

British Guild Of Beer Writers

Newsletter — September 2007

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Chairman Tim Hampson celebrates John White’s wonderful website *inside...*

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The Chairman Reports...

FOR ANY beer writer who wanted information on beer in the Low Countries or brewers from Bamberg then the White Beer Travels website — www.whitebeertravels.co.uk — is a fabulous, if sometimes arcane, treasure trove of information. Indeed, it is an invaluable resource for journalists, beer fans and the just plain curious.

Like many members, I was a frequent user of it, and indeed as I am about to embark upon a trip to Paris, I still find myself using the site. I am therefore very pleased that John White's family have asked that the Guild find a way of preserving the site.

In the short term this means no more than we take on the expense of hosting the site. However, the family are very keen that access to the site be made free and accessible to one and all, which means that the site will be edited to have John's many passwords removed.

In the longer term, information on the site will become out of date and I would welcome suggestions from members on ways of preserving the massive site.

It goes without saying that John's sad death has touched a lot of beer writers as well as others in the industry and fulsome tributes were paid to him on the Guild's website. He will be missed.

In a few days we will be announcing details of this year's annual awards. But I would like to thank Budvar UK for the changes they are making to their prestigious award. As you can read elsewhere in the newsletter, the Budweiser Budvar Travel is to be renamed in honour of John White.

IN A RECENT article on wood-aged beers I read on an American website it described how different materials may be used to age beer resulting in unique flavour and aroma characteristics.

'The wood-based character should be evident, but not so dominant as to unbalance the beer. The intensity of the wood-based flavors is based on the contact time with the wood; the age, condition, and previous usage of the barrel and the type of wood. Any additional alcoholic products previously stored in the wood should be evident.'

It has whetted my appetite for the Guild's seminar on

wood aged beers, which is being held at Thornbridge Hall in Derbyshire. Details of the seminar are elsewhere in this newsletter, but I do commend it to all members.

Often the Guild is accused on being London centric in its activities, so I hope that this event will be supported by all those who do not relish travelling to the smoke, as well as those of us who like Doctor Johnson have not yet tired of life.

TIM HAMPSON, CHAIRMAN

Budvar UK renames Travel

Bursary in honour of John White

THE BUDWEISER Budvar Travel Bursary, which is presented annually by the British Guild of Beer Writers, is to be renamed in honour of John White, who died suddenly in July at the age of 62. The award will now be known as the Budweiser Budvar John White Travel Bursary. Budvar UK sales and marketing director Neville Hall said: 'John White probably did more than any other individual to get people to appreciate great beers by getting them to go to where they were brewed. Besides being a consummate organiser of wonderful tours in search of great beers, his knowledge of them was also encyclopedic, making his beautifully researched notes, I would suggest, a national treasure for beer lovers. We are proud to make this small contribution to keeping John's memory alive.' The first Budweiser Budvar John White Travel Bursary will be presented at the British Guild of Beer Writers Annual Dinner and Awards Presentation — December 5, Millennium Gloucester Hotel, London. The Budweiser Budvar John White Travel Bursary is given to the beer writer considered by the judges to benefit most from a travel bursary. There is a prize of £1,000 plus a trip to the Budweiser Budvar brewery in the Czech Republic.

Wood-aged Beers Seminar

Date: October 1

Location: Thornbridge Hall Brewery

Time: 2.30pm-7.30pm

GUILD MEMBERS are invited to the stunning surrounds of Thornbridge Hall Brewery, Derbyshire to celebrate beer's ancient and currently revitalised relationship with wood aging. Innis & Gunn's oak-aged beer has been the market leader since its launch several years ago, but breweries both here and abroad have been using casks that previously held spirits or even wine to give a whole new dimension of taste to beer. Invited guest speakers include Garrett Oliver (Brooklyn), John Keeling (Fuller's), Dougal Sharp (Innis & Gunn) and representatives of Greene King and Thornbridge. It is also hoped that someone from Rodenbach will be on hand to explain the Belgian dimension, while Guild member and craft brewer James McCrorie will deliver his thoughts on grogging. There will also be samples of American wood-aged beers

CALENDAR 2007

Sept 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
Nov 2	All-Party Parliamentary Beer Group (APPBG) visit to the Coors at Burton

Dec 5	for tour and food and beer matching. BGBW Annual Dinner & Awards, Millennium Gloucester Hotel
Dec 17	APPBG/BBPA joint Christmas reception in the House of Commons.

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

thanks to Guild member Glenn Payne. An extra element of theatre is that Theakston's cooper Jonathan Manby will be producing a barrel during the afternoon. There will also be a tour around the brewery halfway through the proceedings and the floor will be open for a discussion at the end. To help Guild members get to the Hall there will be a free coach from Sheffield station to Thornbridge Hall and one back in the evening. There will also be details of local B&Bs, guesthouses, pubs and taxi firms if needed. There will be room for 60 people so it is first come first served. Please contact Adrian Tierney-Jones for more information or to put your name down.

