later, the researcher Aaron Davis of Kew went on a research expedition to South Sudan, and his modelling predicted that Arabica could be extinct in certain forests by the year 2020.

Reaction from the British trade to this most recent Kew report was worryingly divided.

One of our leading roasters and barista champions wrote that everyone should read the report and consider it - on the other hand, a Tweet purporting to come from a big European coffee brand, but probably written by a PR girl, said: "coffee to be extinct by 2080 - ooh, scary!"

It is reassuring to know the big companies are still taking this matter seriously, isn't it?

## Illy says coffee stocks are in trouble - others disagree

**The debates we reported from our history, on the left, still come back to attention today. Just a few weeks ago, boss of one of the world's giant coffee companies added his voice to concerns about growing problems - Andrea Illy has said that the coffee-drinking world needs 'another Brazil', if we are to avoid a shortage. However, not everyone agrees with him.**

Rising consumption, he said, means that global production will have to rise by an amount which is more than the entire crop of Brazil. "Sooner or later, in months or years, we'll have to make a bold decision about what to do," Illy said in an interview. "We don't know where this coffee will come from."

This story has cropped up regularly over the last ten years - and one of the UK's major bean importers calls it 'nonsense'.

It was reported just over a month ago by a big European coffee trader that the global industry will see a production deficit of 3.5 million bags in the 2015-16 season. Against this, the International Coffee Organization has said that demand will increase by nearly 25 per cent over the coming five years, and another European coffee merchant has put the likely increase at one-third more by 2030 - however, he suggested that production might rise to meet consumption if smallholder farmers can increase productivity.

At the same time again, there are more fears about what climate change is doing to coffee farmers. This is not a new subject, either - the International Coffee Organisation held a seminar on it a clear ten years ago. However, it is now suggested that climate change is endangering farmers in Brazil, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Mexico, and that the balance of global production may shift from Central America to the Asia-Pacific region or eastern parts of Africa, where crops can be grown at higher altitudes. The chief executive of Nespresso has already commented that he sees more and more farmers moving to higher mountain altitudes to try and escape the effects of warming.

In addition, Oxfam has now spoken of the likely effect on crops from another 'El Niño' weather phenomenon, and even the prospect of a 'super El Niño'.

However, and by sharp contrast, the British coffee importer Stephen Hurst of Mercanta has told us, with typical forthrightness, that he believes these stories to be the result of misunderstandings of the global situation.

"It is a complete nonsense," he told us. "I find all this talk quite extraordinary, as I have been hearing it the thirty years I have been in the business.

"Really, the underlying issue to the coffee market in the future is yield. It is yield improvement in coffee which will be the factor, and that is simply not gaining enough credence. Climate change may well benefit as many areas as detriment others.

"Brazil is just about to harvest possibly a record 60 million bags in 2016, and Colombia continues to improve their harvest following the defeat of roya (the pest which attacks coffee plants). In theory, Peru could produce more high-mountain Arabica coffee than Colombia - and Honduras already produces more Arabica coffee than Guatemala, Costa Rica and Nicaragua combined!

"So I am not a subscriber to this sensationalism - I am honestly surprised it has gained relatively serious credence."

From our readers' farewell messages...

Congratulations on retirement, but sad to see you go

- Martyn Streeting, Foodlink Channel Islands



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# The competitive side of the trade

One of the most noticeable trends over the years has been the increasing desire of baristas to get together

About twelve years ago, one enthusiastic proponent of barista activity noted to us the new arrival of 'barista jams' in the USA, and remarked: "a great idea but it will never happen here..."

Twelve years later, it is truly astonishing to consider the amount of barista-related social occasions and competitions which go on. Apart from the formal UK barista championships, there seems to be no end of in-house contests, with a vast number of baristas taking part - Caffe Nero once pointed out to us that in entrant numbers, their contest was bigger than the world barista championship, and the Baxter Storey in-house contest, from a contract caterer, is an impressive display of just how many people are getting into this, if someone pushes hard enough (in this case, Baxter Storey's in-house coffee chief Tim Sturk). A few years ago, it would have been unheard of for a contract caterer to have a barista contest!

