

# British Guild Of Beer Writers

Newsletter — December 2009



## The Chairman Reports...

**PETE BROWN** was crowned **Beer Writer of the Year** at our prestigious **British Guild of Beer Writers Annual Awards Dinner 2009**.

The Beer Writer of the Year is chosen from one of six category winners in a contest that seeks to find the very best of British beer writing and journalism. As well as picking up the overall title, which this year was named after late beer writer Michael Jackson for the first time, Pete also won the Budweiser Budvar John White Travel Bursary for *Hops And Glory*, the story of one man's search for the beer that built the British Empire.

Last year's winner and chairman of the judges Zak Avery said: 'Pete is an exceptionally talented writer and his depth of knowledge and passion for beer really comes across in his writing.' Other winners named at the event, which was once again held at the Hilton London Bridge, included Ben McFarland for beer and food writing, Mark Dredge in the new media category and Jeff Evans, editor of [www.insidebeer.com](http://www.insidebeer.com), for trade writer of the year. Alastair Gilmour picked up the regional journalist of the year award, and author Arthur Taylor was named national journalist of the year.

The standard and range of entries is rising and the exciting thing is the number of mediums writers are using. It is not just print media, as the electronic world of websites, blogs and tweets has clearly come of age. There has never been a better time to be an observer or writer

about the brewing industry — there is so much going on. The awards are a fabulous celebration of the very best of British beer writing. The breadth and depth of the work created by the winners show that beer is being treated very seriously.

Miles Jenner of Harvey's was named as our brewer of the year. His beers are revered both by those in the know, and the casual drinker. The incredible thing about this is that, despite having a global reputation, the brewery doesn't actually make that much beer. 'But the allure of their classic English ales is such that they are sought out by foreign visitors to this country, and relished by those in the immediate locality,' said Zak announcing the award. 'Not only do they make a fantastic classic English bitter, they also produce a slightly lesser known range of beers, from low alcohol ales to mighty imperial stouts.'

### Results in full

**Brewer of the Year 2009** — Miles Jenner, Harvey's Brewery, Lewes.

**Budweiser Budvar John White Travel Bursary 2009** — Pete Brown.

**Shepherd Neame Bishop's Finger Award for Beer and Food Writing 2009** — Ben McFarland.

**Brains SA Gold New Media Award 2009** — winner Mark Dredge; runner-up Dave Bailey.

**Deuchars IPA Regional Journalism Award 2009** — winner Alastair Gilmour; runner-up Simon Jenkins.

**Wells & Young's Business to Business Journalism Award 2009** — winner Jeff Evans; runner-up Rob Brown, *Brewers' Guardian*.

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**Molson-Coors National Journalism**

**Award 2009** — winner Arthur Taylor; runner-up Alex Barlow.

**The Michael Jackson Gold Tankard award, Beer Writer of the Year 2009** — Pete Brown.

**National Brewery Centre**

THE PEOPLE of Burton and its campaigning local paper, the *Burton Mail*, should be congratulated for their spirited fight to save the Coors Museum. The announcement that the National Brewery Centre will be opened on the site of the Coors Visitor Centre and Museum of Brewing is a fantastic outcome. Praise too must go to Molson Coors — the easiest option for them would have been to close the site without a care for its future — but people in the company have worked hard to ensure Burton retains its international pre-eminence in the history of brewing. The town of Burton has now been offered an opportunity for regeneration that should not be wasted. The announcement of the National Brewery Centre is, in its own way, as important to the town as East London getting the Olympics. It is a one-off opportunity to improve the infrastructure of the area so that it is a fit place for the visitors who will now come to the town. The area's communications — roads, rail station, bus routes and internet connections need to become world class. Likewise the hotels, pubs and shops in proximity to the museum now have to realise that their neighbour will be a major tourist draw.

**Beer & bones**

DRINKING BEER in moderation could be important for healthy bones, according to the latest research by nutrition scientists at Cambridge. Writing in the Shepherd Neame house magazine *Master Brewer*, Dr Jonathan Powell, head of bio-mineral research at MRC Human Nutrition Research, says a moderate intake of alcohol may be associated with better health, compared to that of those who either abstain or consume alcohol in high amounts. But, of all alcoholic drinks, beer has particularly benefits for bone and connective tissue health because it is a rich source of silicon.

Dr Powell says: 'Silicon appears to have a beneficial effect in increasing bone mineral density. Epidemiological work has identified a

positive association between drinking beer in moderation (two units per day) and increased bone mineral density and the work of our group indicates this to be partly due to the silicon content in the beer.' He said further research into the effects of silicon was needed but work at MRC Human Nutrition Research pointed towards it being beneficial to health. 'Beer, in moderation, is just one source that could be included into a healthy and balanced diet,' he added.

