

# British Guild Of Beer Writers

Newsletter — June 2010



## The Chairman Reports...

**THE GUILD AWARDS and annual dinner is rightly the prestigious showcase for our activities. The intention for this year's dinner is to bring the glamour of Bollywood to the world of beer. Building on the success of holding the event in modern, stylish surroundings, not normally associated with fine cuisine and beer, we have a new venue and are working with a new award-winning chef.**

The event is being held on November 25 at the Radisson Bloomsbury with the meal prepared by Michelin starred chef Sriram Aylur from the Quilon Restaurant in London ([www.quilon.co.uk](http://www.quilon.co.uk)). Sriram is passionate about matching beer to his South Indian cuisine and, like many a Guild member, he believes that too much attention has been given by the British media to wine when beer is our national drink. He says: 'we need to bring back beer to the front, simply because there are so many beautiful beers produced. Typically, I've seen people go into a pub and say give me a lager, which means nothing.'

'That's not something you do with wine, or even tea. You don't just say give me a tea, you ask for an Earl Gray or a green tea or something else. So, I think beers need to be respected in the same way, because they are very varied in taste, experience, feel and flavour.'

His philosophy is simple. He aims to convey his passion for South Indian coastal cuisine in a way that gives diners a perspective on his quest for perfect ingredients, technique, and a deep-seated desire to continue learning and evolving through old traditions and modern tastes.

While developing his skills in his homeland he conceived the idea of the Karavali Restaurant. 'The challenge was to make the ethnic food without taking any shortcuts in the recipes,' he recalls. It was that dedication, spirit and refusal to compromise that got Karavali its place in the top five restaurants in India.

South Indian food is full of wonderful aromas and flavours. Sriram's marvellous dishes include lively fresh chutneys and dishes softly flavoured with coconut, tamarind and the freshest of ingredients. Indeed his food uses many spices —

but spice does not mean hot. Like a delicate landscape artist working with watercolours Sriram uses mint, chillies, malabar, curry leaves, lavender and kokum to bring crab, cod and lamb to new heights of culinary experience.

And his signature dessert is the labour-intensive stack of pancakes called bibinca, and dodhol, a fabulous fudgy confection based on jaggery, irresistible when served with cracked pepper ice cream.

He believes that because of its lightness and multi dimensional flavours, his food offers the range of taste and textures necessary to show the full potential of beer as a partner to fine food. 'There is a real thirst for home-style Indian cuisine outside of India,' he says, 'we know this because we have seen it and felt it. Our ethos demands that we not only satisfy this need, but that we work to ensure that this is done without compromising on the foundation of this cuisine, and the love of food, and feeding others, which drives it.'

His menus embody a unique blend of ethnic and progressive dishes and, above all else, he stresses that he and his staff love it for what they do is exemplified by the fact they have fun while doing it. And it is this fun that Sriram promises to bring to our dinner.

Sriram is no stranger to preparing food for big events — as once a year he prepares a banquet for heads of state at the G7 talks in Davos, Switzerland. So I look forward to seeing you all on November 25.

Tim Hampson

## Guild AGM details

**DON'T FORGET** that the Guild's AGM is now officially called for Thursday June 24 at the Crosse Keys, 9 Gracechurch Street, mLondon EC3V 0DR — it will kick off upstairs at 7pm (note change of time from original 6.30pm start) with a buffet to be served at 8.30pm. This time we have Wetherspoons 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, the majority of the members of the committee have signalled their joint intentions to continue (there is a maximum of nine members, including three officers); however, Adam Withrington will be stepping down so there is place on the committee. At the moment, we have no

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contenders wishing to stand, so if you fancy a go then why not stand? So if it tickles your fancy then 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 (and haven't yet told the Secretary) 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.

## Eggheads update

TEAM RECRUITMENT has been somewhat underwhelming. At present there are only three wannabee quizzers, myself included, writes Jeff Pickthall. I informed the producers that we wouldn't be auditioning in May and have asked when the next recruitment round is. Fortunately there are plenty of beer events during summer at which I can do some arm-twisting! Apply now: <http://tinyurl.com/29tkdx7>.

## Another Guilder blogs on

LONG-STANDING Guild member Chris Freer has joined the beer-blogging world of the bloggers, albeit with a difference. Indulging his other passion — the beautiful game — Chris is undertaking a personal mission to visit every one of the stadiums in the top eight levels of English football, plus the top four levels in Scotland and top two levels in Holland. The main purpose of the blog is to report on the availability of vegetarian food and cask ale — or bottled beers from a cask ale brewer — at or in the vicinity of each football ground. You can find the blog at <http://flynn123.wordpress.com>.