Beside this, we have Aeropress contests, the latte art smackdowns (a term which always makes us giggle) and quite recently the arrival of barista 'camps', along the lines of the American model, where they have 'camps' for just about any kind of activity. The one in this part of the world is run by the Barista Guild of Europe, something else which would have been out of the question twelve years ago... or perhaps, not quite. In fact, the partners on this magazine put forward the blueprint for a barista guild in 2004, and had a notable meeting with Fracino and what was then the Beverage Services Association. Fracino offered to put a five-figure sum down on the table to start the thing off, if the association would match it... but they didn't!

Barista contests began in the late 1990s - there are several people who claim to have had the first idea, but in the UK the first serious projects were run by the Brasilia espresso machine importer Louie Salvoni, with a degree of success. In 2000, the British champ was Thomas Polti of the Chequers gastro-pub in Bedford, who came fifth in the world contest, something which has long been forgotten by the trade in general (but for practical purposes, he entered under his Italian citizenship). His score in the semi-finals actually topped the champion's score in the final by over twenty points.

At one point, there actually were two barista contests going in the UK - the Brasilia one was by far the better organised, being held at the Kensington Roof Gardens, with a top TV personality acting as compere. Meanwhile, the Speciality Coffee Association of Europe had decided it should have a contest, but didn't know how to go about it, and the Fracino machine company volunteered to host it and pay the expenses, which ran into tens of thousands. (Their part in this progress has also been unkindly forgotten).

The Brasilia event was pure theatre - there was an 'espresso race', which in 2003 was won by Dan Gilmore of Verdi's in Swansea, who poured 50 drinkable espressos in five minutes. He later mentioned to us that he had a system: "instead of starting with all of them in the same position under two group heads at once, like everyone else does, I started with two and let them pour halfway through before I put the next two under. After that, I was always putting two on and taking two off instead of trying to handle all four at once."

By contrast, the Fracino event was quite a folksy affair hosted in the

The  
COFFEE  
HOUSE  
years

company's own reception area and demonstration room.

In 2002 we came 20th in the world, and in 2003 we were thirteenth, both times being represented by Simon Robertson of Leoni's in Yorkshire, always acknowledged as a fine barista, and one who reached eighth in the world in a later year. The whole thing changed in 2004, in a very unfortunate way. Brasilia gave up its contest, with Salvoni moving to a different business model (he created the Espresso Service maintenance organisation). At Fracino, their event was won by an Irish girl, whose winning signature drink was Strumpet Crumpet, Like It or Lump It. It was essentially a vanilla pod latte).

In the world championship, she came 33rd out of 34, and the reaction in Britain was fury... a new cabal of half a dozen young coffee people effectively wrested control of the UK championship from the old hands of the SCAE, and also from Fracino. Their original idea was 'Team UK', in which the British champion would be mentored by experienced players, never again to come second-last in the world event. At the time, Steve Penk of La Spaziale, one of the new organisers, said: "we have put baristas in a situation where rabbits and headlights came to mind... we took people who were used to working behind a counter and expected them to cope with cameras, microphones, and MCs asking questions. We've exposed everyday baristas to fifteen minutes of sheer terror." Another member of the new group, Jon Willassen, added: "we won't just give the UK winner a ticket to the world finals, wish them good luck, and leave them to handle it on their own."

In those days, we ourselves were the 'mystery shoppers' who judged a Fracino/Illy café contest in Liverpool. One competing barista actually steamed the milk, spooned the froth on to the espresso... and forgot to put the rest of the milk in!

Before we adopted the extremely wise philosophy of 'never be a judge in a contest' (it leads to no end of problems!) we were also involved judging the Beverage Service Association's café contest. One café chain - the one which was later taken over by a brewery - had a blackboard up saying 'we roast our own coffee'. They don't, of course,



*They'll never happen here, we were told - but they did! This was the poster for one of the first... in Bristol, we think*

From our readers' farewell messages...

**I can't imagine your shoes can or will be filled, and I will miss the Coffee House capers**

— Jonathan Wadham, Rombouts

and never did. On being asked about it, the girl barista shrugged and said 'it's just coffee...'

