

British Guild Of Beer Writers

Newsletter — March 2006

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Andrew Pring and testing times *inside...*

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The Chairman Reports...

THE SAD NEWS of Gale's closure has just arrived as I write these words and all who cherish beer, breweries and our brewing heritage will be feeling the blow keenly. A brewery closing is like the death of a friend, or, in the case of a 150-year-old brewery with excellent beers, a very well-loved friend.

It is with a heavy heart that we must now come to terms with its loss. Thankfully, the leading Gale's brands — HSB, Butser, Festival Mild and Prize Old Ale — live on at Chiswick. And if Fuller's gets behind them, there's no reason why they shouldn't flourish and even find a wider drinking audience than their current Hampshire fan club. But even if that's so, something precious has been lost. And when even thriving breweries are not safe from extinction, it's a reminder what precarious brewing times we live in. The possibility of death is always present. Yes, we must fight desperately to keep breweries alive — and CAMRA and the locals laboured mightily to find some method of preservation for Horndean. But when has a brewery closure ever been averted by protesters?

The moving finger of capitalism writes, to paraphrase our old friend Omar Khayyam, and having writ, moves on. 'Nor all thy piety nor wit shall lure it back to cancel half a line, nor all their tears wash out a word of it.'

Defeatist drivel, I hear some members snort. But didn't we all expect this when Gale's offered itself up for sale? In a highly competitive market, Fuller's is hardly going to saddle itself with costs when it can brew Gale's beers at Chiswick.

Last year, Wolverhampton & Dudley committed itself to keeping the Jennings Brewery open. It believes that the Jennings name is so revered in Cumbria that to close the brewery would rebound on the pubs. Fuller's clearly feels it will suffer no backlash — probably because it's better known in the south than W&D is in the north-west. Certainly, London Pride has been selling strongly in the Gale's estate since the takeover. If it continues to do so following Horndean's closure, that will tell us all we need to know about how the general public stands on the loss of our brewing heritage.

On to happier matters, and I'm sure the SIBA conference at Bristol this week will prove a very sociable and lively affair. It's noticeable that while family brewers have been closing their doors, micro brewers have been flourishing. Some regional brewers feel the micros are enjoying too favourable a treatment through the Chancellor's progressive beer duty tax break. But it's hard to argue the real ale case, then complain when smaller rivals start nipping at your heels. Good luck to them, I say.

Finally, Adrian is currently trying to fix the date for the June AGM so as soon as you hear from him please put it in your diary. It's just under four months away, but we do want as many there as possible. Certainly, with only 16 or so weeks left until the end of another Guild year, the committee is very focused on providing plenty of action. There are some great trips coming up, and a beer provenance seminar is at an advanced stage of planning. More details of this and other events in the next newsletter.

Andrew Pring, Chairman

CALENDAR 2006

April 2-8	Beer with Food Week
April 7-8	Helsinki Beer Festival
April 7-9	CAMRA AGM, Blackpool
April 10-11	World Beer Cup 2006, Seattle
April 11-13	Pub & Bar, Olympia, London
May	CAMRA's Mild Month
June	Guild's AGM, date and place

	to be confirmed
July 5	All-Party Parliamentary Beer Group Annual Awards Dinner
July 31	Guild's pre-GBBF reception, London
Aug 1-5	Great British Beer Festival, Earls Court

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

The Secretary's round...

