

British Guild Of Beer Writers

Newsletter — June 2007

‘The Guild’s primary objective is to improve the standards of writing and broadcasting on **beer** and beer-related topics, the status of the journalists and authors involved, and the public’s understanding and appreciation of the qualities of beer.’

Chairman Tim Hampson sums up the Guild’s year *inside...*

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The Chairman Reports...

WITH THE AGM happening within a few weeks it seems appropriate that I report upon the Guild's activity.

The Guild's primary objective is to improve the standards of writing and broadcasting on beer and beer-related topics, the status of the journalists and authors involved, and the public's understanding and appreciation of the qualities of beer.

At last year's AGM the Committee outlined a Strategic Plan for 2006-07, and this was accepted by the meeting. It sets out our main priorities as: *continue to organise trips and social events and run awards; build stronger dialogue with other groups promoting beer; create more interaction between members; improve the value of the Guild to the licensed trade; build relationships with key commissioning editors.*

DINNER/AWARDS

THIS IS our flagship event — the Awards Dinner held at the Millennium Gloucester was an outstanding success. With 180 people, this was the highest attendance so far at a Guild Dinner. The involvement of celebrity chef Brian Turner raised the profile of the event and many thanks go to the sponsors of our awards: Budvar, Cains, Shepherd Neame and Wells & Young's. The number of entries to the awards was higher than in recent years and there were some quite outstanding entrants. I am hopeful that the four current sponsors of the Awards will be involved in 2007. Additionally, we are in talks with an organisation who want to sponsor a new award while still seeking a sponsor for the national award. Details of this year's event have still to be finalised, but our ambition is to make it even bigger and better.

TRIPS AND EVENTS

THE YEAR saw a number of highly successful trips and events. Charles Faram organised a hop walk. Shepherd Neame hosted a fabulous beer dinner. Okells invited members to the Isle of Man, where we saw some fabulous pubs and Roger Protz gave a tutored tasting to the local media, politicians and civil servants. At Moorhouse's we learnt about the company's exciting plans for expansion. A seminar on the provenance of beer, which was held in Young's former brewery tap, was well attended and stimulated some excellent debate. Over the years the Guild has held seminars on the ingredients of beer, barley, hops,

and yeast and finally we were able to complete the quartet of ingredients with an event on water. Held at Marstons, it was ably led by the company's production director Richard Westwood (see *Jeff Evans' report page 4*). Barrie Pepper organised a successful tasting of Yorkshire beers in Leeds. In addition members were invited on trips to Switzerland and Malta.

FUTURE TRIPS

FUTURE EVENTS include a seminar on wood-aged beers at Thornbridge Brewery, provisionally planned for October 1. It is hoped that Garrett Oliver will be attending. There is a trip to Arkell's in Swindon at the end of August. Robin Appel of Warminster Malting has offered an event on barley and its importance to beer. It will involve a tasting of eight malted barley porridges followed by eight beers all malted by the BRI and brewed by them to the same specification (see *page 4 for details*). John White has agreed to take over the organisation of Guild trips.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

WE ARE trying to build meaningful relationships with other groups promoting beer. During the course of the year I approached the BBPA, SIBA, Cask Marque, CAMRA, Beautiful Beer and the Beer Academy, who are all trying to do similar things to us, to discuss how we can add value to them and how they in turn can add value to us. I expect the dialogues to continue over the next 12 months.

GUILD WEBSITE

THE GUILD'S website continues to evolve. Beer news is posted regularly up on the site and members are sent news alerts if something significant happens. Following the suggestion from one of our corporate members, they have been added to the news alert service, which has been well received and is seen as adding value to their membership. A forum section is being developed and a revamp of the home page is planned.

NEWSLETTER

SECRETARY ADRIAN Tierney-Jones continues to produce the monthly newsletter — it provides a regular and essential means of communication between members, and its content is certainly enhanced when members send in contributions.

DIRECTORY

MANY THANKS to Hall & Woodhouse for their continued support in helping produce our annual directory.

MEMBERSHIP

The overall number of members remains relatively static at around 135. However, we have had nine new members this year. I believe we should make a concerted effort over the next 12 months to increase membership. As part of this process a list of the benefits of being a member of the Guild is being drawn up.

BENEFITS OF GUILD MEMBERSHIP: news alert service; reduced fee for Beer Academy course: £50,

CALENDAR 2007

June 14	BGBW AGM, Star Tavern, Belgravia
Aug 6	Pre-GBBF reception, location TBC
Aug 7-11	Great British Beer Festival, Earls Court

Dec 6 BGBW Annual Dinner & Awards, Millennium Grosvenor Hotel

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

free to retired members; free subscription to the *SIBA Journal*; regular industry press releases; BGBW newsletter ten times a year; regular copies of Hook Norton's *Inn Season*; regular copies of BBPA's *Export Times*; regular copies of Moorhouse's newsletter; organised visits to breweries; annual Awards Dinner; dedicated overseas tours; regular seminars; social events and beer tastings; dedicated website.