(Ten years later, we abandoned our principles about judging, to help with the University Catering Organisation's event in Blackpool, but only because we fancied a week by the seaside. This was the year that the fashionable flavour in signature drinks was raspberry sauce or syrup... after thirty or forty of those in a day and a half, the judges were feeling pretty queasy!)

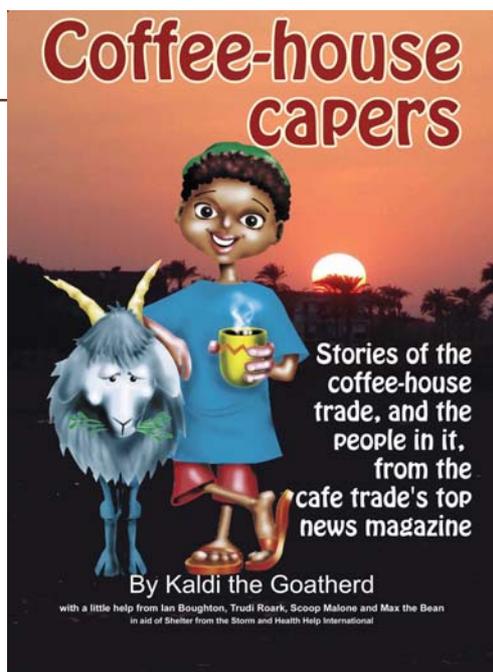
Back in 2006, barista activity was really beginning to happen. Mercanta took a full-page ad in our magazine to congratulate the British champ, James Hoffman of La Spaziale, on coming fifth in the WBC and, in sharp contrast to our report three years earlier, the London roasters Union announced their first London Barista Jam - 'the chance to get n there, get your hands dirty, ask about a coffee and discuss - what shall we do with this one?'

And then the whole world changed for British baristas - Hoffmann took the world title in 2007, to be followed the next year by Stephen Morrissey, who competed for Ireland although working in London at the time, and then in 2009 Gwilym Davies took the world title, thus establishing the use of the flat cap as a standard item of barista-wear. (In this year, Hugo Herculano of England came tenth - it was the year that the 'in' flavour for the UK was Turkish Delight, or various variations on rose water or syrup. You have to get the dosing absolutely right, Hugo told us, recalling that one slip and you really can make the judges gag!)

Since then, barista activity continues to increase... yet, despite the brave efforts of John Gordon and Maxwell Colonna-Dashwood which have seen us in the top six on several occasions, we have not had another world barista champion from the UK.



There are a lot of brilliant product ideas which we have really enjoyed over the last twelve years, and this is a favourite. It is a heavy-duty carrier bag created by Caber Coffee of Aberdeen, made out of one-kilo coffee bags. Is it tough? It certainly is... we've been using ours for years!



While looking back, we can't ignore the fact that we also wrote the book of the industry. To be honest, even we still find it funny, six years on... but there are now only a handful of copies left. If you have one, it's a collector's item!

From our readers' farewell messages...

**Shocked and dismayed to learn of your pending retirement**

– Andrew Richardson, Whitebeans and ARCS

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# Going to the shows

It took a surprisingly long time for coffee-themed events to get going - now there's no stopping them!



*This really was the opening-time queue at the London Coffee Festival - it surprised us, too*

**There has been one trend over the years which has suddenly blossomed into fruition, and we can see the evidence of it this autumn with the running of the Edinburgh coffee festival, and the Cup North festival in Manchester. This is still a relatively new phenomenon - and it was only nine years ago that we saw the very first coffee event of all, with the creation of the Caffe Culture show.**

This was first held in 2006, and at the time it was a revolutionary idea, and many people were unsure about it - we can recall the marketing director of one big British company debating whether or not to take part, and deciding against it. On the first day of the show we saw that same marketing director staring out across a busy and active exhibition hall, wearing a look of pure fury at having made the wrong decision.

But curiously, it was not until the autumn of 2009 that we first heard word of the bold new idea of a coffee festival for consumers.

