

# *British Guild Of Beer Writers*

*Newsletter* — May 2008

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Chairman Tim Hampson and a Polish success story *inside...*

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# The Chairman Reports...

***MOST PEOPLE have probably not heard of the town of Zywiec (pronounced zizzitch) in the south of Poland. And why should they? With a population of 25,000 it is a largely unremarkable place.***

However in 1856 Archduke Albrecht Friedrich Hapsburg founded a brewery there. Today, the brewery is owned by Heineken and it is proud of its claim that not only is it the most efficient operation in the group's Eastern European breweries, but probably ranks as one of the most efficient of the Dutch company's many worldwide activities.

Within its marvellous brewing hall, which opened in 1996, stand two of the largest lauter tuns in the world, each 12.4 metres in diameter. Here Heineken Lager and Poland's biggest selling premium brand Zywiec are produced; the brewery's exquisite Porter is brewed in nearby Cieszyn, where it is lovingly lagered for 90 days. At more than 9%, Zywiec Porter is undoubtedly a Goliath of a beer, but one that shows marvellous balance between rich aromatic coffee flavours and sweet orange notes.

However, this small town, which until recently was largely ignored by tourists, now hosts a large and modern museum. Two years ago Heineken invested 60-million Zloty (about £15 million) into turning an old brewery building into a dynamic and interactive museum.

Visitors are led into it through a representation of a babbling mountain brook, while close by sits a display of Polish barley and hops, leaving no doubt about the beer's raw materials. Other displays include a model of the Archduke's original brewery. There is also a faithfully reconstructed Galician cobbled street, a cooper's workshop and a reconstructed medieval tavern; visitors can relax and enjoy a beer in an original art deco restaurant; opposite stands a replica of a 1920s bowling alley. In addition there is a display from the time when the Polish People's Republic owned the brewery.

There is much, much more, for it is a dynamic museum in which visitors are encouraged to touch and feel the exhibits and pause to take photographs. The company's foresight has been rewarded with 100,000 visitors by the end of its first year of operation. 'It took a lot of hard work, but we are proud of what we have created,' said the brewery's logistics manager.

This leads me to the campaign to save the Coors Museum and Visitor Centre in Burton on Trent, in which some progress has been made. Coors, even though it has not agreed to stay the closure of the site at the end of June, has said it will make a one-off donation of £200,000 to any viable group taking on the site; it is also offering a further £100,000 per annum to cover costs and is willing to rent the site at a peppercorn rent of £1 a year. Significantly, Coors is also saying it will keep the horses at the site until the end of the year. So there is a chance that a viable museum could be established.

But what is needed is a new Burton union. The site should be home not to the Coors or even the Bass museum. It should be the home of the museum of British brewing and

## CALENDAR 2008

May 28-June 1	Mondial de la bière, Quebec
June 13-15	Beers of the World Live NEC, Birmingham
Aug 5-9	CAMRA Great British Beer Festival, Earls Court, London
Sept 12-14	First European Beer Festival, Copenhagen

Sept 25-28	Beer Exposed, Business Design Centre Islington, London
Oct 10	SIBA Local Brewing Business Awards
Dec 10	Joint Beer Group/BBPA 2008 Christmas party, venue TBA

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

specifically real ale brewing. Burton was the birthplace of the magnificent union brewing system, which is still being used in the town, though not by Coors.

The campaign to create a new brewery museum will have an even greater impetus if there is a union of the town's current breweries, coming together in the belief that if the museum survives then they will all prosper from the thousands of people that could flock to the town. If the town of Zywiec can do it — then surely Burton can too.

**TIM HAMPSON, CHAIRMAN**

## AGM

THE GUILD'S AGM is now officially called for Thursday June 19 at the Melton Mowbray, 18 Holborn, London EC1 2LE — nearest tube stop Chancery Lane; it will kick-off at 6.30pm with a buffet to be served at 8.30pm. Once again we have Fuller's to thank for their kind hospitality. Tim Hampson has indicated he is happy to continue as Chairman, but any members wishing to stand should let the Secretary know. At the time of writing, there are two vacant places on the committee available so any members wishing to stand should let the Secretary know. There is no stipulation in the Constitution to do so before the meeting, but if there is anyone interested in standing, please let the Secretary know at least a week before the AGM. Any motions that members want on the agenda must be sent to the Secretary at least seven days before the AGM.

## Trips

THERE ARE two places left on the Springhead visit on Wednesday May 14. This will consist of a brewery visit, followed by a beer and food tasting session. After this transport will be arranged to the Bramley Apple pub in Southwell for lunch and more beer. This is very much first come first served, so if you want to go please contact Adrian Tierney-Jones. There are also plans for a tasting of various regional beers at Hook Norton and a visit to Marston's in Wolverhampton, of which more in the next couple of issues.