## You need Brains

WEDNESDAY MAY 26 saw a party of Guild members — Robert Humphreys, Brian Glover, Steve Hobman, Martin Kemp and myself — enjoy an excellent visit to S A Brain's brewery in Cardiff. First of all, we were thoroughly immersed in the brewing lore of the brewery (which was founded in 1882) and also kept up to date with progress at their recently (in historical terms that is) acquired brewery; the Hancock's Brewery was bought from Bass in 1999, freeing up Brain's old site for central Cardiff development.

The Brewery, which was built in 1896, still retains many of its Victorian features, including the thirst inducing climb up 82 steps to start the gravity based traditional brewing process. Here our guide was Don Jeffreys, Master Brewer and Packaging Manager.

Making a quick sample room stop to see cask finings in action we returned to the Crayshaw Arms for presentations. Marketing and Sales Director Richard Davies and Brands Manager Ian Beattie explained the history, sponsorships and strategy for the brewery and its four main brands — SA, SA Gold, Dark and the Rev James.

With 260 managed or tenanted houses and a turnover of £103 million, this family owned brewery produces a mixture of its own beers as well as contract brews for a market that is developing from a strong local club trade to increasing pub trade with the emphasis on being an integrated and independent brewery with a real sense of Welsh identity.

A recent example of this was the launch of Welsh Black (4.1%), a stout to compete on quality and price with a well-known international brand. To complete the presentation we took part in a three-glass blind taste test of the two stouts and only two of our party of seven got it right!

During the evening we tasted beers in the brewery's pubs including the modern, lively Yard (in the Brewery Quarter which is on the site of the old Brain's brewery), the Albert within earshot of the Millennium Stadium and the Goat Major, a traditional city centre pub.

We were also joined by 10 members of the Welsh Assembly's Beer Group and the evening culminated in an excellent dinner at The Maltsters in Llandaff. Assembly Member and Co-Chair of the Group Nick Bourne thanked Brains for the convivial evening and their wonderful hospitality on behalf of us all. Guild members then stayed at nearby Churchill Hotel before continuing on the second leg of the visit. The next day we travelled to Pontypridd to Otley, another family concern though younger (it started in 2005).

Along with Nick Otley we met the team and learnt all about this thriving 10 barrel brewery that produces a range of draught and bottle conditioned versions. Beers tasted included the smooth and strong pale ale O8, the bestselling bitter O1 and O Garden, a very tasty but not too subtly named wheat beer. We completed our tasting with a beer and food tasting at their nearby pub the Bunch of Grapes.

Returning to Cardiff we visited the city centre brewpub Zero Degrees. Here German brewster Vicki Stippa talked us through the brew house (installed in 2008) and we tasted seven different beers. All in all, this was a thoroughly diverse and interesting taster of South Wales and its beers. Members don't know what they missed. Chris Marchbanks

## Flight path

GUILD MEMBER Alastair Gilmour has a new book out this month. Unfortunately, as far as beer lovers are concerned, it's not about beer (that may be 'fortunately,' he says), but something on an even higher plane.

'I was commissioned to write a book to celebrate Newcastle International Airport's 75th anniversary which falls on July 26,' says Alastair. 'I took it on simply as a job, but got so involved and fascinated in a subject I was never previously excited about — aircraft and flight and all that goes with it — that I spent an enormous amount of time on the research and writing because I was enjoying it so much. By book standards it's fairly modest — 27,000 words — but I was also involved in the photography search and selection plus interviews with everybody from part owners Copenhagen Airports to the general public.

'At least when you write a beer book you're unlikely to have an 80-odd-year-old woman ringing you during a Champions League match to talk about her honeymoon flight to the Isle of Man in 1947, or somebody rambling on about a Dakota DC3. That tests your limits of politeness.'

Alastair is relieved the book is now at the printers and reckons it looks fabulous — plus he made sure it had its beery moments. 'It's very visually-led,' he says, 'and the first book I've been involved with that features Alice Cooper with a bottle of Newcastle Brown...'

**MEA CULPA...** *the Scottish Brewing Archive Association Conference on September 17 is being held in Glasgow not Edinburgh, apologies for the mistake.*

## CALENDAR 2010

- British Guild of Beer Writers AGM  
Crosse Keys, London, 7pm, Thursday June 24
- British Guild of Beer Writers pre GBBF event  
London (venue TBC), Monday August 2
- GBBF, London, Tuesday August 3-Saturday August 7

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