This came from someone outside the trade. It was Linda Donaldson, a PR agent in Bath, who proposed the open coffee festival, to a mixed response. "From the coffee trade, the reaction was mixed," she told us. "There were a lot of people asking why this hasn't been done before, but there are companies who have been geared to the idea of trade shows for so long that it took them some time to get round to the idea of talking to consumers. Illy and Lavazza got it immediately, because they are geared to the consumer, but others needed the concept discussed before they began to get excited. And of course there was the question - 'why hold this outside the M25?!'"

The Bath event, free of charge, drew 7,350 people in two days!

It was to be a couple of years before things began to move elsewhere, and meanwhile, the 2010 Caffe Culture show drew an unprecedented (and unrepeated) 11,363 people, many of whom were consumers. This was because the event hosted the final of the world barista championship, but while it was a success in terms of numbers, it turned out to be an uncomfortable mix between those who wanted a 'hip and happening' event and those who wanted to talk business in the conventional way of a trade show. One exhibitor, annoyed at the sheer ruckus coming from the event area, said to us: "I don't want to be hip and happening - I want to be able to hear what my customers are saying!"

By June 2011 the idea had reached London, and the London Coffee

Festival published a figure of 7,500 paying customers who attended its first event, which featured fifty exhibitors. To show how rapidly the concept of consumer coffee events has expanded, the 2015 event drew 23,642 visitors, and the 2016 one will have 250 exhibitors.

Now we could report that regional consumer coffee festivals were certainly on the up - Norwich had one, there was one at Waddesdon Manor in Buckinghamshire, and before the Cup North event was named, there was a fairly successful trial event near Manchester. Before the Edinburgh event came along, the same organiser ran one in Glasgow.

At more or less the same time, new thinking had cropped up in the matter of trade-only events. The most revolutionary of these was not a 'trade show' in the conventional sense at all - it was a new kind of coffee-themed talking shop devised by Steve Leighton of the Has Bean roastery and Colin Harmon of Third Floor Espresso in Dublin. Steve had been featuring chat videos on his website for some time, most of which centred on his choices of coffee and stories about the farms from which he sourced. Some featured both Colin and Steve in discussion about coffee - and from that the idea of a live event in front of a coffee trade audience was born.

This turned out to be truly revolutionary, because the speakers, largely from the new breed of baristas and roasters, debated issues about actually running coffee businesses in the new millennium, all speaking from personal experience. Along the way, the Tantrum has provided some never-to-be-forgotten moments, not least the time when world champ Gwilym Davies addressed the audience on the subject of gender equality in the coffee business, making his point by appearing in drag and carrying a handbag. (The effect was slightly spoiled by him retaining his beard, but the message was carried through nevertheless).

Among our favourite contentious topics was one raised by Tim Styles, known for his work with many extremely respected organisations - Climpsons and St Ali in



*The show which first proved that the public would come to a coffee event was not in a big city at all - it was in Bath*

London, and Intelligentsia in America. At exactly the time when many people were catching up with the idea of East London as the Mecca of the modern coffee world, he dared offer the suggestion that the capital's coffee scene, while very recently described as having become the world's centre of speciality coffee, may have 'stalled' from 2010 onwards.

"Since 2010, it's my opinion that the once-terrific forward momentum has slowed to a crawl. We seem to have unrelenting openings of carbon copies - same coffee, same suppliers, same machines. We use to laugh at the uniformity of the chains, and guess what? We are now the new chains!