I have arranged for a PDF of the feature to be emailed to all members. **Tim Hampson**

**Tankards are go**

IN WHAT will surely become known as 'The Awards That Never Were', in its 21st year we achieved a first for the Guild — an awards ceremony without any prize tankards. They were infuriatingly close, resting somewhere in the huge Royal Mail depot in Southwark. Sadly, none of the guests at the dinner took up my suggestion of a post-prandial storming of the tower to release the trophies. On reflection, that was probably for the best.

And what a fascinating and varied range of entries we had this year. In each category, there were three or four contenders, and in at least half of the categories, the winner and runner-up switched between all the contenders over the course of the judging process. So although congratulations are in order to the winners, I'd like to send encouragement to anyone who entered and didn't win. It was genuinely a hard-fought year.

There was an incredibly broad spread of entries this year, from the esoteric (sorry Les, no plans for a separate beer poetry category next year), to the ambitious (Alex Barlow's *All Beer Experience* is an incredibly ambitious work that attempts to set out a framework for classifying and tasting beers), to the breathtaking (*Hops And Glory* is a book of such scope and courage that it would have been a crime if it had won something).

In presenting the awards, I tried to feed back what made good and bad entries. Certainly the judges this year had a preference for work that got out of the armchair and went out and investigated the world at large. As I hope I made clear, beer writing isn't just about the

**CALENDAR 2010**

Jan 20-23	National Winter Ales Festival, 2010 Manchester
March 4-5	SIBA Brewing Conference Stratford Upon Avon

March 29 - April 5 Cask Ale Week 2010

April 10 World Beer Cup 2010, Chicago

**Please send details of any relevant events to  
Adrian Tierney-Jones**

liquid in the glass, it's also about everything that surrounds it, from the stories of the people who make it, to its history, to where and how it is consumed. What's also becoming apparent is the interest in the global brewing culture among our members and entrants to the yearly awards. Although we're the British Guild of Beer Writers, there's an argument to be made that to be good communicators on the subject, we need to be conversant in all aspects of the brewing scene globally. I truly believe that British cask ale is a unique gastronomic product that is sorely underappreciated. But at the same time, British ales have influenced brewing culture across the world, and in turn are re-absorbing echoes of that influence. As Pete Brown mentioned in his thank you speech after winning the gold tankard, there has never been a more exciting time to be a beer writer, and the vibrancy of the scene in the UK and around the world bears testament to this.

The best entrants this year were aware of the unique nature of British beer, but also the wider context, both bibulous and cultural, in which they sit. The challenge for members of the Guild is spend the next 12 months communicating this, and hopefully sending the fruits of your labours in for the 2010 awards. I might even have a go at this myself.

**Zak Avery**

## ***Beer Academy events***

**IBD Christmas Lecture**, Marston's, Burton — December 10

**Beer Academy Santa's Stocking of**

**Christmas Beers**, London — December 15

**Beer Academy World Beers Matched with Christmas canapés**, London — December 16

**Beer Academy Organic Beers Matched with Food**, London — January 12, 2010

Please contact Dan Cannas for more information [Dan.Cannas@ibd.org.uk](mailto:Dan.Cannas@ibd.org.uk).

## ***Brewing for the future***

TIM HAMPSON put it well when he said to me at the BBC Food Show in Birmingham last month: 'At last we can celebrate keeping something open.' The something in question is the former Bass Brewery Museum in Burton-on-Trent, axed by Coors in 2008 but now due to re-open next year, possibly as early as Easter.

When Coors — now Molson Coors — announced in January 2008 that it planned to close the museum in April that year due to falling visitor numbers and an annual loss of £1 million, Tim and I attended a meeting in Burton convened by the local MP, Janet Dean. In the packed room were representatives of the local

and county council, the Burton Civic Society and Chamber of Commerce, members of local CAMRA branches, the editor of the local newspaper, and Adrian Worthington, the former museum archivist.

From the meeting, a steering group was set up to look at new ways of running the museum. One route was to run the site as a trust and to apply for Heritage Lottery Funding. Janet Dean organised a meeting with Margaret Hodge, minister for culture and tourism, who agreed to write to every brewery in the country asking them to support a national brewery museum in Burton.

The *Burton Mail*, the town's daily paper, headlined the campaign to save the museum on a regular basis and also organised an on-line petition to Margaret Hodge that gathered 20,000 signatures. Brewery workers, CAMRA members and supporters of the museum staged a march through the centre of Burton.

Coors were shaken by the size of the opposition to their plans. The company went into reverse and told the steering group in November that it had signed a 25-year lease with Leisure Solutions to run the museum. Leisure Solutions, which emerged from the leisure division of the Rank Organisation, has wide experience of running visitor attractions, including Conkers in the National Forest and Vinopolis in London.

