

British Guild Of Beer Writers

Newsletter — July 2009



The Chairman Reports...

MY HEART sank when I read the email: 'Tim, just to remind you that you agreed to join us at our next meeting. Kind regards Mike Lord.' I had been invited to attend a meeting of the Oxford Brewers Group.

Members of the group describe themselves as enthusiastic home brewers. I remembered my own feeble efforts at trying to make something drinkable using the ingredients of beer bought as a home brewing kit from a high street store. Disastrous would be too good a word.

The group was holding its third taste and swap session, which is now an annual event, where members, meet to share, drink and enthuse about beer. So on a Saturday afternoon I found myself in a scout hall in East Oxford. Normally, members of the group set themselves a brewing challenge — in this case a common grist which included Maris Otter Pale Ale malt, some Crystal and wheat malts. Within moments I was won over as each brewer led a brief tasting of their beer. This was no homage to the Boots home brew kit either. It was brewing at its most exciting and creative. It was brewing that showed just some of the wide palate of colours, flavours, aromas and tastes that can be produced from similar recipes.

Some used Styrian Goldings, others Cascade; Sovereign and Northern Brewer were included too. The colours of the beers went from soft yellow to dark-as-night stouts — while several were quite liberal with their interpretation of what could be used in the grist. And the strengths went from the easy drinking and not very strong to easy drinking but much stronger. Each brewer

had also bought a beer from their portfolio of current brews. I quickly discovered that many of these beers were one-off brews that couldn't be easily recreated. They were brewed for the sheer exuberance and enthusiasm for making something different.

Eric had brewed a dry stout, Stout Stanley's not so Bitter Stout. As smooth as velvet and as good if not better than many commercial brews, it was equalled by his American Pale Ale, called Barley Ben's Pale Ale. The grist was a cocktail of malts — Maris Otter, Munich, Vienna, wheat and roasted barley. The hops were Amarillo Gold, Centennial and Cascade — providing marvellous lemon citrus and floral notes.

Will had made an outstanding brown beer to which Brettanomyces had been added, producing marvellous, soaring Lambic-style flavours. Liam produced a wheaty Pale Ale and a mouth-warming Chocolate Stout. Andrew likes strong beer, so his contribution was a 7% Bock — which could have been the envy of any Bavarian brewer. Ed contributed an interpretation of a Simmonds Bitter and a stunning Bombay IPA.

So there I was within a mile of Brookes University, now the home of the Michael Jackson library (the beer writer), and I remembered that Michael had travelled the world to discover some of the greatest brews — because of his work and the lead shown by a generation of new brewers in the USA, Denmark and Italy I now had had the privilege of drinking beers from a new wave of creative brewers and all within walking distance of my home.

The Oxford Brewers Group is informal and is open to anyone — amateur or professional — who values quality and variety. Joining the group is easy. Just turn up to a meeting or sign up for

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their email list. There's no fee or qualification required. The group has no committee and is self organising so members make whatever contribution suits them. And should you ever get an email from Mike Lord — don't sigh at the thought of home brewers — just hope it is an invite to their next swap and taste day.

TIM HAMPSON, CHAIRMAN

AGM

THE GUILD'S AGM was held on Thursday June 11 at the Melton Mowbray and there were a couple of changes to the committee. The officers of the Guild remain the same, while the committee now consists of Zak Avery, Adam Withrington, Robert Humphreys, Pete Brown plus new members Ros Shiels and Larry Nelson. Thanks go to retiring committee members Melissa Cole and Jeff Pickthall for their service.

21 Years

EVERY GUILD MEMBER by now should have been notified of the Guild's 21st anniversary bash on the evening of August 3 at the Riverside pub in Vauxhall (for this year it replaces the annual White Horse eve-of-GBBF event). If you haven't seen the official invite then please let me know. It promises to be a memorable night with beers chosen by former brewers of the year and champion beer writers on show. It will be a night to celebrate 21 years, a night to celebrate beer, a night to focus on the Guild's achievements and also — in a quieter moment — a night to recall those Guild members no longer with us. It will definitely be a night to remember. See you there.

ATJ

Guild seminar

ONCE AGAIN Thornbridge Brewery is generously hosting a seminar for Guild members and invited guests — this year it will happen on Monday October 12 and as ever there will be free transport from Sheffield station and back at the end of the event (Guild members with a bit of time might like to linger in Sheffield). The subject of the seminar is barley wine and more details will appear in the next newsletter.

Beer hear

GUILD MEMBER and *BEER* editor Tom Stainer had every reason to crack open the bottle-conditioned beer when it was announced that *BEER* was declared winner in the 'New Publication' class at the 2009 British Association of Communicators in Business

Awards (CiB), held in Birmingham. It won the award after beating entries from major organisations such as RBS, the Ministry of Defence, Orange UK and the Post Office. The achievement was capped by high praise from the industry judges, who praised *BEER* for its informative writing style and ability to convey a specialist subject to a wider audience.