THE GUILD AND THE MEDIA

THE GUILD is continuing to raise its profile. A media release based on the research undertaken for us by Storm Lantern, which showed that there are beer enthusiasts all around the country, has resulted in good coverage in the trade and consumer press. In addition, stories such as the increased sale of Polish beer in the UK has seen the wider media turn to Guild members for informed comment (with Guild members' comments even appearing in lads' mag *FHM*).

FINANCE

THE COMMITTEE will not be proposing an increase in membership subscriptions at the AGM. The Guild's finances are currently very healthy and I firmly believe it is vitally important that they stay this way. Events such as the annual dinner cost thousands of pounds, and should a sponsor let us down at the last moment money will be urgently needed to fund any shortfall.

AGM

I look forward to seeing many of you at our AGM on Thursday June 14 at the Star Tavern. The evening is kindly sponsored by the pub's owners Fuller's.

THE COMMITTEE

And finally I would like to thank your committee: Pete Brown, Melissa Cole, Alastair Gilmour, Ben McFarland, Larry Nelson, Paul Nunny, Adrian Tierney-Jones and John White for their unstinting support and work. All have busy lives and I am very grateful for them giving of their time and expertise to help make the British Guild of Beer Writers a meaningful and dynamic organisation.

TIM HAMPSON, CHAIRMAN

The Secretary's Round

THE GUILD'S AGM is now officially called for Thursday June 14 at a new venue, the Star Tavern in Belgravia (6 Belgrave Mews West, London, SW1X 8HT), where the evening is kindly sponsored by the pub's owners Fuller's; the time is 6pm for a 6.30pm start. Apparently, this is the pub where the Great Train Robbers planned their heist. Tim Hampson has indicated he is happy to continue as Chairman, but any members wishing to stand should let the Secretary know. All current members of the Committee have indicated a willingness to present themselves for re-election, but once again any other members expressing a wish to be considered 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.

Arkell's visit

THERE WILL be a Guild visit to Arkell's Brewery, Upper Stratton, Swindon, on Thursday, August 30, 11am-4pm. Anyone interested should contact John White, john@whitebeertravels.com, giving details of where they will be able to place a story on the visit.

Brewery History Society

INTERESTED IN beer? Of course you are, or you wouldn't be a member of this august institution. Some of your colleagues are also members of the Brewery History Society and we thought it would be a good idea to tell you a little about this organisation.

The BHS was formed in 1972 and focuses on British brewery history (including related subjects, such as malting), although foreign news is also reported. We currently have some 500 members including 60 corporate members and around 15 institutions, major museums and libraries. The corporate members are mainly brewers and maltsters, but also include such organisations as the Institute & Guild of Brewing and English Heritage, whilst the individuals comprise a broad church of industry professionals, historians (both amateur and professional), collectors and those with a general interest.

Publications include a quarterly journal full of erudite articles, complemented by a quarterly newsletter full of industry news, readers' queries and general snippets of information. We also publish books from time to time and, of course, the essential *A Century of British Brewers - Plus*, containing details of over 10,000 British brewers known to have existed since 1890. We hold a number of meetings at breweries throughout the year, have a major archive, and an oral history archive. All in all we are a society of like minded people, information and fun. Why not join us? You would be very welcome.

Contact address: Jeff Sechiari, Manor Side East, Mill Lane, Byfleet, Surrey KT14 7RS; tel: 01932 3410984; email: membership@breweryhistory.com or see www.breweryhistory.com

Attention all brand and brewery PRs!

THE GUILD is compiling a definitive database of all beer brand and brewery PRs. Please could you answer the below questions and send them back via email to James Gibb on jamesalexandergibb@hotmail.co.uk

Brand

Brewery

Name

Telephone No.

Email

Address

Beer Academy on tour

THE BEER ACADEMY are planning to hold their first course outside the UK in October at the Budweiser Budvar brewery in Southern Bohemia followed by an opportunity to chill out in Prague. Full details from Guild members George Philliskirk on 01283 567977 or John White on 01472 884768.

Gone for a Burton

WE ALL make a fuss of beer's ingredients in our writings. Well, some of them anyway. We shout from the rooftops about the subtleties of malt, the glory of hops and the magic of yeast, but the other key ingredient in the mix is often overlooked. Water may constitute more than 90% of a finished pint, but it's barely a drop in the ocean in most of our features. That's why the Guild sets out to balance things up with an important seminar in May on the nature of brewing water.

Where better to hold the event than in Burton-on-Trent, the home of the pale ales that revolutionised the brewing world, thanks to the wondrous properties of the local springs and wells? Marston's were our hosts, and generous ones at that.

