

British Guild Of Beer Writers

Newsletter — February 2007

‘At a recent presentation I asked a marketing manager whom a new beer was aimed at. He replied “the typical consumer will be sitting with a known associate in a Classic Affiliation Environment”. I think he meant two men in a pub.’

Chairman Tim Hampson minds his language *inside...*

Chairman: **Tim Hampson**
Tel: 01865 245711; 07768 614283
tim@infopub.co.uk

Treasurer: **Paul Nunny**
paul@nunny.fsbusiness.co.uk

Secretary: **Adrian Tierney-Jones**
Lee Farm, Winsford, Somerset TA24 7HX
Tel: 01643 851469
tierneyjones@btinternet.com



www.beerwriters.co.uk

The Chairman Reports...

AT OUR AGM last year the Guild took on a new strategy to help raise our profile and improve relations between us and other groups within the brewing and pub industry. And to this end we have made tremendous strides in the last few months — and I feel quite confident that our new approach is building upon the work of previous committees.

Of course everything cannot be done at once — all of us are volunteers, and none of us can devote the time we would like to do so to this great project. However, our Awards Dinner, which was an outstanding success — socially and financially — has hit a chord with many in the brewing industry who would like to play a part and make it even better.

We ourselves do not intend to rest on our laurels. We raised the bar last year, but staying the same is not an option and we intend to look at every aspect of how the awards and dinner were run — from publicising the event to the giving out of goody bags at the end of the dinner.

The venue at the Millennium Gloucester was just perfect and to have filled the room with so many friends and colleagues was a revelation, but we are already considering a new venue for this year. We feel that as 180 people were persuaded to come last year, we are confident that we could exceed that number in 2007, so it is likely that we will have to move. There are also aspects of the evening which we would like to make run a little smoother, but does not mean that we will change the character of the event. It is the British Guild of Beer Writer's Annual Awards Dinner and this is what we want it to remain. Bigger it may get, more professional in the presentation it will become, but it will always remain a friendly, relaxed affair at which we celebrate the very best of beer writing.

However, one issue which the membership does need to take on board is why do so few individual members submit entries to the awards? Once again this year, more entries came from outside our membership, even though the entries from the Guild was higher than it has been in many a year.

One of the awards judges made the comment that too many entries were obviously just re-hashes of press releases and did not display original thought, initiative or passion — unlike the work of our worthy winners. So how can we address this?

Well, perhaps our PR members can help here. For a start, perhaps we could have more thought given to the information you give to us. Tremendous strides have been made in recent years — press releases about beer are no longer solely dedicated to how much is being spent on advertising, but improvements could still be made. We are hungry for good beer stories, and hungrier even more for people stories.

Also, as someone who sits on a newsdesk for a consumer newspaper, please give more thought to the pictures you send us — people holding charity cheques have long been a no no, but people holding plaques and certificates and staring at the camera are becoming harder to place in the papers I write for.

And finally, please talk in English. At a recent presentation I asked a marketing manager whom a new beer was aimed at. He replied 'the typical consumer will be sitting with a known associate in a Classic Affiliation Environment'. I think he meant two men in a pub. **TIM HAMPSON, CHAIRMAN**

Pubs are hip shocker

IT'S JANUARY, when every single publication in every walk of life fills its pages with tips on what's hot for 2007. And it may surprise members outside 'the metropolitan elite' (© *every right-wing columnist and talk radio presenter*) that this year, pubs are officially cool. Not just gastropubs or pubs with a lank-haired bloke spinning decks in the corner, but ordinary pubs. Trendy bars and night clubs are naff. Anyone who is anyone would rather be down their local boozier. I'm not making this up (nor am I drunk, I'm writing this, worryingly sober, in the middle of detox January).

What's happened? Has the real ale revival reached tipping point? Have our joint efforts finally convinced a sceptical nation? Not exactly. Pubs are cool again... because Kate Moss says they are. Pubs are cool again because 'The Celebrities' have started

CALENDAR 2007

Feb 1	Morning Advertiser Awards
Feb 10-13	Pianeta Birra, Rimini, Italy
Feb 17-24	CAMRA Community Pubs Week
March 1-2	SIBA Conference, Leeds

March 20	Publican Awards
April 20-22	CAMRA Members Weekend, Wolverhampton

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

going to them. Supermodel Erin O' Connor and her boyfriend Jamie Theakston are regularly seen propping up the bar at the Westbourne in West London. And you'll probably spot Kelly Osborne, Sadie Frost or Amy Winehouse in Camden's Hawley Arms. Pete Doherty and Liam Gallagher are even reported as planning to open their own boozier in Kentish Town.

