

# *British Guild Of Beer Writers*

*Newsletter* — July 2007

‘Robin Appel’s malt-teasers won me over and made me think that the barley from which a **beer** is made is perhaps something we should pay much more attention to.’

Chairman Tim Hampson flies the flag for barley *inside...*

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# The Chairman Reports...

**WINE EXPERTS talk with great reverence about the influence of grape, terroir and the producer's skill in shaping a great vintage. Making beer is arguably more difficult; the larger range of ingredients test the brewer's artistry and technical abilities to the full.**

Beer, as most of us will have written many times, is made from cereals, yeast, hops and water. Transforming these natural ingredients into a blissful, nutritious drink with subtle complexities of colour, aroma, and taste is the province of the brewer. It is the brewer's job to extract sweet fermentable sugars from the cereal, which is normally barley. But let me stop there. Is that all the barley provides: sugar for fermentation?

Could it be that the variety of barley used to make the malt contributes more to the beer than just sugars — and that each barley variety has a unique taste profile, which contributes as much to the finished beer as a grape variety does to a classic wine?

We all accept that different grape varieties produce very different wines, few of us would mistake a white wine made from Chardonnay grapes for a red made from Shiraz. If we wanted to make a robust, booming red with fragrant but game-like characteristics we might use Pinot Noir grapes, whereas we might turn to Syrah if we wanted a wine that was rich and spicy.

Distinctions between barley do exist, but are less clearly expressed. German and Czech brewers favour spring-sown barley, saying that it produces a cleaner sweeter flavour. The Belgians and British favour winter-sown crops, because they are robust and provide more firmness of flavour.

But much malt is chosen, not because of the characteristics inherent in the grain, but because of the amount of sugar they contain, its ease of release and its ability not to clog up a mash tun once its job is done. In the United Kingdom the classic ale barley Maris Otter, is being pushed aside by strains that yield more fermentable sugar per tonne.

Maris Otter is owned by Robin Appel, and his belief is that each barley variety has a different taste profile, some thing that should be recognised: this was the reason why a group of beer writers and brewers met last week at the Spice of Life in London's West End.

Eight different single-varietal barley porridges were available for us to taste blind, which were then followed by eight single-varietal malt beers. Each barley variety had been malted to the same standard and then used in a 100% single-varietal grist to make a 5% beer. The brewing was undertaken by the BRI on its 1-hl pilot brewery. The barley porridges were made from spring varieties: Cellar, Cocktail, Optic, Tipple and Westminster; winter varieties were Flagon, Maris Otter and Pearl. The bitterness level was 24 BUs.

The revelation for me was the characteristics we found in the porridges and the differences between each. Some had a soft rounded flavour with a sweet finish, other were robust and nutty, there were traces of mustard in one, while another was less robust with hints of biscuit.

There was a wonderfully bittersweet symphony of tastes, with each variety clearly different from its peers. So it was with the beers: we found sweetcorn and toffee, hints of sulphur, bitterness, boldness and even a mouth watering warmth. Each was quite clearly different.

When we came to discuss the beers of course there were differences of opinion, but there was also a general consensus that two beers stood out: the ones brewed with Optic and Maris Otter.

Robin Appel's malt-teasers won me over and made me think that the barley from which a beer is made is perhaps something we should pay much more attention to. For if I want a bold beer with a fuller flavour then perhaps I should be looking for it to be made from a barley which is full of roasted and softer sweeter flavours — like Maris Otter.

## AGM

I WOULD like to thank all those who attended the Guild's AGM at the fabulous Star pub, close to Belgravia Square. I was left in no doubt as to the vitality of the Guild and the commitment and passion that members have to the topic which unites us — beer. The backing that members gave to the work the committee is undertaking on your behalf was truly heartening, and we will work hard to ensure that our annual dinner and awards continue to be a success and keep developing in prestige.

We will also develop relationships with other groups key to the brewing industry and will continue to organise and promote events and trips — including the forthcoming seminar on wood-aged beers. The website, which is already well regarded, will continue to evolve. The newsletter will continue to be published and we will welcome more contributions from members.

