

# British Guild Of Beer Writers

Newsletter — June 2009



## The Chairman Reports...

**WITH OUR AGM organised for Thursday, June 11, I would like to take this opportunity to report on the Guild's activities over the past 12 months.**

### Dinner/Awards

Our flagship event, the Awards Dinner, was held for the first time at the Hilton, Tower Bridge — and the chef Christian Honor produced an imaginative menu. The event continues to grow and was well supported by members. Thanks are due to Melissa Cole who took on the organisation of the event; they are also due to sponsors Beautiful Beer, Brains, Budvar, Caledonian, Coors, Shepherd Neame and Wells & Young's — none of it would have taken place without their help.

The current Committee has decided that this year's dinner will be at the same venue on December 3. Beer Writer of the Year Zak Avery has agreed to chair this year's awards panel and he has put together a new panel of judges comprising Larry Nelson, publisher of *Brewers' Guardian* (who will not be entering the awards), Sean Franklin from Roosters Brewery and Jamie Goode, wine writer at the *Sunday Express*.

### Trips and events

The organisation of trips and a seminar continues to be an important part of our activity. In October, Adrian Tierney-Jones, together with our friends at Thornbridge, organised a highly successful and challenging seminar on the topic of lager. Another seminar is planned for October 12, once again at Thornbridge — this time the topic is barley wine. More details will appear during the summer.

Trips organised during the year included visits to Acorn, Sharp's, Moorhouse's and several breweries in the Newcastle area. Two trips are currently planned — Sambrooks on the date of the AGM and Roosters on June 24. Other visits

being considered include Woodforde's and Crisps Maltings. It is proposed that there should be a short discussion on future trips at the AGM; this will be on the agenda. Members' views on trips and their value will be welcomed.

### Building relationships

Forging relationships with trade organisations continues to evolve and the National Honey Show, Tesco, Sainsbury, SIBA and CAMRA all made approaches to the Guild when looking for judges for their beer events. The Guild also sponsored one of the SIBA Business Awards.

### Guild website

The Guild now hosts the [whitebeertravels.co.uk](http://whitebeertravels.co.uk) website and steps have been taken to remove all the passwords off the site allowing free access to the information. The Guild's own website continues to evolve. Beer news is posted regularly up on the site and individual and corporate members are sent regular Beer News alerts.

### Newsletter

Adrian Tierney-Jones continues to produce the newsletter — it provides a regular and essential means of communication between members, and its content is certainly enhanced when members send in contributions. It can either be emailed or posted to members.

### Directory

This Guild's Directory has been revamped and renamed the *Beer Writers Yearbook* and it is now published in collaboration with Larry Nelson and Advantage.

### Pre-GBBF reception

We held a highly successful reception at the White Horse, Parsons Green on the eve of the Great British Beer Festival.

### Membership

Current membership as published on the website is 145.

### Guild @21

Pete Brown, Melissa Cole, Robert Humphreys and

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## BRITISH GUILD OF BEER WRITERS NEWSLETTER JUNE 2009

Ros Shiel recently met to discuss an event for members to celebrate 21 years of the Guild and look back on its achievements. An event is planned for August with details being announced shortly.

### Finance

The Committee will not be proposing an increase in membership subscriptions at the AGM. The Guild's finances are healthy and I firmly believe it is vitally important that they stay this way.

### Benefits of Guild membership

*News alert service*

*Reduced fee for Beer Academy courses*

*Free subscription to the SIBA Journal*

*Regular industry press releases*

*Newsletter 10 times a year*

*Organised visits to breweries*

*Annual dinner and awards*

*Dedicated overseas tours*

*Regular seminars*

*Social events and beer tastings*

*Dedicated website*

*Brewery visits*

### Future

At our last AGM we confirmed that the Guild's main priorities are to:

Continue to organise trips, run awards and organise social events; 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; I believe that the Committee has worked hard to try and achieve these objectives — however, I would welcome feedback at the AGM on how we can continue to improve what we do.