Director of Brewing Richard Westwood oversaw proceedings, giving Guild members a fascinating insight into the symbiotic history of water and brewing in Burton, followed by a close analysis of the composition of Marston's own water supply. Did you know that the company takes its water from four different wells and blends it with the local mains supply to get the right balance of minerals? Were you aware that the 'Marston's Blend', as it is known, is then boiled for an hour before going anywhere near a mash tun, so that carbonate and chlorine are removed? Have you ever been told the importance of minerals like chloride and sulphate to the quality of beer? If your answer is no, then you should have been in Burton.

We probably all know that hard water is best for making pale ales while lagers need soft water, but those of us who made the visit can now paint a lot more detail into our pictures of brewing, just as we've been able to add more of a flourish to our descriptions of malt, hops and yeast on the back of previous Guild seminars. Such events are invaluable to people in our trade, as you don't pick up anything like this amount of detail on a general brewery visit. My thanks on behalf of the Guild go to Marston's, Richard Westwood and everyone who facilitated this highly informative and very enjoyable day.

JEFF EVANS

The Inns of Dickens reviewed

I LOVE books like this — the content is like a good pub conversation, seemingly trivial but actually marvellously erudite and intensely profound. Barrie Pepper's latest book — *The Inns of Dickens* — is his first to be published by Heritage House Press. And as Barrie has won Guild awards for previous titles such as *Fifty More Great Pub Crawls* and *The Landlord's Tale*, Heritage now has a writer who must be a loss to his previous publisher CAMRA.

The book is a marvellous insight into the nature of beer in Charles Dickens' day and provides an insightful portrayal of the drinkers found in the taverns and inns in his time. Barrie together with his wife Carolynne, retrace the steps of Wilkie Collins and Dickens who, 150 years ago, set out on a trip, to be later immortalised in *The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices*.

The book celebrates many of the pubs mentioned in Dickens' books — some real and some imaginary, and provides an illuminating view of the nature of the inns

and taverns and the services they provided. You can read this book in one go — or sip it gently page by page, and just share Barrie's enthusiasm for great literature, great beer and great pubs. *The Inns of Dickens*, Heritage House Press; price £9.95.

TIM HAMPSON

Travels with barley

ROBIN APPEL of Warminster Maltings, with a little help from the BRI and Rupert Ponsonby, has offered to host an intriguing tasting of eight different beers each mashed with a different variety of barley, on June 21, at the Spice of Life, Cambridge Circus, in London, 3-5pm. If you are interested and have not put your name down yet, please contact Tim Hampson.

Members online

Even though the details are on the website and in the Directory, things change and here is an up-to-date list of members' blogs and websites; if there is anyone I have missed out or has not been in touch please contact me and I will put them in the next issue.

Paul Ambler: www.workedwonders.org; Roy Bailey: www.lambournvalleycider.co.uk; Les Baynton: www.pintpotpoetry.co.uk; Fiona Beckett: www.matchingfoodandwine.com; Pete Brown: www.pete-brown.co.uk; www.petebrown.blogspot.com; Mike Chapple: www.atthebar.merseyblogs.co.uk; Melissa Cole: www.girlsguidetobeer.blogspot.com; Chris Freer: www.freerbutler-gds.co.uk; Robert Humphreys: www.pass-scheme.org.uk; Michael Jackson: www.beerhunter.com; Roger Protz: www.beer-pages.com; John Simpson: www.simpson.uk.com/beers; Adrian Tierney-Jones: www.beeralewhatever.com; Tim Webb: www.booksaboutbeer.com; John White: www.whitebeertravels.co.uk

Michael Hardman

MICHAEL HARDMAN, who co-founded the Campaign for Real Ale and created the *Good Beer Guide*, is to join SIBA, the Society of Independent Brewers, as public relations manager on June 1. His role will include raising the profile of SIBA, which represents 380 local and regional brewers, and making the public more aware of the variety, quality and availability of their beers. He will also be involved in campaigns to modernise the image of traditional beer and gain access to markets closed to some of the best brews in Britain. Hardman has been working in the brewing industry and licensed trade for more than 30 years, firstly with CAMRA, where he edited the *Good Beer Guide* and the monthly newspaper, *What's Brewing*, and for the past 27 years with Young's of south London, where he was head of PR. Hardman, who is based in Reigate, Surrey, said: 'This is a great opportunity for me to get involved in the expansion of SIBA, which is one of the most exciting developments in the brewing industry over the past few years.'

A Partridge in a pear tree

THOSE OF you who cower behind the sofa during *Dr Who* can emerge in perfect safety on Saturday June 16, when Guild member Pete Brown appears on BBC2's *Culture Show*, where he will be talking about pubs.