We are committed to ensure that the finances of the Guild remain strong and are looking at ways of increasing ordinary and corporate membership. I would like to thank those members who have agreed to help founder members Roger Protz in coming up with suggestions on how we might celebrate 21 years of the Guild in 2009.

The Guild's primary objective is to improve the standards of writing and broadcasting on beer and I

## CALENDAR 2007

Aug 6	Pre-GBBF reception, location TBC
Aug 7-11	Great British Beer Festival, Earls Court
September 25-27	National Licensed Business Show, NEC, Birmingham
Oct 1-3	International Brewing Conference,

	G-Mex Centre, Manchester
Oct 11-13	Great American Beer Festival, Denver
Dec 5	BGBW Annual Dinner & Awards, Millennium Gloucester Hotel

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

believe we have a programme of activity that is making a significant contribution to achieving this aim.

Finally I would like to thank Fullers for so generously providing the room and superb refreshments for the AGM.

**ON JULY 1 PUBS** and other public places in England will fall in line with Scotland, Ireland and Wales. Smoking will no longer be allowed inside any pub, club or restaurant. The move to stub out cigarette smoking presents those of us who write about beer and pubs with an opportunity as never before. The fact that pubs were once 'smoke-filled' or a 'fug of tobacco' were often reasons cited by commissioning editors for not publishing articles on beers. Well that is not an excuse any more. The end of smoking in pubs presents us with a unique opportunity to write positively about beer and pubs as never before.

**TIM HAMPSON, CHAIRMAN**

## The Secretary's Round

IT'S THAT time of year again when members doormats (virtual or otherwise) will receive a membership renewal form. Some of you have indicated your preference for an emailed form, while the rest will receive it through the post in due course. The membership fee remains at £40.

I am working with Thornbridge Brewery on the wood-aged beers seminar, which will be an attempt to see where we are with this small but vital beer style. The date will be 1 October, and it will kick off in the afternoon at Thornbridge Hall. It is hoped that speakers from Fuller's, Greene King, Innis & Gunn, Thornbridge will be present, while there are strong chances that Brooklyn Brewery's Garratt Oliver will also be there. There will be a buffet and the Guild will be financing a coach to Thornbridge from the nearest rail station (probably Sheffield) for those coming by train; I also hope to produce a list of hotels and B&Bs for those staying in the area. You might like to know that the International Brewing Conference is taking place in Manchester October 1-3, so some of you might want to go on to there on the Tuesday. More information of the seminar will be released in the next few weeks and I will start collecting names.

## Arkell's Visit

THERE WILL be a Guild visit to Arkell's Brewery, Upper Stratton, Swindon, on Thursday, August 30, 11am-4pm. Anyone interested should contact John White, [john@whitebeertravels.com](mailto:john@whitebeertravels.com), giving details of where they will be able to place a story on the visit.

Further north, Guild member Steve Sharples has organised a visit to Wolverhampton & Dudley on November 22. Anyone interested should contact Steve on [stevesharples@mac.com](mailto:stevesharples@mac.com).

## The Glenfiddich Three

GUILD MEMBERS Roger Protz, Oz Clarke and Alastair Gilmour were shortlisted in the recent Glenfiddich Food & Drink Awards. Roger and Alastair were nominated in the Drink/Bar Writing category along with cocktail expert Simon Difford. Oz was nominated for Drink Book and Alastair was also singled out in the Regional Writer section. He went home clutching the Regional award — our sole success — but the trio consoled themselves by appreciating how far they had gone in an extraordinarily tough competition. Fellow Guild member and judge Andrew Jefford confirmed the excellence of entries.

The Glenfiddich is a stiff test and the standards are as high as it's possible to get in food and drink writing, radio broadcasting, photography and television, so it's encouraging to see the calibre of Guild members' writing being recognised in a wider context. It's important, too, as it sets a standard for our own awards entries where quality must be the prime consideration.