Thanks From Richard Morrice

THROUGH THE spring of 1997 I worked with a group of British Guild of Beer writers and CAMRA officials on what turned out to be a very successful project indeed. We launched the first Tesco Beer Challenge exactly 10 years ago. It was very much a shot in the dark and we were not sure how many entries we would get. After all, Premium Bottled Ales were very much in their infancy in those days. But we needn't have worried. We got over 100 entries and McEwan's No 1 Champion Ale (still a massive seller) was our first worthy winner.

Over the years the competition has grown and developed and by this time last year the Tesco Drinks Awards encompassed Beer, Cider, and Innovation. It has been, without doubt, the most interesting project that I have worked on in my 35 years in business. It combined a great client with a superb basic idea that grew and grew plus the sociability, support and hard work of many people who did everything in their power to make it a success. I will pick out certain people for a special mention — Barrie Pepper who organised a team of judges in the north to judge the preliminary rounds, devised team quiz held at the lunch on the final day and gave me lots of support on this project (and many others of course); Sue Nowak who attended all but one preliminary judging and final and created excellent recipes for the celebratory lunch at the final; Roger Protz who frequently led the judges; Andy Gale from Tesco who attended every event and provided crucial support at Tesco Head Office, and Young's, who for years provided venues for the judging at their expense. This is just the tip of the iceberg. Guild members and others gave freely of their time year after year attending judging sessions and helping to develop the competitions.

Of all the great things that happened I remember a phone conversation with Ken Brooker of Harviestoun Brewery. He had won on a number of occasions and had a beer in the final of 2003, but he couldn't attend the lunch. He said that he would ring me from his holiday location (some hot and steamy swimming pool in North Africa), at 3pm our time (6pm there) to find out how he had done. Ken had had a demanding day by the pool and was feeling 'mellow'.

Here's how the conversation went: KEN: 'Hi Richard, it's Ken here, have you got the result?' RICHARD: 'Yes, you've won again.' KEN: 'You must be joking.' RICHARD: 'I don't waste precious mobile phone time on jokes — you've won again with the highest score ever recorded.' KEN: 'Oh. There are over 100 people here and I've promised champagne if we win — where's my wallet!'

The Awards have helped to put some brewers on the

map, rewarded excellent innovations and given cider the profile it deserves. The team here is not working on the Awards this year. The contract has gone to a wine PR company who will develop the competition in its own way. But I'm not off the scene just yet. I'm working on some fascinating projects which I hope you will like when they are announced soon. And I do hope that you will be able to support me again as magnificently as you have done it the past. Thanks!

RICHARD MORRICE

More Members Online

Martyn Cornell: www.zythophile.wordpress.com; Adrian Tierney-Jones: www.beeralewhateverblog.blogspot.com.

John White

Commemorative Beer Hunt

STRANGE EVENTS draw people together and so it was after the tragic death of our friend and colleague John White. His next beer hunt was his annual visit to Bamberg, which was due to occur two weeks after he died, with 10 or so hunters all signed up and brimming with the detailed travel and visit paperwork for which John was famous.

Although technically cancelled a hardcore of the group still travelled to Bamberg on a celebratory visit to the breweries and hostelrys, with the aim of sticking as closely as possible to the plans and dates we had been given as a tribute to John.

It was a truly atmospheric visit with guests joining and leaving the six-day trail as the mood and interest pulled. Starting with a 'recce' for the future we visited four brewery sites in Regensburg followed by a hunt for rare Zoigl beer — in Windischeschenbach — with the added delight of meeting the brewer and visiting the 1852 Kommune Brewery. This was a world class experience in the best traditions of John White Beer Travels.

There was less formality in Bamberg, but a celebration of his life with a drink at the Rauchbier shrine — Schlenkerla — led by Matthias Trum (the owner brewer) was very moving before we all went our various ways to visit the town's nine breweries. Some did the Bamberg trail in one day! Wherever we went the sorrow and respect for John was palpable, his precision and knowledge legendary, making the welcome we received all over the region a memorable experience.

We had precise travel details of bus and train times for the next three days when we travelled into the Bamberg countryside to visit the Annafest beer festival and a dozen or so breweries and hostelrys. The programme worked to the letter — travelling to Merkendorf and Pottenstein (the latter a first for most of us) into Franconian Switzerland and finishing the trips with that wonderful view of Bamberg from the hilltop Keller bars for some reflective time with a *Krug* while watching the sinking sun. Visits to Bamberg will never be quite the same — but the enjoyment and passion for hunting out fine beer with good company in glorious countryside will last forever.

CHRIS MARCHBANKS

Hands-On with London's Youngest Brewer!

WHATEVER YOU'RE thinking, stop it! When I say I spent the day 'hands-on' with London's youngest brewer, Tony

Lennon, I mean he was kind enough to let me spend the day brewing with him. Without wishing to tease too much I can't write too extensively about my day before the mash tun at the Florence in Herne Hill because I'm writing an article for *Beers of the World*, but what I will say is how educational it was for me.

