

British Guild Of Beer Writers

Newsletter — Feb 2009

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Chairman Tim Hampson stays Sharp to the bottom of the glass (next time he’ll follow the bear) *inside...*

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The Chairman Reports...

POSITIVE ENERGY seems to exude from every pore of Sharp's business — they are as brash and modern as the surfers who ride the rolling Atlantic waves that hurl onto and harry the Cornish coastline. Based in Rock, the company shuns the traditional image of Cornish pasties and sun-struck holiday cottages, as Guild members discovered on a recent trip to the brewery.

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Sales currently stand at 45,000 barrels a year — and with astonishing confidence the company's Managing Director Nick Baker is forecasting that this will have doubled to 90,000 within three years.

The company has just unveiled a £2m expansion to its brewery, which it says makes it probably the UK's most environmentally friendly producer of beer. The brewery says its passion is to produce beer of the highest quality using the finest natural ingredients — its biggest seller is Doom Bar, named after the infamous sandbank at the mouth of the Camel estuary. Late hopped with Northdown hops it is full of spicy and estery flavours that are in balance with sweet and roasted malt notes.

Brewer Stuart Howe gets angry when beer is regarded as a commodity and a poor relation to wine. He was challenged by culinary legend and

piscine promoter Rick Stein to create a distinctive English beer, with the character and individuality to stand alongside the Belgian greats. The result was Chalky's Bite, which is flavoured with wild Cornish fennel and matured for three months.

The link between Sharp's and Rick Stein took the Guild to the chef's cookery school in Padstow for a beer and food workshop. Here Guild members chopped and sautéed squid, chorizo and all the other ingredients for seven different dishes — each paired with different Sharp's brews. Beer was certainly no poor relation to wine. In a modern, stylish environment it showed its true qualities as a drink with class.

Another West Country success story is the Otter Brewery in Luppitt, Devon. Established in 1990 by the McCaig family, it too is primarily a cask ale brewery and like Sharp's it is very positive about the future as it now provides beer to more than 500 pubs across the southwest.

A steep and somewhat precarious track leads from a narrow lane down to the brewery, which is housed in buildings behind a farmhouse. The somewhat unprepossessing entrance hides another success story. Not long ago it was a 10-barrel plant — this was replaced in 2004 and today Otter has the capacity to produce 1,000 firkins a week with the brewery saying that a pint of Otter is drunk every 12 seconds in the UK.

Modern technology and tradition combine to make an environmentally friendly brewery. Water for the beer comes from the brewery's own springs in the Blackdown Hills and the effluent is filtered back into the ground using traditional willow beds. And soon to be opened is a state-of-the-art, £750,000 investment, eco cellar, where the beer is racked and packed. Built partly underground, lit by solar powered neon tubes, and covered in a living, sedum roof, the building is a bold statement about the state of Otter's business and the McCaigs commitment to the environment.

Turn on the TV or radio or read a newspaper and it seems virtually impossible to find good

CALENDAR 2009

Feb 14-17	Pianeta Birra, Rimini, Italy
March 6	SIBA National Brewing Conference Stratford upon Avon
April 6-13	National Cask Ale Week
April 23	SIBA South West Tuckers Maltings Festival, Newton Abbot

June 3-7	Mondial de Biere, Quebec
Aug 4-8	Great British Beer Festival, London
Sept 24-26	Great American Beer Festival, Denver

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

economic news. Yet Sharp's and Otter are investing and building for long term sustainable futures — long may they prosper.

TIM HAMPSON, CHAIRMAN

Medal guru

MICHAEL HARDMAN, first secretary of the Guild and one of the four founders of the Campaign for Real Ale, has been made an MBE in the New Year's Honours for services to CAMRA and the brewing industry. He was CAMRA's first chairman from 1971 and later worked for the Campaign, editing the *Good Beer Guide* and *What's Brewing*. He popularised the term real ale, which is now in everyday usage and recognised by dictionaries. For the past 30 years, he combined his work as a journalist for national newspapers and BBC Radio News with public relations in the brewing industry, mainly for Young's, the London brewers, and most recently with SIBA, the Society of Independent Brewers. Hardman is now producing newspapers and magazines for corporate clients and lives in Reigate, Surrey. Telephone 01737 766345; hardmanmichael@man.com.

Also banging the gong for beer and brewing was Jonathan Adnams, who received an OBE.

Every man his own reviewer

JOHN BRICE writes to let members know that he has just set-up a website for professionals and amateurs to review new beer books. It's called: www.beerbookreviews.com. According to John, 'the idea is that details of new books are listed and we add reviews of them in various publications. Then anyone —who has registered as a user with us — can add their own review. People can also buy books through the site. The site is active at the moment but is not getting any promotion until we have listed more books and reviews from the media. As soon as that is complete, it will be launched with a flourish! In the meantime, I am seeking help from Guild members who have published books to let me know the details so that I can get in touch with their publishers for material to put on the site. They can send me information on: johnkgvbrice@hotmail.co.uk.'