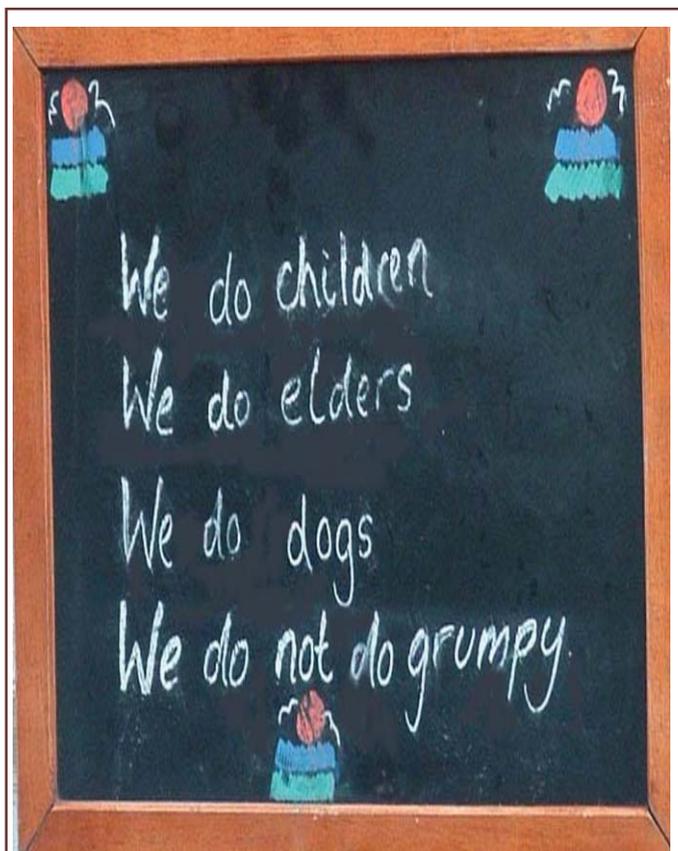
"The trade's progress has got lost in a sea of self-congratulation. We have lost the ideals. We have lost the ability to take honest feedback and we have become an industry of keyboard warriors in a frenzy of mutual Twitter congratulation. London people have become introspective - 'this is the greatest', and that's it.

"I want to put my hand up and say: 'no!' I contend that the amount of time people spend on Twitter saying how fantastic everything is would be better spent on improvement. We need debate, differences of opinion, thicker skins, and we need to be able to take critical feedback and use it to improve.

"We have great wine shops, cheese shops, micro-breweries, all quality-driven and coming up with great handcrafted things... and if, in the middle of this, the coffee sector has stalled, then that is really scary."

The really remarkable thing was that nobody disagreed with him. Tantrum co-organiser Colin Harmon wrote after the event that he agreed with Styles' demand for the trade to accept critical feedback: "negative feedback is gold dust," wrote Harmon, "it points out where we're not communicating effectively."

If feedback is gold dust, so are the events at which it is found. This trend has come to stay!



*A super sign we saw on a cafe in Devon. Who could possibly disagree with these principles?*

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Best wishes to Ian and Trudi for their retirement.  
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# The campaigns and crusades

We have not actually been a 'campaigning' newspaper in the sense it is usually understood - but the fact is that Coffee House magazine has, in a fairly low-key but persistent way, encouraged wider attention for certain issues which needed to be addressed... and on most occasions, have been the only media to even report such things.

**One of the biggest continuing scandals to hit the coffee trade, which nobody has really ever addressed, is the scalding problem. This has been going on for fifteen years or more - there have been court awards of massive amounts given against café operators for injuries, and yet neither the coffee trade nor the takeaway cup industry have really stood up to address the issue (the takeaway cup sector is involved in many of the instances of injury from hot coffee because spills have taken place when a takeaway drink is passed between barista and customer.)**

A typical case was in 2009, when a 13-month old baby in Sussex was scalded when a teapot was dropped into its pushchair.

At this point, we surveyed the trade to see what precautions they had in place, and apart from a few vague references to 'duty of care', there were no positive replies at all. One well-known manager said, with disgraceful candour, that no trade body or supplier would dare advise on the subject - because in a litigation-conscious society, any caterer suffering an incident would then sue the supplier who had given advice. However, trainers such as Robert Henry and Paul Meikle-Janney pointed out that there are sensible precautions to be taken in every café - they said that you cannot remove the danger of hot water, but good design, layout and practice can help identify and minimise risks. The basic considerations are: avoid moving boiling water around at all, or minimise it; teach staff the safe carrying of hot drinks, and where there are customers with children, always take the drink to the table.

Robert Henry reported researching health and safety audits and guidance on the matter and found no relevant help at all. So we took part with the Coffee Council, a small and highly-unofficial discussion group of very experienced coffee people, and wrote a paper on the subject.

Some years later, in November 2011, the issue arose again, with a matter raised to us by a café operator who had experienced four scalding incidents within recent weeks. In each case, he told us, the problem was not the result of any lack of care by his serving staff, but appeared to be the result of a curious phenomenon in which takeaway lids which appear to be secure at first fitting, then loosen. He appealed for help to understand this, asking: 'is this a known industry problem?'