Just before Christmas, the *Evening Standard* ran 'London's Ultimate Pub Guide' over a centre spread. It featured the best pub for celeb-spotting (natch), the best pub quiz, best pub entertainment, best décor, best food... but omitted to give a best pub for beer. In fact, in profiles of 13 pubs — all of which have their merits, don't get me wrong — beer was mentioned precisely twice. And this in a feature that includes a line on 'what are you having?' for each pub. The piece suggests a pint of Adnams Broadside in the Gun at Canary Wharf, 'if you're feeling Nelsonesque', and 'cask ale' in the Spaniards Inn on Hampstead Heath 'in keeping with the historical spirit'. Nowhere else does the word 'beer' feature.

A month previously, *Observer Food Monthly* ran an article on celebrities and their favourite pubs. Beer was not mentioned once. *Time Out* has also beefed up its pub coverage. But it's not unusual to read a review of a pub that talks about the location, the sofas, the chandeliers, the potted plants — and fails to mention a single drink served at the bar.

It would be an understandable if your reaction to this was to reach for the green ink and pen something along the lines of 'Oi! We've been singing the virtues of pubs for years! If you're going to steal our turf, at least have the decency to mention the central point of pubs' existence, which is the serving of beer!' That might make you feel better, but it'll get our cause nowhere.

Instead, shouldn't we be viewing this as a major opportunity for beer writing? Our biggest barrier in getting beer writing published in the nationals is engaging commissioning editors and persuading them that beer is relevant today. Surely this task is much easier once we've metaphorically led them past the door to Soho House and into a decent boozier?

So I offer this as a challenge to Guild members: the values represented by great pubs are now fashionable and newsworthy, but great beer is still off the radar. How can we use the new enthusiasm and lead people from that to beer? This is the angle I'll be taking with submissions over the next few weeks. If enough of us do the same, we just might get the ball rolling.

PETE BROWN

Ale Caesar

ITALIAN GUILD member Maurizio Maestrelli gets in touch to say that the next Pianeta Birra in Rimini runs from February 10-13. Coinciding

with the event Maurizio is publishing the second edition of *Birra ai Fornelli*, a book of recipes with beer produced by Italian publicans. *Cuisine à la bière* is becoming more and more popular in Italy according to Maurizio, in pubs and brewpubs as well as select establishments such as the Michelin-starred Le Calandre of Rubano. He would also like members to know that as from February he will be editor for the magazine *Birra & Sound*, a magazine that focuses on beer, pubs and the licensed trade.

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. **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 it is hoped to have some typical Yorkshire food (such as pork pies and black pudding) alongside the beers. There are still places available for what will be a great event, so please contact Barrie Pepper on 0113 265 8595 or barrie.pepper@ntlworld.com

The Best of British awards

GUILD MEMBER Paul Nunny is at the forefront of the 'Best of British Beer Awards', which sees the *Daily Telegraph* and the Cask Marque Trust joining forces. Over March, the *Daily Telegraph* will run a four-week campaign to encourage beer drinkers to vote for their favourite cask ale. Voters will be able to find their nearest polling station (only Cask Marque award-winning outlets can become designated polling stations) by texting a pre-designated short code or by going on line. The country will be split into 10 regions and votes will be counted by region to give regional champions. *The Daily Telegraph* will produce a four-page supplement in the *Saturday Weekend Food & Drink* section to cover the results of the whole competition, with a final awards lunch being held in London. According to Nunny, 'The *Daily Telegraph* has a daily readership of more than 2,000,000 people and the reader profile perfectly matches that of the cask ale drinker. Having a national newspaper support and promote cask ale is an important acknowledgement that the sector is well and truly alive.'

Over a seven-day voting period £1-off vouchers will be available in the *Daily Telegraph* which can be redeemed in participating Cask Marque polling stations. For further information call the Cask Marque Trust on 01206 752212, Paul Nunny direct on 07768 614065, or visit www.cask-marque.co.uk.

