

# *British Guild Of Beer Writers*

*Newsletter* — October 2006

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Chairman Tim Hampson celebrates beer *inside...*

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# The Chairman Reports...

**SOMETIMES PEOPLE ask me — ‘why should I join the British Guild of Beer Writers?’ Well two recent events have exemplified to me not just the importance of the Guild but also the joy that the beer and brewing industry can bring. Recently, John Keeling, our current Brewer of the Year and Fuller’s head brewer, led a wonderful tasting of ten years of the bottle-conditioned 8.5% Vintage Ale.**

Addressing an audience of brewers, writers and senior industry executives he said that Vintage Ale had character and personality in abundance, making it one of the best beers in the world.

Vintage Ale is a true classic, first brewed in 1997 by the now retired head brewer Reg Drury. Based on Fuller’s Golden Pride, it is a limited edition brew that uses only the best of the year’s malt and hops. As a beer it is also a superb example of how bottle-conditioning gives complexity and depth of flavour.

We were able to taste a unique collection spanning ten years of different vintages, giving us an ideal opportunity to compare successive years, and appreciate the full depth of flavours that develop through time.

What I found fascinating, and a real testament to the skill of the brewer, was the fact, that each year, though the specification for the beers was the same, the ingredients changed. In 2006 Fuggles and Super Styrian hops were used as was floor-malted Optic. However, in other years Goldings, Target and Northdown hops have been

used, while various other malts have had their spell in the mash tun, including Maris Otter.

‘Beer changes in character and does not age in a straight line,’ said Keeling, ‘it rises in a series of peak like a sine wave. Vintage Ale passes its peak and then rises to another.’

So what is the best Vintage Ale to buy and when is the best to drink it, asked someone. Keeling had no doubt on this — ‘buy 48 bottles and drink one every three months and make your own mind up,’ came the answer.

The previous week had seen also members of the Guild invited by Paul Corbett, managing director of Charles Faram, to Pridewood Farm, Herefordshire, for a hop walk.

On a blazing afternoon, we watched Fuggles, Goldings and Northdown hops being harvested and were able to experience the closeness of the link between the land, farming, beer and brewing. The event was all about beer — and one of the highlights was being able to sample six brews prepared by Roosters’ Sean and Sam Franklin.

Each beer used the same mash, but was then boiled with a different hop. So we were able to understand better the subtle difference that Centennial, Goldings, Pilgrim, Styrian Goldings, Sovereign and Willamette each bring to beers.

I left inspired, realising that the very best of beer truly does have character and personality.

Finally, as Young’s brewers passed and present met to mash the Ram Brewery’s last brew, their tears were not for the end of over 425 years of brewing in south London but for the death of the company’s charismatic chairman John Young.

For on the eve of this poignant gathering in south London, John Young had died quietly at home in his sleep after a long illness. And I’m told, the wake for the brewery on the banks of the River Wandle, turned instead into a celebration of the life of a man, who mixed benevolence with autocracy, stubbornness and a belief in the values of the past with an extraordinary vision of the future. We’ll miss you John, you certainly had character and personality in abundance.

**TIM HAMPSON, CHAIRMAN**

## CALENDAR 2006

Oct 14	CAMRA awards lunch, Canal House, Nottingham
October 17/18	International Centre, Telford Pub Business Exhibition
Oct	CAMRA cider month

Dec 7	British Guild of Beer Writers Awards & Beer Banquet, Millennium Gloucester Hotel, South Kensington
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**Please send details of  
any relevant events to  
Adrian Tierney-Jones**

## John Young, an appreciation

BY ROGER PROTZ

BUT FOR John Young, we wouldn't have much to write about. Guild members, of course, write about more than just cask beer, but if John hadn't nailed his colours to the mast in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the industry would have fallen almost entirely to the global brewers and today our writing opportunities would be confined to indistinguishable global brands.

John Young, the chairman of Young's of Wandsworth, who died in mid-September, made drinking beer both a pleasure and fun. Horse-drawn drays in the streets in south London, a live ram, stables, ducks and geese made the brewery a special place, far more than a beer factory. And John himself, donning boxing gloves at his company AGM to deter critics or dressing up as Lord Kitchener or Father Christmas, made his mark on the London pub scene.

There was a deeply serious side, too. He believed staunchly in traditional beer drunk in traditional pubs — not because he was some conservative crusty but because he believed that was the best way to make and consume good beer. He stuck with cask beer when most regional brewers, scared witless by the short-lived success of national keg brands, were going over to keg like lemmings at Beachy Head.

The success of Young's cask beer policy forced the regionals to rethink and remain true to John's chosen path. His iconoclastic attitude not only kept many other regionals in business but helped spawn the micro-brewery revolution of the 1990s.

Many years ago, working on a paper in Hackney, I was invited to drink some Young's beer in the Rose & Crown. As an East Ender, I knew all about Charrington, Manns, Truman and Watneys, but I'd never heard of Young's. I went to the pub, had a pint of Ordinary and my life changed. I wasn't the only one.

We are all in John Young's debt and even as the brewery leaves Wandsworth I trust a fitting memorial will be left to mark his unique contribution to the joys of good beer.

BY MICHAEL HARDMAN

JOHN YOUNG was, by anyone's standards, a most extraordinary person. 'He's a funny man, Mr John, isn't he?' one of my sons observed. Eccentric, most people said. Barking, perhaps, said Michael Jackson in his touching obit in *The Independent*. But John Young was, above all, fearless and strong. He was fearless enough to fly fighter

planes in the war and strong enough to take Young's along the real ale road in 1964, against all contemporary trends and advice, and to reign over his family brewery for 44 years, way beyond any normal person's expectation of retirement.