HOLD THE cuckoo clocks and chocolates, there's now a far better reason to think about Switzerland with the release of said country's Appenzeller beers from the Locher Brewery in the town of Appenzell. A selection of their organic beers landed on my desk last month and I was impressed by their quality. As seems the norm for Switzerland, these are lager-style beers, all 5% in strength. *Vollmond Bier* has a fresh bready nose with hints of resinous hop, a bittersweet palate and a very long bitter finish. This feisty little beer is apparently brewed only on the night of a full moon. Very biodynamic. *Naturperle's* hops and malt are grown at over 5000 feet (beer with altitude indeed) and this is reminiscent of a North German pilsner (think Jever) in its bitter finish, though the nose suggests the rich, caramelly malty aromas of a Viennese Red. Intriguing. *Castégna* is so pale that it looks like it's seen a ghost, and seems to peer eastwards to Bohemia for its flavour profile. The two other beers I have yet to try are *Swiss Mountain* and *Hanfblüte*, the latter which has hemp in the mix, an age-old tradition according to the brewery. If you want to find out more about these beers contact René Seidl at reneseidl@suisseconnection.com.

After Pete Brown's tale in the last newsletter of his work with Young's on their Ram's World campaign and subsequent ASA rulings, Refresh UK have also had a run-in with the advertising industry's watchdog. This time, a lager drinker complained about the Hobgoblin Lagerboy ads, saying that national advertising for Hobgoblin implied that lager drinkers were 'afraid of the dark' and that the advertising was offensive and aggressive. The ASA had the sense to turn down the complaint noting that it 'was intended to be humorous and that the image used in the ad was stylised and unrealistic. We considered that the readers of the *Times* would not find the ad offensive or aggressive.'

I have also received this missive from former Secretary Barry Bremner: 'I was amused to read in the latest newsletter about Peter Coulson coming to Al Murray's rescue and sending him a replacement Guild tie. Subsequently, when I took over as Guild Secretary in 1997, Al Murray's agent tracked me down and purchased no fewer than 15 Guild ties because the TV production company insisted that he should

wear a bright new tie for every programme. A year later, I was asked to send another big batch of ties, but the number ordered exceeded our stocks and there were only a few left for members, so I had to refuse the request. Presumably, Al Murray is still wearing Guild ties from the 1997 supply. Of course, Al Murray is not the only one who has been in need of a Guild tie. Guild Chairman, Andrew Pring, had mislaid his tie on the eve of the Guild dinner in December, so I gave him the use of mine for the evening! I wore a McMullen brewery tie instead.'

GUILD AGM

The Guild's AGM is now officially called for Tuesday June 27, and we will be meeting once more at Young's excellent Brook Green Hotel.

GUILD TRIPS

MARCH The next trip is to Cains in Liverpool on 15/16 March. The trip is just about full up, so anyone interested should let Tim Hampson know asap.

APRIL The Hall & Woodhouse trip on 26/27 April is now full and I have had to place a couple of members on a reserve list. If anyone who has put their name forward needs to cancel please let me know asap.

JUNE Moorhouse's has invited the Guild to its brewery in Burnley on 21/22 June. It is likely to kick off at lunchtime at the brewery, and later after a short break at our hotel an evening tour of some of the innovative company's pubs.

SEPTEMBER There is a possible invite from NE/Yorkshire brewers to a beer & food lunch in York on September 26.

OCTOBER Tour of and tasting at Shepherd Neame on October 5 with a Hop Blessing at a local church on the next day. October 13 should see invites to press day of Beer and Food Exhibition, Harrogate.

● To be considered for any of the Guild trips contact Tim Hampson on tim@infopub.co.uk; please include details of where you may be able to place a story. Furthermore, if anyone has any suggestions for trips please let him know.

CHANGE OF E-MAIL ADDRESS

GUILD member Lynne Pearce sends word that her e-mail has changed to lynnepearce29@ntlworld.com.

WORKING WONDERS

NEW GUILD member Paul Ambler will be publishing www.workedwonders.org on the web from 28 February. The website will contain photos of

Wrexham Lager and Ind Coope Burton Breweries in the 1960s and 1970s, whilst the text will describe how his initial enthusiasm brewing for Allied Breweries waned as the company changed its culture. He hopes that the site will promote discussion and looks forward to members' comments.