John Lowther from Leisure Solutions told the steering group that a new National Brewing Museum would use modern technology to make the centre attractive to a broad audience. Static models will be replaced by working ones, dummies by live actors. The centrepiece of the site will be a 30-barrel brewery that will produce cask beer for commercial sales. Master brewer and Guild member Steve Wellington, who has run the White Shield Brewery within the Coors complex with great success, will run it.

The museum will trace the history of brewing in Burton, including the rise of IPA and pale ale in the 19th century, but will also cover brewing in all parts of Britain, again giving it wider appeal. The site will have bars, restaurants, and facilities for families and educational as well as rooms for meetings and conferences.

It has to succeed. If the museum fails again, there won't be a further opportunity to save it.

**DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE IS**

**JANUARY 20, 2010**

Every Guild member should write about the museum, blog it, broadcast it. Tim is thinking of organising a Guild event there next year and CAMRA is considering holding its annual awards lunch at the museum.

This is a great victory for beer lovers, historians and writers. Make it succeed. **Roger Protz**

### ***Norfolk, very flat, unlike the beer***

OUR FIRST Guild visit: Norwich Station on a wet November morning, how do we recognise a group of beer writers we have never met? Question quickly answered by the glimpse of *The Good Beer Guide* in the hands of a tall guy talking to another. We introduced ourselves, other members of the group gradually arrived, and the Norfolk beer experience began. We started at Woodforde's Broadland Brewery at Woodbastwick, where Director Mike Betts related the history of the brewery. It was founded in 1981 in Drayton but the site was not ideal and in 1983 they moved to Erpingham, where they stayed until they outgrew the premises. The first brew at the present site was in 1989 — Wherry, which won CAMRA's top prize in 1996. Woodforde's is one of only two breweries in the UK to have won CAMRA's supreme award twice with two different beers (Wherry and Nog).

Mike explained that Woodforde's use water from their own bore holes because it is low in nitrates. Woodforde's use Norfolk grown Maris Otter malt and support English farmers as much as possible when buying hops (their other source is Slovenia) and are totally committed to whole hops. During a tasting of a range of Woodforde's beers, Mike told us that all their bottled beers were bottle conditioned. Woodforde's were now supplying Marks & Spencer with a beer called Norfolk Bitter, which was bottled by Hepworth's in Horsham, as was some of the Wherry. A tour of the brewery was followed by an excellent lunch in Woodforde's brewery tap, The Fur & Feathers, during which Mike demonstrated Woodforde's 18-pint box buddy, specially designed to overcome the problems of standard beer boxes.

The day finished with visits to two famous Norwich pubs, first The Fat Cat where we were joined by Mike Betts and other members of the Woodforde's team, then The Coach & Horses, home of the Chalk Hill Brewery, where James 'Tiny' Little gave a tour of the brewery and introduced his brewery's beers. Next day a minibus took us to Crisp Maltings at Great

Ryburgh, one of the largest malting plants in the UK, producing around 115,000 tonnes of finished malt per annum. We saw traditional floor malting, then a plant installed in the 1960s, and finally state of the art equipment installed in the 1990s. We learnt that most of the barley required is sourced from the surrounding area, and the malt is exported as far away as Japan.

Then onto Wroxham Barns where we tasted beers from Uncle Stuart's Brewery and other local craft breweries. We enjoyed another excellent lunch, the dishes being cooked with local beers, and had the opportunity to chat to Mark Riches from Beeston Brewery. Finally, 'Uncle' Stuart Evans showed us round his micro-brewery (housed at Wroxham Barns), and the adjoining beer shop. The trip was highly successful, giving us a glimpse of a beautiful part of England, introducing us to the local beers and giving us the chance to meet some of the people producing them. **John Simpson**

### ***Rocky Mountain High***

NEW GUILD member Andy Neil is a ex-Army NCO who takes beerlovers all over Europe in the search for great beer (read about him at [beeralewhatever.com/beermania.html](http://beeralewhatever.com/beermania.html)); he is now doing the same in the US and this is the latest itinerary for next year, with four tours to the Colorado Mountains in the USA during June and July. All tours are eight-days/seven-nights long and start on Fridays and Mondays from Denver.

**Friday 04-Friday 11, June 2010**

**Monday 14-Monday 21, June 2010**

**Friday 25 June-Friday 02, July 2010**

**Monday 05-Monday 12, July 2010**

These tours are for small groups (eight maximum) with typically six-eight people. Tour price is €1560 per person and includes accommodation, breakfasts, evening meals, transport within the tour, leader/guide/driver and a great time! Contact Andy at [bier-mania.com](http://bier-mania.com).

**The next Guild newsletter will be out at the end of January so I would like to wish Guild members a great Christmas (complete with stunning beers) and all the best for 2010, as beer writing (of whatever style) continues to go from strength to strength. ATJ**