Behind the bar of history

I HAVE been invited by the Society of Genealogists to edit a guide provisionally titled *My Ancestor was a Publican* — indeed my parents were in the business for many years. I would appreciate any help that members of the Guild can offer me particularly by way of sources of information. The guide is intended to include brewery workers as well as pub staff and ancillary occupations. I do not want local sources as this would far too large a job. If you have any information that you think might help then please get in touch on either barrie.pepper@ntlworld.com, 0113 265 8595 or 58 Elmete Hill, Leeds LS8 2NT.

Barrie Pepper

Wandling free

T'WAS A hot and thirsty day when we wended our way to the Wandle!! Six Guild members — Jeff Evans, Guy Thornton, Iain Loe, Chris Pollard, Ron Atkins and myself — en route to the Guild AGM were sidetracked for another excellent brewery visit. Units 1/2 Yelverton Road, hard by the Thames Heliport in Battersea, is the home to the newest brewery in the heart of London, where Duncan Sambrook, recently an accountant, kicked his already purchased five-barrel brewery into the shed and, with the partnership and guidance of David Welsh, recently of the parish of Ringwood, settled for a more commercial 20-barrel brewery and a passion to brew.

Following his taste buds he brewed 'a beer that I like' and which would be different from the other famous two local draught ales. Starting late in 2008, Wandle Ale was launched in the Borough of Wandsworth as a full flavoured, quaffing bitter of 3.8% abv. It was brewed using conventional malt (Maris Otter) and water (Metropolitan) with a unique yeast, traditional hops plus a very modern hedgerow hop (Boadicea), all produced in a brand-new stainless steel brewery.

This prize-winning combination was an immediate sell-out (as opposed to selling out), prompting expansive plans for more fermenters. Wandle Ale is

CALENDAR 2009

Aug 3	British Guild of Beerwriters 21st Anniversary, London
Aug 4-8	Great British Beer Festival, London
Sept 24-26	Great American Beer Festival, Denver

October 12 British Guild of Beer Writers Seminar on Barley Wine, Thornbridge Hall

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

also now available as a bottle-conditioned beer. A golden-amber beer with a hoppy finish, it is stocked by local supermarkets and publicans, a great start for a new brewery. The primary target for the brewery is the London market. An impressive map of London in the tasting room uses coloured pins to mark sales progress in the capital; the room also doubles up the take-home sales 'shop'.

New premium ales have been formulated and as soon as time and capacity allow there will new brews. All I can say is visit www.sambrooksbrewery.co.uk for these refreshing additions to London's beers.

Chris Marchbanks

All Beer Guide wins award

OUR FIRST publication, *All Beer Guide*, the book at the centre of the All Beer Experience, recently won a silver medal at the Independent Publisher Book Awards in the USA. As any award-winning Guild member knows, to win something is always welcome recognition! I've been on the beer education soapbox for a many years now but Diane, my wife and co-author, has recently re-discovered beer. Not initially a willing volunteer, the opportunity to taste more beer styles and flavours started to change her perception. Work on creating the All Beer Experience had started. We aimed to inspire bar staff, retailers and consumers where beer knowledge and confidence are low, PR negative and money tight. It's a beer book for people who don't normally buy beer books, clear and concise but comprehensive too. We're now working on taking the new insights into beer flavour balance and intensity into relevant and easily communicated information for consumers. They may assist brewers with product developments too. After lots of positive feedback we're working with brewers and retailers to train staff and retail the pack. We plan to export to the USA this autumn, and are using formats created in the guide to develop an online beer style and flavour search facility.

Alex Barlow

Does my Brum look big in this?

GUILD MEMBERS Pete Brown and Roger Protz stepped in to run a beer masterclass in Birmingham last month when fellow Guild member Glenn Payne pulled out with a ruptured cartilage. The event was Beers of the World Live! at the Birmingham NEC, part of the BBC's Spring Show. Roger was already on hand, giving a series of masterclasses on British beer styles. As two of his beers were IPAs — Meantime and Marston's Old Empire — it seemed logical to call in Pete Brown from the Worthington White Shield stand where he was promoting his new book, *Hops And Glory*. 'The result was brilliant,' Roger reported, 'The class worked well

as a double header and we attracted the best audience of the weekend. As well as paying customers, there was a large crowd listening from the side of the theatre, who seemed to enjoy the event even though they didn't get to taste the beers.'

Wag the dog...