Beer writing should push boundaries — reporting may be the bulk of our output, but we should grab the rare opportunities which allow us to express ourselves and inform, educate and entertain. We should break moulds and learn from the style and content of wine and food writers who enjoy far greater coverage than we beer writers. If there's a tip to pass on, Alastair reckons it's not a bad idea to also study sports feature writing techniques plus the approach of top interviewers and how they deliver their message. Then do it better.

## Beer Academy On Tour

THE BEER ACADEMY are planning to hold their first course outside the UK in October at the Budweiser Budvar brewery in Southern Bohemia followed by an opportunity to chill out in Prague. Full details from Guild members George Philliskirk on 01283 567977 or John White on 01472 884768.

## Members Online

Last month the newsletter contained a list of members' websites and blogs, here are some others that slipped through the net: John Brice: [www.kgvpub.com](http://www.kgvpub.com), [www.medwaybeerfestival.com](http://www.medwaybeerfestival.com); Andrew Jefford: [www.andrewjefford.com](http://www.andrewjefford.com); Richard Morrice: [www.themorricepartnership.co.uk](http://www.themorricepartnership.co.uk), [www.powerofcommunication.blog.com](http://www.powerofcommunication.blog.com); Ron Pattinson: [www.europeanbeerguide.net](http://www.europeanbeerguide.net).

## George Bateman

NO ONE who attended the Guild's annual dinner in 2000 will forget the emotional standing ovation given to George Bateman when he received our Beer and Brewing award. George, who died on 25 June after a long battle with cancer, was a revered and iconic figure, best remembered as the man who saved a family brewery in the 1980s. George, who was 80, had had a conventional life as the son of a brewer: following public school, army service and 'pupillage' (apprenticeship) he joined the family company in Wainfleet, Lincs in the 1950s. But he swept convention aside. He transformed the business, introducing modern methods of fermentation and even small amounts of keg beer when the Watneys Red keg revolution convulsed the industry.

However, the arrival of CAMRA and the resurgence of cask ale enabled him to build sales of proper beer, but this success seemed short-lived when his brother John and sister Helen announced in the mid-1980s that they wanted to sell up and move abroad. As they owned 60% of the shares, George had a battle for survival on his hands. He toured the country, seeking support from other brewers and banks. He was finally successful in 1987, helped in no small measure by XXXB winning CAMRA's Champion Beer of Britain award the previous year.

Sales of Bateman's beers grew nationally and the company was able to buy new pubs even as it paid off loans estimated at £10 million. But the struggle had taken

its toll and George was struck down by throat and mouth cancer. With enormous determination, he returned to work, running the brewery with the active support of his wife Pat and children Stuart and Jaclyn. Pat died in 2005 and sadly George's cancer returned.

He was a man of enormous drive, compassion, wit and determination. Most importantly, he saved a family brewery that continues to brew Good Honest Ales.

#### ROGER PROTZ

*'George was one of the nicest people I have come across in the brewing industry (writes Tim Hampson). He truly cared about his beloved brewery, he was passionate about beer, but above all he showed great love and compassion for those who came in contact with him. He was a wonderful, great gentleman. I'll miss him.'*

### Claude Arkell

CLAUDE ARKELL, the owner of one of country's most beautiful breweries, has died at the age of 89. Mr Arkell had run Donnington Brewery for over 50 years, having succeeded his father after war service. He was a direct descendant of Thomas Arkell, who had bought a 13th-century watermill in idyllic countryside near Stowe-on-the-Wold in Gloucestershire in 1827; brewing began in 1865. Mr Arkell was a very private but utterly charming and quite compelling man, and widely regarded by fellow brewers. He was devoted to the task of brewing and made few concessions to what he regarded as unnecessary progress.

To this day, the watermill is still used to power small pumps and machinery within the brewery, supplying Donnington's 15 tied pubs and a number of free trade pubs with its BB and SBA beers. To visit the brewery was to step back in time. Claude Arkell's beautiful home was always an incongruous place for a brewery. Visitors often spent more time entranced by the sight of swans circling over the yellow Cotswolds stone rooftops and chimneys before gracefully landing on the adjacent lake than doing business.