Several cup suppliers were quick to warn of the dangers of using 'any' lid, pointing out that with so many suppliers on the market, often producing products of slightly different sizes, the café operator has to be very cautious. Mark Woodward of the Paper Cup Company remarked that manufacturers' cups do give different lid-fit, and imported cups can be unreliable in several ways - some do not have adequate resistance to heat. And, he added, even if you have the best lid fit in the world, and the customer takes the lid off to put sugar in, or stir it, and then puts the lid back and spills it... the café operator will still be held liable. The critical thing for café operators to know, said Vegware, is that all lids are not the same.

Serious a matter as this is, it has a lighter side. My Coffee Stop of Enfield told us of the customer who bought a takeaway coffee and declined the lid. It was a safety rule, the barista said. The terse

*The*  
**COFFEE**  
**HOUSE**  
*years*

response was: "I've just come back from serving in Afghanistan - I'll risk it!"



Another long-standing problem, which again has ever really been solved, is the place of the coffee trade in the national litter problem. We were the first to highlight this back in 2009, when Keep Britain Tidy researched the litter of ten major cities, and while McDonalds was the 'biggest branded litter', accounting for 30 per cent of everything seen in the gutters, the coffee trade figures strongly. In London, generic branded coffee cups were found to be the largest single measured item of street litter. Several cup makers did try to address the subject - Solo ran a conference, and Starbucks did the same in America, and the trade was miffed when Which? magazine ran a report in 2011 giving some cheap and superficial criticism of the coffee trade over the litter problem. The Foodservice Packaging Association said, in exasperation: "we have 398 local authorities in this country, all telling us different things. They print pictures of branded packaging and blame us!"

Five years after we first highlighted the situation, the Foodservice Packaging Association ran a summit meeting at which cup makers and environment experts met to debate a way forward.

A star of the FPA event was Martyn Jaynes of Maidstone council, who impressed the conference with his no-nonsense attitude - on his patch, a dropped cigarette end is an immediate £75 fine. Coffee cup litterers have been fined in his area, he told us afterwards, although no statistics exist.

Takeaway cups are a tricky problem, he told Coffee House: "On the high street, a cup is not an item of litter that is typically 'dropped' - they are large and obvious, and only the boldest litterer would be brazen enough to drop them in public. Typically, they become litter when the user leaves them on a bench or on top of a bin, and then they get blown onto the street, or they are thrown from vehicles."

A big question has been over whether the beverage trade can influence and improve consumers' behaviour.

"I would ask that you take some responsibility for the litter you help produce," Jaynes told the cup industry. "It sounds harsh, but the packaging industry provides the ammunition for those that litter. I ask that as an industry, you find ways to communicate to the consumer a clear message about the social requirement to place finished cups in a bin."

"The reality is that littering is not something any single group can

From our readers' farewell messages...

**The coffee industry will be plunged into darkness without you!**

– Nick Tolley, Taylor Street Baristas

solve, and the funding available against issues such as litter is becoming harder to find. I suggest the industry adopts the approach used by McDonalds, who re-invest into the communities with clean-up days and other initiatives. The food packaging industry could be well placed to help support local authorities by sponsoring initiatives."



The biggest of all our campaigns, for which we came in for praise and criticism in equal measure, was the matter of the Sainsburys explosion - this was the situation in which an espresso machine exploded in a supermarket café in Hampshire. We know that this received wide attention, because even to this day, people in the coffee trade quote something we learned from a Health and Safety Executive and reported on our front page - that if the barista had been standing one pace to the left, he would have been decapitated when the machine bounced off the back wall and ended up in the middle of the café.

It seems incredible to us to this very day, but while the matter was a nine-day wonder in the daily press, no other media in the catering trade press ever bothered reporting it at all. But we did - because, for the trade, we said, the health and safety spotlight would be on us as never before.