His last appearance in public, when he insisted on chairing the company's annual general meeting in July, barely two months before he died, was an occasion of heroic proportions. He stood, unsteadily and clearly frail, at the rostrum to defend his board's decision to sell the brewery site but had to be helped into a chair when it came to fielding questions from the floor. He received rapturous applause, both when he had finished with the questions and when the meeting ended. He was physically and mentally drained but he had won over a potentially hostile gathering of shareholders.

His generosity was unparalleled. He worked tirelessly for charity — most notably for the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery — made large donations to deserving causes and was the saviour of many an employee or friend down on his luck.

I knew him for 30-odd years and worked for him for 27. We shall never see his like again.

## Annual Dinner

BOOKING FORMS for the Guild's awards and dinner will soon be sent out. This year, as you should all know by now, we have moved to a fabulous new location, the Millennium Gloucester Hotel in Kensington, an impressive four-star deluxe hotel in the heart of Kensington — there will also be a special rate for members if they want to stay at the hotel, more details on which will be released soon. The date for the dinner is Thursday, December 7 and this year we have asked celebrity chef Brian Turner to prepare the menu and believe his involvement will raise the profile of this important event even more. With the price of a ticket remaining at £50 this is definitely a date not to be missed.

## Membership

RENEWAL FORMS have been going out at the tail-end of the summer and I am still waiting to hear from a few members (they know who they are!). This is also the time when we hear from a few members who are stepping down from the Guild. This time Peter Ogie, Robin Young and Rodney Bennett-England have all been in touch to say their farewells, but on the other hand new member George Philliskirk of the Beer Academy has joined.

## 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 is organising a beer tasting of small brewers' beers in Leeds.

A TASTING of vintage Thomas Hardy Ales is planned.

SIX MEMBERS are invited on a trip to OKELLS on the Isle of Man — a date is still to be arranged — but anyone interested should contact Tim Hampson with details of where they can place a story.

## Awards

ENTRIES ARE once again sought for the British Guild of Beerwriters' awards. This year there are six categories. The *Cains Finest Lager Award for Regional Journalism*: for the very best regional beer writing or broadcasting; the *Wells & Young's Trade and Technical Journalism Award*: for the very best writing in trade and company newspapers, newsletters, magazines and websites; the *Bishops Finger Beer with Food Award for Beer and Food Writing*: for the very best writing or broadcasting on the subject of matching beer with food; the *Whitstable Bay Organic — Brewed With Sustainability Award*. This is a new category with writers encouraged to submit articles that promote beer as a healthy, natural product using sustainable raw ingredients and brewing processes; the *Budvar Travel Bursary* — OPEN TO GUILD MEMBERS ONLY — and is for the entrant considered by the judges to benefit most from a travel bursary. Finally, the *Award for National Beer Journalism* — includes the national press, consumer magazines, national television and radio and internet, web pages and other electronic media. The results will be announced at the Guild's Annual Dinner. To enter the competition send four copies (xeroxes accepted) of each entry, published or broadcast in the 12 months up to 30 September 2006; authors of books need to send four copies. Alternatively, good quality PDFs of work will also be accepted. Website entries: send web address only.

Entries should be sent with a covering letter by October 13 to *Beer Writers Competition, c/o Seal Communications Limited, Islington Gates, 8 Fleet Street, Birmingham B3 1JH*. Email:

[beerwritersawards@sealcommunications.co.uk](mailto:beerwritersawards@sealcommunications.co.uk)

Entrants are asked to nominate which category they would like their work to be entered into but the judges reserve the right to consider work for other categories. For more details, please go to [beerwriters.co.uk](http://beerwriters.co.uk) or contact either Adrian Tierney-Jones or Tim Hampson.

## Website

WE HAVE recently carried out some upgrades to the Guild's website.

- It is now possible to have a photo added to your entry in the on-line directory. If you be interested in this, please send your photo to John White at [john@whitebeertravels.com](mailto:john@whitebeertravels.com). Photos should preferably be no bigger than 300x200 pixels, and named in the format, [member\\_WhiteJE.jpg](#).

- Membership forms can be downloaded.

- We have a new button called 'Expertise', which provides the on-line equivalent of the Subject Index of the annual directory. It is quite time-consuming to get this information onto the site, so there is a possibility that when you look at this page, the job will not have been finished, or you will not be listed in any or all of the categories that you should be. If this is the case, then please contact John White by e-mail.

We are also making more use of some of the existing features of the site, in particular 'News', which is now more regularly updated.

Of course, there are other things that could be done to improve the site and suggestions are most welcome. We recognise, for example, that it would be nice if the News section could be indexed/searched, so we will be adding this feature; there is already a search facility on the page giving details of all Guild members. We are also going to add a message board or a blog, which the new 'Forum' button is reserved for. We are also going to add a 'members-only' area to the site, which will include, amongst other things, contact details of appropriate organisations, including links to their websites. Of course, there are many such links in the members' entries at present, but this new page will be more comprehensive. **JOHN WHITE**

## Pub Business

THE PUB Business Exhibition is taking place at the International Centre in Telford, October 17/18 2006. This is the first ever business-focused national event just for pubs, with the exhibition promising to provide publicans in the UK with at least 10 great new ideas to boost turnover. Guild member Roger Protz will be holding a Beer Talks tutorial on Original and Dark Lager in association with Budweiser Budvar on both Tuesday and Wednesday, October 17/18 at 2.15pm until 3pm at the Food for Thought Theatre. Guild members interested to find out more about the event are asked to contact [Melanie Oxford](#) on 01344 873003.