The Donnington Brewery supplied local beers to local pubs. What could be better? It was green before the word became fashionable. It brewed beers for sale on draught in nearby pubs by licensees running their own businesses. It is a simple business model that works. The Donnington Brewery is much more than a charming anachronism, it offers the hundreds of small committed brewers that we now have in this country a business model that works.

With no immediate relatives, Claude Arkell was nevertheless keen to keep the business in the family and has left the brewery to cousin Peter Arkell and his son James of Arkell's Brewery in Swindon. **TIM HAMPSON**

### Nice To Be Noticed

ROGER PROTZ wrote a feature for *All About Beer* on the history and revival of Imperial Russian Stout, which was subsequently posted on the magazine's website. He was not amused to find that Aussie site [www.grainandgrape.com.au](http://www.grainandgrape.com.au) has lifted, reused and only slightly re-written the piece without permission or acknowledgement. A terse email has been sent Down Under. Says Roger: 'Naively perhaps I have always thought Aussies were bonzer blokes who wouldn't stoop to such behaviour. Then I recall that the world's biggest media tycoon was once an Australian...'

### Durden Park

JAMES MCCRORIE gets in touch to say that he has spoken with the Chairman of Durden Park Beer Circle about the possibility of individual BGBW members attending one of their meetings. These are normally held on the third Monday of the month at the Perivale Community Centre in NW London, from 8pm-10:30pm. He suggests that members wishing to attend contact him via their website [www.durdenparkbeer.org.uk](http://www.durdenparkbeer.org.uk) to make arrangements.

### Kelham Island Floods

KELHAM ISLAND Brewery and the adjacent Fat Cat pub have both been severely damaged by the floods in Sheffield on Monday, 25 June. Guild member and brewery owner Dave Wickett said: 'The water started to flood the car park at 3pm, I told the staff to secure the brewery and abandon the brewery at around 4pm. Half an hour later the Don burst its banks and the whole area was flooded. The Fat Cat was well under water as well. This morning we have noticed that a couple of conditioning tanks on tall legs in the room at the back may have not gone under water so we might have a little bit of beer left but otherwise its a big setback.'

### GBBF Hits 30

THE YEARS roll by and the Great British Beer Festival — number 30 — is almost upon us. The event at London Earl's Court runs from August 7-11 and CAMRA aims once again to fill this vast hall with beer enthusiasts. Last year's festival saw an all-time record attendance, with Earl's Court offering vastly increased space than Olympia.

As always, the focus will be on British cask-conditioned beers. There will be some 450 of them but there will be no shortage of beers from the US, mainland Europe and even further afield in the large foreign beer sector.

Authors will be plying their trade in the on-site book shop — when they are not in one of the balcony rooms conducting beer tastings. The scheduled tastings this year will be your humble scribe conducting World Explorer on Tuesday and Champion Beer of Britain twice on Wednesday, followed by Fiona and Will Beckett matching beer with food on Thursday, George Philliskirk presenting a Beer Academy event also on Thursday, a group of brewers proclaiming their favourite beers on Friday followed the same day by Tim Webb with New Belgian classics. For full details see [www.camra.org.uk](http://www.camra.org.uk). And CAMRA has promised better toilet facilities — so no bursting bladders this year!

See you there...

**ROGER PROTZ**

### The Next Issue

The next issue will be sent to members at the end of August. The deadline for sending copy is August 20.

### SIBA News

THE SOCIETY of Independent Brewers has announced details of this year's Local Brewing Business Awards. The awards, inaugurated last year, are designed to demonstrate local brewers' professionalism, innovation and commitment to increasing commercial results for their own operations and those of their customers.

Closing date for entries to the awards is 1 September. The finals ceremony will be at the London headquarters of the Institute of Directors on Monday, 15 October. For more information, contact Peter Amor on 07802 432138 or Michael Hardman on 01737 766345.