

British Guild Of Beer Writers

Newsletter — December 2006

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Chairman **Tim Hampson** goes mealy-mouthed *inside...*

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The Chairman Reports...

THE SUCCESS of our annual dinner was a very public example of the Guild's central aim of improving standards of beer writing and extending the public knowledge of beer. Celebrity chef Brian Turner prepared the menu — and what a feast it was at our exciting new location for the dinner, the outstanding Millennium Gloucester Hotel in the heart of Kensington in west London.

For starters the award-winning chef created a Cornish crab and bacon cake topped with an oyster and celeraic fritter, which was served alongside Shepherd Neame's Whitstable Bay Organic Ale. The main course was roasted loin of Irish venison, accompanied by a dark and fruity Cains 2008 Culture Beer. The meal finished with Chocolate Fondant and Jaffa Cake Ice Cream accompanied by Young's Double Chocolate Stout.

The evening was much more than a fabulous celebration of the very best of British beer writing. Initially we thought about 130 people would attend, then 140, but in the end over 180 beer writers, journalists, brewers and pub operators attended, making it the year's biggest party for beer writers. And for many of those who attended it was their first time at such an event — and many of the food writers left making favourable comments about the success of the food matchings and the quality of both the beers and food. If all of this was not enough the quality of entries to our awards was judged to have been higher and from a wider range of publications than ever before.

The real high point for me was that it was an

evening where we all met as friends, to enjoy each other's company and to savour good beer and good conversation. As an organisation we have shown that we can organise a highly successful dinner at which beer was drunk in surroundings which are modern and highly stylish. Led by Michael Jackson and others back in 1988, the Guild broke new ground in holding dinners where beer and food were matched, and over the years many members have helped create many memorable dinners, and we have grown used to being imitated by trade associations, brewers, PR companies and many others.

However, I firmly believe that we have raised the bar even higher once again with this year's dinners— by so wonderfully showing the richness and diversity of beers served in a variety of handsome looking glasses and how well it goes with food. Our challenge now is to make sure that next year's event is even better.

TIM HAMPSON, CHAIRMAN

Special offer for Guild members from *Beers Of The World*

I WOULD like to introduce you to *Beers of the World* (writes the magazine's publisher Damian Riley-Smith), the independent source of information, knowledge and delight on everything to do with beer — from recommendations of the best beers, to the history and legends of the great beer names. *Beers of the World* celebrates beer in all its diversity, bringing you news, reviews and features, and takes you behind the scenes, meeting the characters that have shaped the industry, and sharing their stories.

Discover the very best of the world's beers And then there are the tasting notes — we have pages and pages on the latest releases. In forthcoming issues *Beers of the World* will be tasting milds, dark lagers, British golden ales, bocks and IPAs, to name but a few of the world's great styles. And we cover all the great beer producing nations of the world, so look out for our reviews of Belgium, the USA, Germany, Eastern Europe — and of course the very best areas in the UK, from the South West to the East Midlands, Scotland to Wales.

Special offer – save 30% when you subscribe

CALENDAR 2007

Jan 17	National Winter Ales Festival Manchester
Feb 1	Morning Advertiser Awards
Feb 17-24	CAMRA Community Pubs Week

March 1-2	SIBA conference, Leeds
March 20	Publican Awards
April 20-22	CAMRA AGM, Wolverhampton

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

now We are delighted to offer Guild Members this very special 30% discount offer. Subscribe to *Beers of the World* for six issues and it will cost you just £18.95 (usual price £27.00). And if you subscribe for two years you will also receive one extra issue at no cost.

To have every issue of *Beers of the World* sent direct to your door post-free — just order online at www.beers-of-the-world.com/subscribe/bwg or call 0870 066 7540.

Climbing Chatmandu

MOST WRITERS agree with most singers and performers — you work in a particular medium because that's the one you're good at working in. Just because you can sing, say, doesn't mean you can act (mind you, no one seems to have told that to the current crop of Hollywood stick insects). Just because you can write in a vaguely witty fashion, doesn't mean you can rock an audience like Jimmy Carr. Okay, bad example — like Billy Connolly.

So it was with some trepidation that I agreed to be the after-dinner speaker at Thornbridge Hall's annual beer dinner. Thornbridge, home to one of the most exciting new micros in the UK (over 20 awards at UK beer festivals in the 18 months they've been brewing) held their inaugural dinner in 2005, and had Roger Protz speaking. This year they asked me. To speak to 120 people. At 10.15pm. When they had all enjoyed a five-course dinner with freely flowing quantities of magnificent beer. I've done readings and PowerPoint presentations before, but this was something else.

The dinner itself was a beer fan's dream: a galette of smoked fish was complemented by Kipling, a dry, citrusy pale ale. The main course of seven-hour braised shoulder of lamb with Indian spices was paired with the phenomenal Jaipur IPA. Cheesecake with ale jelly was set off by the barley wine-style McCrindle, and finally a dark chocolate and orange pot was complemented by St. Petersburg Imperial Stout. Each course was introduced by the Beer Academy's Dr George Philiskirk, who explained the character of the beers and the thinking behind the pairings.

Thornbridge definitely have an advantage over many micros in that they're based in a stunning stately home in the beautiful Derbyshire countryside. The location definitely enhanced the event. But if you haven't got a stately home of your own, a dinner like this in a more modest location is a brilliant way of introducing local movers and shakers to the delights of beer and food.

And the speech?

I survived. If you ever find yourself in a similar situation I can offer two pieces of advice. One, five days before the event, scare yourself rigid by going to a wedding where the best man is a TV comedy script writer; realise how far off the pace you are, and spend every waking minute for five days crafting and honing your speech. Two, tell lots of Man Walks into a Pub jokes. **PETE BROWN**

Future visits

ASPALLS CIDER have offered a trip.