The fact is that espresso machines are covered by the Pressure Vessel Regulations, which means they have to be inspected regularly, by 'competent persons' - and that archaic description led to years of argument. It doesn't mean someone experienced in boilers or espresso machines, it means 'somebody that the rules say is impartial enough to oversee the inspection', and the rules are so obscure that nobody could really work out exactly who this was - one major belief was that the engineer who regularly serviced a café's machine could not be counted as sufficiently independent to handle the regular inspection, requiring two engineers to be on hand for that... which doubled the costs for the café operator. Not surprisingly, it became widely accepted that a vast number of people who run cafes and hotels simply ignore the regulations, largely because of the cost and kerfuffle.

We reported the exasperation of the machine makers, with Adrian Maxwell adding that the enforcement is also slack, probably because of the authorities' ignorance of the equipment. His view was confirmed by February 2011, when we reported that opinion among engineers was widely divided, and we discovered that the HSE is saying different things to different engineers, because they didn't understand the subject any better than the trade did.

The Coffee Council published a very full document setting out the problems surrounding the matter, and realising that the HSE knew nothing about espresso machines, we introduced them to some experts in the trade.

Then, in our fiftieth issue, in June 2011, we put the HSE inspector on our front page - this probably accounted for the fact that the HSE treated us with suspicion ever after!

Local authorities continued to demonstrate that they didn't have a clue what was going on - one of the councils to send warnings around its local caterers was Aberdeen, which actually told caterers in its area that 'if a steam coffee machine fails in use it can seriously injure or kill nearby people'. A supplier of machines and coffee to the hospitality trade in the north of Scotland told us that he had a stream of calls from clients who been shown the letter by many of his customers, who have been scared stiff at the prospect: "our phone was red-hot with panicky café and restaurant owners." Aberdeen confirmed to us that they had

sent the letter out without any guidance from the HSE or any expert authority, and at Espresso Service, the national chain of service engineers, managing director Louie Salvoni said he would press for the HSE and local authorities to come up with an agreed set of guidelines for users of commercial espresso machines, which all caterers and environmental health departments will follow.

With regard to the Aberdeen letter, Salvoni commented: 'the authorities have gone from complete silence to scaremongering in one step...'

Astonishingly, the rest of the coffee and catering media continued to ignore the whole situation, but we got so fed up with the HSE, who told us that they thought it 'inappropriate' to comment on the matter, that we went through the Freedom of Information Act in an attempt to uncover the Executive's papers on the matter and find out what they had done in their investigation.

The results were not surprising. Essentially, the HSE assumed that it knew better than the experts in the coffee trade, completely missed its opportunity (or responsibility) to issue serious and helpful advice to the industry, but decided to prosecute the Italian manufacturer of the machine... in the wrong court, which meant that the case was thrown out, twice.

At which point, the Health and Safety Executive appears to have simply given up on a matter of importance to the entire catering trade.



Our very favourite campaign concerned the wonderful Bramah Museum of Tea and Coffee, which used to occupy a site in Southwark, south London, and was full of historic tea and coffee equipment and artefacts. Bramah himself was a wonderful old character, a former tea planter and author of books on the old tea auctions and even old teapots, and a most entertaining speaker on the subject - his lectures included such fascinating asides as noting that in the Boston Tea Party, the people who threw the casks of British tea overboard forgot to check whether the tide was in or out, and his comments on the suicide of someone who helped invent the PG Tips chimpanzee advertisements were probably slanderous. He was widely loved, but he was not a businessman - the Beverage Service Association (as it then was) occasionally slipped him some cash to keep him going, and he was known to sleep in the museum when times got hard.

In 2008 he died, at the age of 76 - and for years, people asked us: 'what became of his collection?'

We persisted with this one for six years. Eventually, in the company of Russell Kerr, the 'doctor espresso' and machine restorer of south London, we discovered the answer - property developer Don Riley, owner of the Chocolate Factory theatre in Southwark and Bramah's old landlord, had let the old chap off paying rent for seven years, and had promised him that he would keep the collection, for later display at some stage. Don, a delightfully forceful New Zealander who arrived in the UK in 1963 with £60 in his pocket and now seems to own half of Southwark, led us into a dusty basement so we could view the collection - and the first things we saw were two tower machines which the 'doctor' dated as 'from the dawn of espresso', and probably worth in five figures... each. According to Russell, some of these machines could be made to live and work again, safely. Don Riley speculated on an exhibition site in the heart of the City of London, but the last we heard, part of the collection was destined for a new Tea Museum he might set up in Battle, in the south of England... where he recently upset the neighbouring church by felling trees on the proposed museum site, without planning permission.