### The Committee

And finally I would like to thank your Committee: Zak Avery, Pete Brown, Melissa Cole, Robert Humphreys, Paul Nunny, Jeff Pickthall, Adrian Tierney Jones and Adam Withrington — along with co-optees Ros Shiel and Chris Marchbanks (trips organiser) for their contribution to making the Guild work.

**TIM HAMPSON, MAY 2009, CHAIRMAN**

## AGM

THE GUILD'S AGM is now officially called for Thursday June 11 at the Melton Mowbray, 18 Holborn, London EC1 2LE — nearest tube stop Chancery Lane; it will kick-off at 6.30pm with a buffet to be served at 8.30pm. Once again we have Fuller's to thank for their kind hospitality. Tim Hampson has indicated he is happy to continue as Chairman, but any members wishing to stand should let the Secretary know; while

both Secretary and Treasurer are also happy to continue. At the time of writing, there is one vacant place on the committee available (there is a maximum of nine members, including three officers); Ros Shiel has indicated an interest in standing.

Any members wishing to stand should let the Secretary know — and the time-honoured procedure of nominations, seconding and then having a vote will be undertaken. 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. However, according to the constitution any motions that members want on the agenda must be sent to the Secretary at least seven days before the AGM.

Finally, if you are coming please try and let the Secretary know so that he can tell the pub how many people they can expect for the buffet. If you have never been to an AGM before please make an effort, it's a chance to meet other Guild members and make your voice heard.

## Trips

A VISIT to Sambrooks brewery has been arranged for the afternoon of the AGM, there are a few places left; if you want to see the resurrection of brewing in Wandsworth, please contact Chris Marchbanks at [cjmarshbanks@aol.com](mailto:cjmarshbanks@aol.com). This is also the final call for the visit to Roosters Brewery and then a coffee tasting at Taylors in Harrogate. Again if you are interested please contact Chris at the email above.

## 21 Years

THE SUB-COMMITTEE charged with organising an event to celebrate 21 years of the British Guild of Beer Writers will shortly be in a position to announce the time and place of what they hope will be a scintillating event. Meanwhile, you might like to remember this...

## To begin at the beginning

IT WAS that Edison light bulb moment. At some time in 1987 I happened to pass Iain Dobson, CAMRA's company secretary, on the stairs at the Campaign's head office in St Albans. 'I notice,' Dobson said, 'that there's a wine writers' guild. Why isn't there a beer writers' guild?'

Why not, indeed? On my first computer, the notorious Amstrad PCW, I cranked out letters to everyone I could think who wrote about or publicised beer and asked if they thought a guild of beer writers was a worthwhile idea. In the days before email, I was inundated with letters and phone calls that amounted to a collective 'Yes!'

### CALENDAR 2009

June 3-7	Mondial de Biere, Quebec
June 11	Guild AGM, Melton Mowbray, London
June 12-14	Beers of the World Live, Birmingham
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**

It was time to test the temperature of the water and there was no better place than the Waterside Inn alongside the Regent's Canal in north London. It's a vast pub fashioned from an old flour mill and I booked a large side room. So many people turned up that I was forced to stand on a table to address the throng. My task was not made any easier by the fact that management of the pub was unable to turn down the canned music that infested the room.

The enthusiasm for the project was clear and we decided to reconvene a few weeks later for further discussions in a quieter place. A second gathering was held — minus music — and the key decision was taken to organise a proper inaugural meeting early in 1988.

The minutes of the proceedings of the meeting on Tuesday February 2, 1988 at the Horniman at Hay's Wharf, SE1, were beautifully transcribed by Michael Hardman. The list of attendees included Michael Jackson, Alan Hall and Mary McLeod, who ran Nicholson's Inns and later Löwenbräu UK, Alisdair Aird, editor of the *Good Pub Guide*, Andrea Gillies, first female editor of the *Good Beer Guide*, Brian Glover, Ronald Atkins, Peter Martin, Phil Mellows, Ted Bruning, Neil Hanson (former *Good Beer Guide* editor), Mike Ripley from the Brewers' Society, and Andrew Barr, a drinks writer with the *Sunday Times*.