IT'S BEEN a good year for beer books. We've had *A Life on the Hop*, *Hops And Glory*, Randy Mosher's *Tasting Beer* and now Guild member Helen Peacocke has produced a pub guide with a difference. After a year spent visiting dog-friendly pubs from Oxford to the Cotswolds with her beloved Border Collie and constant companion Pythius-Peacocke she has come up with *Paws Under the Table*. Each chapter contains her professional comments on the pub, the history of the village or town they visited and details of a nearby walk. She obviously comments on the quality of the beer served too. To give this book an unusual twist, she has written it in two voices, hers and the dog's, as what she observes and enjoys is not always seen in the same light by her four-legged friend. Her hope is that this book will encourage dog-owners to create a day out round a pub visit. She says, 'with more than 30 pubs nationwide closing every week, I have become alarmed that there might well come a day when there is no pub to use as a watering-hole before or after a long walk through the countryside'.

Paws Under the Table, Wychwood Press, £9.99.

ANOTHER BOOK on beer that appeared in the post and is definitely off-centre is *B is for Beer*, by American author Tom Robbins, best known for *Even Cowgirls get the Blues*, which was made into a film starring a large thumbed Uma Thurman. It is described as a 'grown-up book for children' or 'a children's book for grownups'. Make of that what you will. The writer lives around Seattle so is no stranger to good beer. With the Beer Fairy taking centre stage this is most certainly a book of which you can safely say 'this is a beer book Jim, but not as we know it'. *B Is for Beer*, No Exit Press, £9.99.

Grand tours

GUILD MEMBER Chris Pollard (aka Podge) contacts the newsletter with a mouth-watering itinerary of the latest list of his Belgian beer tours. These include Ghent, Brussels, Aalst and Bruges over Christmas. If you would like to join him on any of the tours or need more information please contact Podge on 01245 354677 or email podgehome@blueyonder.co.uk.

THERE IS NO AUGUST ISSUE AS USUAL SO THE COPY
DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE IS AUGUST 27, 2009.
THIS IS YOUR NEWSLETTER, PLEASE CONTRIBUTE TO IT!

As if you didn't know, this year the Guild celebrates 21 years of existence — it's not an anniversary that comes along that often so no excuses are offered for continuing to write about it. In the last issue of the newsletter one of the founding fathers Roger Protz recalled how the Guild got off the ground. Here a couple of former chairmen recall their times in the hot seat.

Barrie Pepper, 1991-1998

I TOOK over the chair of the Guild in 1991 and at the same time Peter Coulson became Secretary and Treasurer. We agreed that there was a need for a new impetus and planned a number of initiatives. One was a number of seminars with the first one held at Whitbread's on Pale Ale. It was amazingly successful and led on to several others. In an attempt to get ourselves better known receptions were organised firstly at CAMRA's annual meetings in Scarborough and Wolverhampton and then on the eve of the Great British Beer Festival at the White Horse on Parson's Green. The original intention was that this would be mainly for overseas visitors but it has developed and enables the Guild to invite our sponsors and other guests who are in London for the Festival.

The Guild's finances were boosted by the introduction of corporate membership although this was not the primary reason. The ready access available for the Guild's ordinary members to brewers, pub owners and the allied companies was a major boost. Membership in both categories has grown since then. Another widening of our activities came with the Guild's sponsorship of the International Speciality Beer category at the Brewing Industry International Awards. It was also a breakthrough in that for the first time non-brewers (ie members of the Guild) acted as judges in the awards. Another major introduction was the British Beer and Brewing Awards started by the Guild and copied by others. The first winner was Marston's, Thompson and Eversheds of Burton-upon-Trent. This award now seems to have developed into a Brewer of the Year award.

Susan Nowak, 1998-2000

WHEN I was elected back in 1998 I said I'd rather be known as Chairman than Chairwoman or, heaven forbid, Chairperson. But I did hope to encourage more women to write about beer — and more journalists to feature beer with food. On the food front the Guild's annual beer banquet has always been a great showcase. For several years I devised the menu with the stalwart help of Mark Dorber, but my favourite was the Millennium dinner in December 1999. The theme was to be dishes and beers with a historic flavour. So the starter was Elizabethan trenchers, pastry cases filled with asparagus and smoked haddock in a golden sauce incorporating Saffron Ale. Brewed specially for the occasion by Dave Wickett at his Kelham Island Brewery, we drank it with the dish. For mains it had to be British beef, marinated and braised in the then Bass Museum's Masterpiece IPA, based on an India Pale Ale recipe dating back to 1829. Martin Kemp of Pitfield Brewery, then in London, sent 1850 Shoreditch Porter to flavour — and accompany — quince trifle. Ales from five breweries were served with English cheeses. Ironmongers Hall made a sumptuous setting for our feast from history. On arrival we drank three cask ales from Bateman, Hampshire and Swale breweries. Only one of them now still exists.