Beer and food matching with Raymond Blanc

RAYMOND BLANC is one of a handful of UK-based chefs who are playing around with beer and food, in his case with characteristic energy and enthusiasm. With the help of his equally beer-smitten sommelier Xavier Rousset, he's just introduced a list of ten beers from around the world at his Oxfordshire restaurant Le Manoir aux Quat' Saisons. It includes a deliciously fruity Italian lager I hadn't tasted before — Menabrea 1846 — three US beers (Anchor Liberty, Goose Island IPA and Celis White), two Germans (Schneider Weisse,

December saw the unique unveiling of a long lost cache of old Burton beers with Guild member (and White Shield brewer) STEVE WELLINGTON in the limelight. This is fellow Guild member LES BAYNTON's poetic thoughts on the matter

VINTAGE DRINKING

They lay in the Maltings at Burton,
A cache of lost, almost forgotten,
Vintage beers, waiting
To be rediscovered
Like Egyptian treasures
Buried in The Valley Of The Kings
At last in 2006 a brewer, explorer, Mr Wellington
Dusted them off, brought them into the light
For the oldest, Ratcliffe Ale,
It had been a long, long rest
Of one hundred and thirty seven years
He was excited as he tentatively tasted
The century old ale which others said
Could not have survived...
But it did, and he savoured
The sweet honeyed ripeness
And knew he had made
A momentous discovery
A great moment for British brewing.
Now we have savoured those treasures,
And delighted in their exotic ripeness,
Their wonderful textures and taste,
The '78 Princess Ale, the '77 Jubilee Strong,
The '29 Prince's Ale and the wonderful
1869 Ratcliffe Ale, we were in
A kind of heaven, that night
But could those ancient brewers
Ever have imagined us tasting
Their exquisite creations
In the year of 2006?
Or could we have ever
Dreamed of such a privilege?

Aventinus), three Belgians (Tripel Karmeliet, Liefmans Frambozen and Westmalle Dubbel) plus a solitary representative from the UK, Worthington White Shield (he intends to remedy that by adding some beers from local breweries). I was given a run through some of the pairings that he and head chef Gary Jones have come up with, with Blanc periodically leaping from the table or issuing instructions for recipes to be tweaked.

First up was a crab salad with grapefruit and ginger jelly, with oscietra caviar partnered with *Schneider Weisse*. There was also a rather wonderful orange-flavoured crostino served alongside topped with pink grapefruit and mango and a touch of mango puree under the crab. All very clever I thought but Blanc dispatched it back to the kitchen to ratchet up the spicing and include more brown crab meat, which brought out the banana and coriander flavours of the beer even more clearly.

Next, a warm confit of organic salmon with a mouli and cucumber salad and horseradish sauce. The salmon had a fantastic, fall-apart texture and you can find the recipe in the food section of the BBC website. Rousset had partnered this dish with the *Goose Island IPA* which was spot on, but Monsieur Blanc wanted a touch more smoke in the salmon.

The main course was a daube of Shropshire beef cheek served with a cauliflower puree and winter vegetables. Blanc had wanted to cook this in beer but found his favoured cooking method just didn't work so he had to serve it braised in wine instead. Rousset paired the dish with the big peachy *Schneider Aventinus*, which was a really great match, and the *Westmalle Dubbel*, which we had both anticipated would be the better of the two pairings but was overwhelmed by the richness of the stew.

It also went well with *Duchy Originals Winter Ale* that Rousset was considering for the list — a much more classically English, less exotic combination but with a refreshing dryness.

Blanc then sneaked in a cheese course, a fine slice of toasted sourdough baguette topped with warm Vacherin Mont d'Or and finely sliced truffles served with a small salad. It went surprisingly well with the rich, full, sweet *Tripel Karmeliet*. Finally a classic beer match: *Liefman's Frambozen* with an ultra smooth dark chocolate fondant tart, chocolate ice cream and a confit of raspberries. Rousset wasn't sure whether the raspberries were needed but after tasting the dessert we concluded they helped to build a bridge to the raspberry flavours of the beer and counteract the richness and bitterness of the tart.

Blanc and Rousset plan to do more development work on dishes to pair with their listed beers and will be holding their first beer dinner on September 18 with Roger Protz. For more information check out www.manoir.com.

FIONA BECKETT