The minutes record that 'Roger Protz acted as Chairman at the start of the meeting'. It was not a position I sought on a permanent basis, as a deeply conservative brewing industry would have dubbed the Guild 'CAMRA Mark Two'.

Michael Jackson hadn't attended the exploratory meetings the previous year but before the inaugural AGM I asked him if he were prepared to stand for the position of Guild President. At the time he was the only beer writer with any public profile and he would give the Guild the gravitas it needed. He was elected President at the February 1988 meeting but the title was almost immediately changed to the less pompous one of Chairman. Michael Hardman was elected Secretary and Iain Dobson became Treasurer. Peter Martin, Mike Ripley and I joined them on the first committee.

The main debate at the first AGM was the mission of the organisation. Tim Hampson, then at the Brewers' Society, contributed a helpful paper that suggested the aims should be 'to improve the professional journalistic standards on, and public understanding of, beer, brewing and the brewing industry'.

The committee met regularly in the Calthorpe Arms in Gray's Inn Road. Our deliberations led to the first annual awards dinner, held in Brewers' Hall, an ideal if cramped location. The dinner was a great success but little did we know that a crisis would soon engulf the youthful Guild. In 1991, a shocked committee learned that we were effectively broke. The reason was simple: the then Treasurer had kept all the membership renewal cheques in a Sainsbury's shopping bag under his desk instead of depositing them in the bank. The Guild's demands on Michael

Hardman's time were eating into his freelance work and he stood down as Secretary while Michael Jackson was spending so much time abroad that he could not effectively chair the organisation.

I made a series of phone calls in a bid to save the fledgling organisation. Michael Jackson, without demur, agreed he was unable to continue as chairman and Barrie Pepper volunteered to replace him. Peter Coulson offered to become both Secretary and Treasurer and steered the Guild back to solvency. Some of his burdens were lifted a few years later when Barry Bremner took over as secretary. Subsequent AGMs ratified these appointments.

The Guild had staggered back from the edge of the abyss and went from strength to strength in the 1990s. But it was a close-run thing. Roger Protz

## Let us now praise famous Belgians

THE WAY I remember it, the Guild and *Good Beer Guide Belgium* were conceived on the same evening in October 1986, at the Brugs Beertje cafe in Bruges. The last quarter century has been good to all three institutions. Edition six is published on June 3 by CAMRA Books, who can supply Guild members with copies for review. Back in 1992 the first effort was little more than a list of cafés, breweries and beers, puffed out with a Dutch section because more tourists went to Amsterdam than Flanders. Nowadays *GBGB* is a travel guide, with sections on getting there, understanding the country, specialist tourism, bringing beer home and UK suppliers. It is an impossible creation whose survival appeals to my sense of the absurd. The fact it now has great full colour design, four spin-offs and an allied publishing company ([www.booksaboutbeer.com](http://www.booksaboutbeer.com)) is dizzying. At heart it is still about politics and in particular the dynamic between the global dream makers selling white sliced beer and the artists who create the interesting stuff. Those of us privileged to be published when we write about our favourite drink squander that honour if we kow-tow to the industry. To the critical friends among us, I raise my glass. Proost. Tim Webb

## Books do furnish a room

IT'S TRUE that little things that make the most impact, although I have to say that I wasn't quite prepared for the sheer size of the Michael Jackson archive. Now lodged in the National Brewing Library in the special collection at Oxford Brookes University, it's made up of two rows of filing cabinets (taken straight from Michael's office space), amid shelves housing everything from ancient brewing texts to copies of contemporary magazines. Fellow committee member Pete Brown was visibly discomforted at the idea that

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there were books in the collection he hadn't read as part of the research for his new book. 'Probably just as well — you were over the word count already,' I said, and he grinned rueful agreement. There are also shelves of Michael's old notebooks, full of tasting notes, directions to obscure bars and breweries, and just occasionally, a quote in speechmarks. Although these are exciting to see, for me the real interest is in the meticulously arranged filing cabinets. A folder marked 'New York I' (alongside II and III) is crammed full of cuttings, scrappy scribbled notes, and other ephemera of a life on the road. In it, I found a matchbook from the Waterfront Ale House on Atlantic Avenue in Brooklyn, a bar I had visited in the early 1990s. He'd put it in his pocket, brought it home, and filed it, and now I had it in my hand. Do visit the brewing library and the archive — it's full of great little things. Contact Don Marshall (dmarshall@brookes.ac.uk) if you would like to know more about this peerless collection. **Zak Avery**

## Shipping news

HAVE YOU ever had a few beers and then gone and done something really stupid?