THWAITES have offered a trip for next year — to celebrate the brewery's 200th anniversary. BARRIE PEPPER has organised a brilliant sounding tasting of small brewers' beers in Leeds — see below for details.

OKELLS ON the Isle of Man has offered a visit. Originally planned for November it has now been provisionally rescheduled for February 20/21, 2007. Several have asked to be considered for this — if anyone else is interested please could they let me know and where they could place any stories. Also could you indicate which would be the best airport for you to use. **TIM HAMPSON**

Beer tasting in Leeds

DATE: Saturday February 17, 2007 at 2pm.

VENUE: The Grove Inn, Back Row, Holbeck, Leeds (close to Leeds railway station)

EVENT: The search for a Yorkshire style of beer. Eight brewers are invited to present one of their beers that they consider represents a 'Yorkshire' style. It will last from 2 pm to 5 pm and I'm hoping to have some typical Yorkshire food (such as pork pies and black pudding) to accompany the beers. If you want to go please contact Barrie Pepper on 0113 265 8595 or barrie.pepper@ntlworld.com

It's good for you

A BOTTLE of Guinness Please by former Guinness brewer David Hughes is an important new book on the early brewing, bottling and brand history of Guinness from 1830 up to the present day. It is a major reference work researched from the brewery archives in London and Dublin, full of interesting brewing, bottling and trade facts. Guinness's Stout has a rich history that spans over 250 years, migrating from Ireland, first to mainland Britain and thence around the world. The book is available as a numbered limited edition, price £22 +£6pp, from David Hughes: phim.finch@btinternet.com, call 01189730721 or write to David Hughes, 252b Nine Mile Ride, Wokingham, Berkshire, RG40 3NT, enclosing a cheque.

The British Guild of Beer Writers Awards 2006

Brewer of the Year: Roger Ryman, St Austell
Judges' Award for Excellence: John Westlake
Budvar Travel Bursary: Pete Brown
Bishop's Finger Award for Beer and Food Writing: Richard Fox
Whitstable Bay Organic Brewed Sustainability Writing Award: Dominic Roskrow
Wells & Young's Trade and Technical Journalism Award: winner: Adam Withrington; runner-up: Nigel Huddleston

Cains Finest Lager Award for Regional Journalism: winner: Mike Chapple; runner-up: Simon Jenkins
Award for National Journalism: winner: Ben McFarland; runner-up: Adrian Tierney-Jones
Beer Writer of the Year: Ben McFarland
Three times Beer Writer of the Year ALASTAIR GILMOUR took a rest this year and chaired the panel of judges. These are his thoughts on the process: "I thought the venue lifted the the whole occasion; people seemed much more animated and the choice was a master-stroke. The big winner was beer — its profile was raised by having a bit of class attached to it rather than being surrounded by stained glass windows and fake tradition. I think non-beer folk would have gone away deeply impressed that it wasn't just a lot of fat, T-shirted males at the dinner and that what we bang on about is having its desired effect. Even Mark, the sound and vision man, got changed into a shirt and tie for the dinner, which is a measure of the respect he had for the event and a mark of his professionalism. Kate Oppenheim's roving reporter bit added another level of importance. The winners were genuinely appreciative and I can't say enough for the judging panel of Kate Oppenheim, Ian Dixon and Alex Brodie. Their dedication, professionalism, attitude — and good humour — made the whole process a lot easier. Jo Mathers at Seal — with the assistance of Julie — did a great job from photocopying everything to making sure we got the entries safely and to preparing the final press releases. Big thanks to them — and to Angie Hewitt who must have got fed up by my regular requests for names of those attending. And, everybody who won an award was there, which is good for the Guild and great for the sponsors. We asked for some of the best writing in the country and we certainly got it. It was great to see Ben still bewildered and happy about three hours later. The others seemed thrilled as well — none more so than Nigel Huddleston (who thought his chance had gone when he was seated next to the fire exit)."

WE'VE GOT A TRUMPET AND WE'RE GOING TO BLOW IT — COMMENTS ON THE DINNER

Sounds like a good bash.
Chris Evans, Radio 2

I heard from my brother it was a super dinner.
Ajmail Dusanj, Cains Brewery

On behalf of the Budvar team attending I would like to congratulate you and the other organisers on a bravura performance. You have set a new benchmark for the dinner.
Denis Cox, PR Budvar

We all really enjoyed the dinner and approved of the new, improved venue. Brian Turner's food was excellent and the most important bit, the beer, was fantastic as ever.
Zoe Springett, PR Shepherd Neame

We had a great time thanks — and thought it was a superb meal! Well done.
George Wald, PR Fullers

What a great night it was last Thursday. You all worked very hard for it. David Grant had a terrific evening.
Steve Hobman, PR Moorhouse Brewery

I enjoyed the food and beer combinations very much.
Sally Toms, Editor, Beers of the World

Can I just say thank you for a great evening. I am very impressed by the size of the rod you have made for your own backs, unless, of course, you are intending to use it as a pole to vault over the bar you have set yourselves for next year.
Peter Haydon, Meantime Brewery

Congratulations on an excellent evening — the venue was very good and atmosphere just right...food and beer all good.
Rupert Thompson, Refresh

I thought it was a breath of fresh air, an enjoyable occasion all round.
Jeff Evans, author

The award of Brewer of the Year was a genuine surprise, but very gratefully accepted. I am certainly sharing company with some very esteemed past winners — John Keeling, Ken Don and Paul Bayley — so it is a great honour.
Roger Brewer, Head Brewer, St Austell