Visits

Moorhouse's Brewery: March 25-26

March 25: arrive Manchester Piccadilly Station 12pm-ish (details tbc), to be taken by minibus to the brewery in Burnley (BB11 5BN). At 1pm there will be a buffet lunch, a visit to the brewery and a beer tasting followed by a discussion led

by Managing Director David Grant. Subjects will include: progress with major investment in the new brewery (the first sod was cut by Chairman Bill Parkinson in Jan 2009), excellent Christmas trading, plans for beer launches and exports (including USA).

This will be followed in the evening with visits to show how Moorhouse's has invested heavily in its pub estate to ensure they survive the current economic crisis. Overnight accommodation has been kindly offered at a nearby hostelry. After breakfast the following morning is free to do our own thing — but there will be transport to Manchester. Please confirm to Chris Marchbanks — cjmarshbanks@aol.com — by March 10 if you wish to attend the visit.

Institute of Brewing and Distilling Activities

February 10, 2009: visit to Harviestoun Brewery

March 12, 2009: visit to Copper Dragon Brewery

March 18, 2009: Marston's, Burton — talk on Old English Beer Styles

March 23, 2009: French and Jupps Maltings, followed by visit to the new McMullen's brewhouse

If members of the BGBW are interested in attending contact simon.jackson@ibd.org.uk.

There is also a study visit to Budvar Brewery, April 21-23 2009; contact Dan Cannas at dan.cannas@ibd.org.uk for details.

WB Yeast

THE GUILD'S resident poet (and Beer King) Les Baynton has a new set of rhymes out on the street, all of which take beer and brewing as their inspiration. Produced in conjunction with Shepherd Neame, *Poems & Pints* is a companionable compilation of poems with such titles as *Hip Hop* and *Amber Lady*. Available from Les or Sheps' visitor centre at the price of £3.

The buck stops at Gluck

MANY GUILD members will have read Malcolm Gluck's absurdly confrontational and attention-seeking piece on the *Guardian's* online forum regarding the superiority of wine. A riposte to the superplonker came from Roger Protz in the following day's online *Guardian*, while Martyn Cornell tackled the subject on his blog. Melissa Cole went even further by inviting the man to a beer vs wine food tasting — no doubt you will be able to read what happened at the online *Guardian*.

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NEXT ISSUE IS FEBRUARY 20, 2009

Padstowawayday

IT'S NOT often you get to meet one of your true heroes, and by the time you're 40 you should be able to take it in your stride anyway.

BUT WE GOT TO HAVE A BEER WITH RICK STEIN! OFF THE TELLY!



Man off telly with beer in hand — does the Portman Group (or Malcolm Gluck) know?

In a world where Nigella, Jamie, Heston, Gordon and the rest are more brands than people, Rick Stein has managed to scale similar heights of fame and still seem real. He's the kind of bloke who enjoys a beer, who you feel you could chat to over a pint. On January 14 a dozen Guild members got to do just that, courtesy of Rick's neighbours at Sharp's Brewery.

We spent the afternoon tasting 10 beers from the Sharp's range. Head brewer Stuart Howe endeavours to make his session pints as drinkable as possible — that's what they're for. But whenever he gets a spare moment, he's off creating a strain of speciality beers that combine



Assembled Guild members wait for their dinner — how well-behaved they are. Pic: Fran Nowak

local flavour with a distinctly Belgian influence.

Two of these beers were developed in conjunction with Rick Stein, hence our chance to meet the man himself. Already feeling warmed against the winter chill by our afternoon's activities we crossed the estuary from Rock to Stein's seafood school in Padstow. After chatting about Chalky's Bite and new beer Chalky's Bark, we donned our aprons to learn how to cook various seafood dishes.

Each came with a choice of three Sharp's beers, and we undertook a well-meaning but utterly futile attempt to agree on which beer matched best with each dish. The only consensus we managed to reach by the end of the evening was that they were all really, really nice.

The other consensus was that this is one of the best trips the Guild has run — the fact that it has been (or will be) written up in virtually every beery British publication is testament to its success.

Heartfelt thanks to Sharp's for an experience that was unforgettable. Even after the 10% ABV Massive Ale...

Pete Brown

Brewing returns to Wandsworth

GUILD MEMBERS might be interested in this bit of news that turned up on the desk the other day...

A former photographic studio in Wandsworth is the unlikely premises for London's newest brewery Sambrook's. Duncan Sambrook first had the idea of setting up a brewery three years ago but had in mind 5-barrel plant located in the outskirts of London which he would run part-time. A chance meeting with David Welsh, the ex-MD of Ringwood, changed all that. Duncan decided it would be worth investing in much larger plant at a location in the heart of London on a full time basis. And so it was that last August, with the backing of family, friends and investors including David, he gave up his accounting job at Deloitte and started converting the two studio units in Battersea.

A month later a 20-barrel plant was delivered and just before Christmas the first batch of Sambrook's Wandle Ale was produced. Duncan & David are committed to sourcing local English materials for their beers and use Maris Otter malt from Warminster and whole leaf Boadicea, Goldings and Fuggles hops for Wandle. This beer has been very well received by pubs in south-west London who are especially pleased to see the resumption of brewing in Wandsworth following the closure of Young's in 2006.

Thanks

STEVE SHARPLES says thanks to all the Guild members and brewers who sent him get well wishes following his recent open heart surgery.