In October 2007, when I was stuck on a container ship in the middle of the Indian Ocean with 14 Filipino sailors and three German officers, with no contact with the outside world for almost a month, starting to fear that I was losing my mind and worrying about the fact that the end of this period of isolation would be marked by an encounter with Iranian border guards, and 20 litres of India Pale Ale stashed in the hold, I began to suspect that I'd taken my interest in beer a little too far.

The idea to recreate the famous voyage of India Pale Ale slapped me around the face while I was sitting in a pub with a mate. It suddenly struck me that the label copy on most IPA brands talks about how the voyage from England to India around the Cape of Good Hope had an extraordinary effect on the beer, developing its unique character, and then pointedly ignores the fact that the beer in the bottle has not been on this journey.

I was looking for a beery adventure, and exploring the IPA legend seemed to fit the bill. If I'd known then what lay ahead — submersion in a filthy canal, an exploding barrel, physical injury, near-misses with pirates, the solitude and haggling with corrupt customs officials — I think I'd have dismissed the project as the lunacy it so clearly was. But now, on the eve of the launch of the book of my adventure, the experience has taken on a rose-tinted hue, as these things do, and I suspect I'd do it all over again if given the chance.

*Hops and Glory: One Man's Search for the Beer that Built the British Empire* is launched June 5, and is already available for pre-order on Amazon. As well as my adventure, it tells the fullest possible history of the world's greatest beer style. Please buy it. My wife only let me do this because I promised her it would sell really well and I'd take her on holiday with the proceeds. **Pete Brown**

## The Beer Academy Presents...

### BEER APPRECIATION FOUNDATION COURSE

June 5, London, Beer Academy HQ

June 12, Dorset, Palmers Brewery\*

June 19, Oxford, Hook Norton Brewery\*

July 3, Wiltshire, Wadworth Brewery\*

\*Includes a brewery tour

Contact: Dan Cannas at dan.cannas@ibd.org.uk or on 020 7290 6087 for more details.

## Beers of the World Live!

ONCE THE AGM is done and dusted on June 11, why not travel to the Birmingham NEC the next day, which sees the start of Beers of the World Live! (Friday June 12-Sunday-June 14, 11am-6pm). Over 350 beers will be showcased with sampling at the core of the event. Cam shaft cooking champions Hairy Bikers will be taking the stage, opening up the throttle for a trip 'around the world with a crate of beer' along with a bit of cooking. Meanwhile Guild member Roger Protz will host daily masterclasses on The Return of Style, while there will also be a vast selection from the World Beer awards, the Bottled Beer Bar, food and beer pairings and the beer garden. To find out more, just visit [www.beers-of-the-world.com](http://www.beers-of-the-world.com) and click on the Beers of the World Live logo.

## 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](mailto:podgehome@blueyonder.co.uk); also see [www.podgebeer.co.uk](http://www.podgebeer.co.uk) for further information.

## And finally

THE GUILD'S intelligence network spans the globe and its Australian desk has sent in this particular excerpt from the winter edition of *Beer & Brewer* magazine in Oz (it's winter over there now): 'The Melbourne Showgrounds were the place for beer lovers to be in March with the inaugural Beer & Brewer Expo hitting town. Coinciding with the Australian International Beer Awards, the Expo was a live version of the magazine, with attendees enjoying a great selection of beers and the opportunity to sit and listen to some of Australia's best beer brains talk about beer.'

'English beer writer Roger Protz was the undisputed star of the Expo, winning an even larger legion of fans with his willingness to chat about beer with anyone. His tasting masterclasses were exceptional and demonstrated why he is widely regarded as the world's premier beer writer.'

Will this be a regular winter sojourn for Roger as the rest of us shiver in the UK?