DEFINITELY UKRAINIAN

GUILD BEER Writer of the Year Alastair Gilmour gets in touch over a small matter of semantics. 'Two recent magazine articles by Guild members on the Weisse Bier Etalon have included an irritating and unnecessary determiner. The beer's country of origin is Ukraine, not The Ukraine. No doubt we should be hearing more of this beer, so let's nip the The in the bud.' Meanwhile committee member Larry Nelson appeals to the historians out there asking if anybody knows the origin of the phrase 'crying in their beer?' (*something to do with supporting Arsenal? — ATJ*).

BEER BOOKS

Guild member and CAMRA's Head of Publications Joanna Copestick explains how things have changed at the Campaign's books division...

2005 WAS A good year for CAMRA Books as we set out to become established as the leading British publisher of books about beer and pubs. With six-seven new titles annually, we aim to provide an interesting mix of beer consumer guide books, campaigning, gift, humour and reference titles.

We are lucky to publish several of the Guild's most distinguished beer writers, including Roger Protz, who is about to edit his 15th edition of the *Good Beer Guide*. His *300 Beers to Try Before You Die!* has been the second fastest selling CAMRA title of all time after the *GBG*. It sold out its high initial print run in just four-and-a-half months and was reprinted in January. It is likely there will be a US edition later this year.

The Big Book Of Beer, by the Guild Secretary Adrian Tierney-Jones, was published in November and is selling steadily to both book trade and direct to the CAMRA membership. Meanwhile Tim Webb's 5th edition of the *Good Beer Guide to Belgium* won him the Guild's Budvar Travel Bursary Award and Jeff Evans' *Book of Beer Knowledge* and *Good Bottled Beer Guide* also sold out. *Cellarmanship* by Pat O'Neill was published during National Pubs Week, and is a completely updated edition of one of CAMRA's earliest publications.

At a time when competition in the food and drink marketplace is fierce, CAMRA Books have been

given a visual overhaul. CAMRA's overall book sales doubled in 2005 and its profile in the book trade is rising thanks to a coordinated marketing and editorial approach to publications. The timing of new books is closely linked to specific campaigns such as National Pubs Week, the Great British Beer Festival and the National Inventory of Historic Pub Interiors, as well as to traditional trade publication cycles. CAMRA Books, like all small independent publishers, is always looking to reach potential book buyers direct via membership and website. Check out current titles on www.camra.org.uk/books, due to go live in March 2006.

Specific highlights during the last year have also included a timely quote from Andrew Flintoff on the front of the *Good Beer Guide 2006*, and an entertaining beer tour of Brussels for key members of the press led by Tim Webb and sponsored by Eurostar. The day-long trip led to extensive broadsheet and magazine coverage.

Books are now planned at least 18 months to two years in advance so for any authors out there who would like to pitch a book idea, please contact Joanna Copestick on joanna.copestick@camra.org.uk. She is always on the look out for innovative, informative and inspirational book ideas. New titles planned for 2006 include a brand new, all colour edition of *Good Pub Food* for March. *Good Beer Guide Germany*, due in May, ahead of the World Cup, came about after a chance meeting on a train platform between editor Steve Thomas and the Guild's Tim Webb. It is the first time anyone has attempted to provide a comprehensive guide to all of Germany's 1250 breweries.

CHEESE AND WINE PARTING

MORE EVIDENCE of John Barleycorn's eminent suitability with cheese comes with a press release from Guild member Kelly Smith. The grape and the grain were pitted against each other at the Food Development Association Wine and Cheese V Beer and Cheese challenge, which was held at celebrity chef Anton Edelmann's Allium restaurant in London. In beer's corner was Burton's Ben Bartlett, catering development manager at The Union Pub Company (UPC), who went head to head with Master of Wine Sally Easton in presenting their preferred tipples to an audience of 40 food and drink opinion-formers. The overall winning match was in fact an English team of Pedigree and Somerset Cheddar. For more information you can get hold of Kelly on kellys@getvital.co.uk.