Although I know the majority of the theory, and I've been to many different breweries of varying sizes, I've never actually been hands-on with the whole of the brewing process and certainly not on such a micro scale — so it's really increased my understanding of the practical side of the process, as opposed to the slightly more 'fluffy' tasting and food matching side.

We were making Bonobo (4.5%), the darker of the two beers brewed at both the Florence and its sister pub the Cock & Hen, and my boss for the day seemed pretty pleased with it all, so that's good — but I'll let you know what it tastes like in 40 days!

I have to say I was knackered at the end of the day. There's no doubt that not having a grist mill in this tiny brew-plant makes for some hard work as you have to hold the edge of a 25-kilo grain bag in one hand, over the mash tun, and run hot water through a hose in the other, whilst stood on an up-turned beer crate. My shoulders were on fire after the first 15 minutes!

Tony, despite the fact he's got the hump with me for calling him a 'lovely lad' in a post on my blog, was more than a little patient with my occasionally stupid questions and the fact that I was almost certainly more hindrance than help, so for that I thank him.

And, at the risk of sounding like one big advert for the Florence, you really should get down there. It's a beautiful pub. There's a massive garden, lovely airy conservatory, great food, beautiful architecture and original features, plus an in-house brewery.

They sell Budvar, Aspell, Adnams and, of course, either one of the in-house brews, either the golden and hoppy Weasel or darker, fruitier Bonobo (soon to be joined by a third brew — a wheat beer).

Next stop for me? The White Horse for a brewing day — I'll let you know how the legendary beer pub gets on with producing its own brew...

MELISSA COLE

Visits

GUILD MEMBERS are invited to a tasting of BBPA members' beers on Tuesday, October 9 at Hook Norton visitor centre. Starting time is 10.30am and the event will probably finish mid-afternoon. Probable participants will be Everards, Elgood's, Batham, Charles Wells, Bateman, Marston's and Hook Norton. Please contact Steve Sharples (stevesharples@mac.com or 01384 376557) if you want to go or get further details. There is also a proposed Guild trip to Marston's Wolverhampton Brewery (where the Banks's brands are brewed) on November 22, starting time 11am. Please contact Steve Sharples for details on this as well.

SIBA News

MEMBERS OF SIBA made a clean sweep of the awards in the Champion Beer of Britain competition at the Great British Beer Festival. The overall championship and all seven gold medals for individual beer styles awarded at the CAMRA-organised event went to SIBA breweries.

SIBA chairman Peter Amor said after the results were announced: 'This is proof that Britain's local breweries are producing quality beers full of character and flavour. Our 400-plus members offer a remarkable variety of brews in styles to suit all tastes, and their efforts have obviously impressed the expert judges in the competition.' The overall title of Champion Beer of Britain went to Hobson's Mild, brewed at Cleobury Mortimer in Shropshire, which also took gold in the section for mild ales. The other six sections judged were won by Harvest Pale from Castle Rock Brewery, Nottingham (bitter); Glaslyn Ale brewed by Purple Moose in Porthmadog, North Wales (best bitter); Maldon Gold produced by the Mighty Oak Brewing Company at Maldon, Essex (golden ale); Centurion's Ghost from the York Brewery (strong bitter); the coriander-flavoured Umbel Magna from Nethergate Brewery in Pentlow, Suffolk (speciality beers) and Port Stout from O'Hanlon's Brewing Company at Whimple, Devon. All but three of the silver and bronze medals in the competition were also won by SIBA members.

Cellar To Seller

MEMBERS ARE reminded that the Cellar to Seller Dispense Conference and Exhibition is this year located 'lock, stock & barrel' within the International Brewing Convention at Manchester Central Exhibition Centre on October 2-3. Member Keith Hornby Priestnall — Cellar to Sellers' proprietor — will give a warm welcome to his Guild colleagues, who can visit www.cellartoseller.com for company details of the 'full-house' of exhibitors and also the Conference programme subjects and speakers. Contact Keith (01335 343454 or Bdi4keith@aol.com) if you require any further information.

UK Grey Beer Market Gets New Twist From Afghanistan

A SHARP-EYED member of the Budvar UK team spotted a bottle of Budvar in a Barnsley bar with a German back label. As most grey stock in the UK normally comes from France he was naturally more than usually interested. The plot thickened when he realised that the front label was in English.

The code number on this enabled the brewery to establish exactly where the beer was originally destined for — Kabul, Afghanistan. It was supplied by Budvar to Supreme Foodservice, a caterer with European headquarters in Switzerland, specialising in supplying the military in war zones. Currently Budvar are supplying the company with 12,000 cases a year.

'How many end up in Barnsley is not quite clear,' says Jon Whittle, Budvar UK's off-trade director, 'but they are making a big carbon footprint'. Whittle pointed out that supplies of this kind to Afghanistan are duty free and it demonstrates the way in which the Grey market shrouds duty fraud.

The Next Issue

THE NEXT issue will be available for members at the end of September. The deadline for sending copy is September 20.