From our readers' farewell messages...

**Thank you for a lot of hard work – and even if I didn't agree and like everything, the coffee business needed a voice, which you were, brilliantly and independently**

– Peter James, James Gourmet Coffee

**ALL GOOD THINGS COME TO AN END**

BEST WISHES TO THE  
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Ian and Trudi would like to say a big...

**THANK  
YOU!**

... to all the people who made this magazine possible, and made it so entertaining for us to write.

Thank you to all the captains and stalwarts of the industry, who have given their time, their support and their money (many of them right from day one).

Thank you to our subscribers and our readers who have made their contributions in so many ways.

Thank you to our friends and contacts in the media, who have both assisted us and employed us.

Thank you to our long-suffering computer expert and our accountant.

We have thoroughly enjoyed reporting on this ever-changing, exciting, and turbulent industry, and we have made many friends, including some lifetime ones.

We wish all our colleagues well for the future – we are sure it will continue to be a vibrant, healthy, and most importantly, a prosperous industry!



# Kaldi

*Our columnist Kaldi the Goatherd has been with us from the very first issue, and has never missed one since. He was drawn for us by Derek West of Witney, and he has always had a keen eye for the slightly ridiculous side of the trade...*

This month, the international press has enjoyed a sign erected by the Fascine Coffee Lounge in Carnarvon, Western Australia. In a situation which seems to be straight out of Crocodile Dundee, the coffee house has erected a sign saying that it will refuse to accept money which has been kept in customers' underwear - apparently the locals are prone to storing their dollar bills in pants, bras and the like, and have upset others by rooting for their money when inside the café. The owner suggests that since putting the sign up, his regulars have become wise, and now get their money ready before walking in. "We had four or five people that did it. A lot of women think their bra is the best place for their money because they don't have pockets."

This story has shot round the world, but there may be more than a touch of Australian humour in it - the Fascine seems a perfectly nice-looking place with well-presented food.

The fraught subject of online reviews has re-appeared, with the experience of a café which is sited in a Dublin hotel. A customer had posted a negative report on a review website -

to which the café responded by posting CCTV footage showing the customer "horsing food into them and clearing our plates clean". The café operator added "if you are not happy with your food, tell us at the time and whatever you do, don't \*\*\*\*ing eat it. We will happily give you another dish and you won't have to go and write a negative review. If you say negative stuff about our food online, having inhaled it in record time, left your plate gleaming clean and not made one complaint in person, I will, in turn, say negative things about you online."



This, you might think, was unforgivable, but perhaps it was understandable in the middle of a busy day that the barista took out his frustration on a till roll... not expecting that a customer would ever read it!



**It has been suggested that Kaldi may come out of retirement one day to write the follow-up to his first book...  
... we shall see ! Bye, everybody.**



And again from our back pages, this quite brilliant illustration of what many roasters think of the standard of certain Fairtrade and 'ethical' coffees was inspired by Richard Jansz of Coffee Compass in Sussex, while evaluating coffees which the suppliers promised him had every certification under the sun...

*...and finally, Kaldi reveals who it was who made up the mysterious Coffee Council, who wrote those hard-hitting discussion papers on the scalding issue and the pressure-vessel issue, were behind the pressure under the Freedom of Information Act which finally got the Health and Safety Executive to reveal what it had done (or not) after the Sainsbury's explosion, and stirred the pot of many other very necessary debates.*

*They were Barry Kither of Lavazza, Ian Balmforth of Bolling, Kaldi himself, and Louie Salvoni of Espresso Service.*

From our readers' farewell messages... a final one which we particularly enjoyed!

**I do hope someone will be foolhardy enough to take it on and continue to wave the banner for a truly independent view of the marketplace – it would be ghastly if we have to get our news via those with vested interests and their hands in the corporate pockets of the industry, wouldn't it!**

– David Wiggins, Cappuccino Rapido and Toast Bakery