## Toon on the tube

CURRENT GUILD gold tankard holder Alastair Gilmour has been asked to develop a 30-minute programme for an American television company focusing on Newcastle-upon-Tyne and beer. It's part of a travel series by HD Network Mojo that takes a light-hearted approach to a region's history, geography and its people through drink. First suggestions from the States include a Newcastle United match, a pub crawl and brewery tours. Filming is scheduled for August. 'The request came out of the blue,' says Alastair. 'The pub crawl and the brewery stuff I can cope with and I can put something memorable together, including with Newcastle United. When you think about it, there's certainly plenty to laugh at there!'

## Deutschland über ales

THE VERY best German beer rarely travels more than a few miles from where it's produced, let alone abroad. Yet May 15-17, 20+ microbrews from across the country will be on offer at Zeitgeist, London's new German pub. Served via gravity direct from traditional bar-top barrels, there'll be a range of styles representing the true variety of German brewing. Bier-Mania, a company specialising in European cultural beer tours, will be driving them direct from source in a trusty white van, ensuring the unpasteurised beer will be in top condition. The list has been chosen by Andy Neil of Bier-Mania and Guild member Jeff Bell of Stonch's Beer Blog, which is promoting the event. The festival venue — Zeitgeist — is at The Jolly Gardeners, 49-51 Black Prince Road, Lambeth, SE11 6AB. Everything will be priced at £3.50 a pint and served in appropriate glassware. German music and food will accompany the beer.

## Belgian tales

GUILD MEMBER John Brice writes to ask members of the Guild for their help. 'Now and then I talk to local groups about Belgian beers and I've been asked by the local Round Table if I can tell them a few funny or

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*amusing stories about Belgian brewers, breweries or the beers themselves. I've got one or two but not enough. Can anyone help? I remember going on a Guild trip to Belgium many years ago and two 'half' stories come to mind. One was about a beer glass produced by the Silly Brewery that had a lad sitting across a barrel — it appeared that he was relieving himself. The glass had to be withdrawn from use but I can't remember the details. Can anyone? The other is about the Dolle Brouwers where the flame-stoked brew kettle "exploded". Again I can't remember the details. Is there anyone out there with a better memory than me?'*

## Beers of the World goes Live

**BEERS OF THE WORLD** comes to life in June 2008, bringing its first premium international beer show to Birmingham's NEC. Running alongside the BBC Summer Festival, Beers of the World Live will showcase beer in a stylish environment. It is open 12-6pm Friday-Sunday June 13-15.

## World Beer Cup

CONGRATULATIONS ARE due to Meantime, BrewDog, Rooster's and Bass, who all won medals at the prestigious World Beer Cup in San Diego in April, with BrewDog scooping a couple of medals for their Paradox Grain and Punk IPA.

## Read ale about it

IF WE THINK of beer and books, then it's usually Inspector Morse or maybe Housman declaiming that ale was the stuff to drink. Australian author Matthew Freeman has continued in this theme with a thriller called *Beer Money*. An email to the Guild from the author described it as thus: 'A brewery executive has gone missing...or has he? Joseph Lucien Abbott — Joe to his mates — is paid by the man's wife with a beer-sodden cheque to find out the truth. In doing so he locks horns with dodgy nightclub owners, a toupé-wearing beer baron, and endless eccentrics — plus, of course, a wild pig — all in the twisted pursuit of a stash of missing money. And he has time for a beer or ten along the way.' A link to the book is at: [www.zeus-publications.com/beer\\_money.htm](http://www.zeus-publications.com/beer_money.htm)

## Be a virtual pub landlord

EVER WANTED to run your own pub? Even better — how do you fancy running a pub without ever having to leave your armchair? A new website is giving subscribers the chance to do that — and save a much-loved pub from closure. The aim of [runmypub.com](http://runmypub.com) is to get enough members on board to take over a pub facing closure, invest in it to get it back on its feet and turn it into a success.

For a subscription of £25, members will have a share in the venture and will help decide which pub should be saved from the axe. They will have a say in the décor, the opening hours, the hiring of staff, and once it's up and running will be able to vote regularly on key management issues like beers to stock, songs to put on the juke box and how much to charge for a pint.

The idea for [runmypub.com](http://runmypub.com) came out of a discussion between old friends Steve Dews and Andy Womack over a few pints one night in Leeds. 'We were talking about Ebbsfleet United,' said Steve. 'They're the football club that have been taken over by a consortium who came together through a website, and we wondered if the same could be done for a pub.'

As an experienced finance director, Steve crunched the numbers and realised the idea had real possibilities. Andy, a senior operations manager at a major UK company, brought his organisational skills to the project — the website was launched in February. The pair have enlisted the support of Andy's brother Phil, and journalist Simon Jenkins, a member of the British Guild of Beer Writers.

Steve and his colleagues reckon that with 5,000 members they would have raised enough cash to take on the lease of their first pub, double that number would enable them to buy a pub outright. But if it proves a success, the site will not stop there, and will hopefully help a number of struggling pubs back into business.

The scheme has also secured the backing of CAMRA, whose spokesman Tony Jerome said: It will appeal to a lot of people out there who have always dreamed of owning their own pub. Buying a pub can cost a lot of money but this scheme lets pub lovers have a slice of the action for just £25 per year!

Simon Jenkins