

British Guild Of Beer Writers

Newsletter — May 2010



The Chairman Reports...

IT HAS taken a while but a sense of glory has returned to Burton-upon-Trent with the opening of the new National Brewery Centre. The attraction is once again open to the public, a happy occasion that marks the end of a keenly-fought battle to retain a focal point that celebrates not just the town's rich brewing history but also Britain's.

Originally home to the Bass Museum, the venue was renamed the Coors Visitor Centre until it closed amid public and industry outrage during the summer of 2008, with the US-owned brewer insisting it was too costly to keep open. However, Molson Coors were incredibly supportive in their efforts to ensure the site remained as a museum even if they were not to operate it. Step forward the leisure operator Planning Solutions with their plans to bring the attraction back to life.

Mike Stickland is Chairman of Planning Solutions and says he is looking forward to welcoming visitors to The National Brewery Centre. 'We have been overwhelmed by the level of support in the town and from the industry as a whole. We've assembled a fantastic team here in Burton and they have all been working very hard to get everything ready. I'm sure that the visiting public will be pleased with what we have done to the site. Brewing history will come alive.'

Visitors will be greeted on their tours by Pepper's Ghost, a holographic presenter who will take them on a journey through the evolution of brewing, from its ancient origins through to the present day. Hundreds of displays, artefacts and exhibits, including a vast scale model of Burton in 1921, will then bring the history to life, aided by six performers in period costume who will recreate characters from the town's history, including Michael Thomas Bass II, brewery workers, a school mistress and an inn keeper. They will stay in character and interact with visitors, taking them back to a bygone age — offering an insight into life in Victorian times.

Adults will be able to sample four different ales in a beer tasting master class — learning how the different ingredients and techniques can influence

taste, aroma and appearance. The shire horses, Major and Trooper, will be in the stables at weekends and during school and bank holidays. There's a collection of vintage vehicles that have been used in the brewing industry, from fire trucks to a 1920s Daimler in the shape of a bottle that was originally used to deliver advertising materials to pubs. Meanwhile steam enthusiasts will appreciate the No.9 Locomotive and Directors Carriage alongside a mock-up of a Victorian station platform. There's also a working Robey steam engine that was once used to power a maltings.

After fully exploring all the Centre has to offer, visitors can relax in the café or dine in the Brewery Tap. There will also be a range of Beer Bites available, dishes that have been designed as the perfect accompaniment to the selection of six real ales on offer — many of which will have been brewed specially for the Centre by the onsite White Shield microbrewery.

It is planned that this brewery will be moved into a new area of the site so that it can become part of the visitor experience. This is expected to take place during the late summer months of 2010 and it will enable visitors to see at first hand how some of its famous real ales are created. I recommend it to all Guild members.

AND WHILE I think about it can I commend to you *1001 Beers You Must Try Before You Die*, edited by our secretary Adrian Tierney Jones. Written in an easy-going and entertaining style by an international panel of beer heroes, the book features most of the world's classic brews and is a marvellous journey through our world of beer. Like any beer the contents of the book could be downed in one swallow, but it deserves better, and so like a great beer it should be sipped, savoured and enjoyed with reverence. Comprising more than 960 pages of mouthwatering entries it should see even the most abstemious reaching for their bottle opener. The government says people should only consume 22 units of beer a week, but this book lets you drink your fill and much more and all in one sitting. It is indeed a weighty tome which should become an essential element on every beer lover's book shelf.

Tim Hampson

Twissup in a brewery (town)

FOLLOWING THE success of the day in Sheffield, which I hazily recounted in the March newsletter, we have arranged another Twissup (social media stepping into

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the real world for a piss up), this time to visit Burton-upon-Trent. It will be on Saturday May 15 and the plan has been arranged to take in as much as possible while focusing the trip on seeing the new brewing museum. So far around 20 people are confirmed as attending, a mix of bloggers, brewers, beer sellers and beer twits (in the best possible sense).

The rough plan is to meet from 11.30am-onwards in the Coopers Arms. Then a tour of the Maltings at 12.30 (if you want to come then we need to know your shoe size for this), followed by The Dial where we will trial draught Blue Moon and Worthington Red Shield (the chaps at Coors are helping us arrange the day so we can allow them this step). Around 3pm we will have a tour of the White Shield Brewery with Steve Wellington and then a trip to the National Brewing Museum with a courtesy lunch and some beers in The Brewery Tap, including samples of P2, Worthington E, Red Shield and White Shield to take away. Then it's on to Burton Bridge where we'll have a tour if there's time or just some beers if not, and then to Wetmore Whistle, which is either a pub or an instruction. This should take us to the early evening — some might want to get the train home, others can visit some more pubs. There is accommodation available for those who need it — a group of us are booked into William Worthington's house (this might now be full but there's other hotels available).

The day will be a chance for many of us already down to attend to go somewhere new with great beer heritage (a pilgrimage, no less!), to meet up, share a few beers, have a look around a malting and a couple of breweries and get to celebrate the re-opening of the museum (and give it a good plug on the internet in the days that follow). Everyone is welcome, you just need to sort out your own travel arrangements there (we'll walk the rest of it) and bring some beer money. If you'd like to come along or you want to know more then email me on markdredge@hotmail.co.uk.

The Guild takes a trip to Wales

THERE ARE still places left for the Guild's trip to South Wales Wed/Thurs 26/27 May. Contact Chris Marchbanks at cjmarshbanks@aol.com or on 01283 561626. The deadline for contacting him is 5 May, 2010.

All the news that's fit to tweet...

IT'S HARDLY news to say that beer is the world's favourite tippie but judging by the response of the press to a recent story I was involved in about the role of females in brewing history it seems that it is the media world's favourite too. If only they had got the facts right... The cliché about not believing anything in the press is often justified and although yesterday's newspapers end up lining the cat litter tray, the virtual world promises eternal life, while misinformation on-line refreshes the parts accurate reports cannot reach.

I run a business called School of Booze — tutored beer, wine and whisky tasting events. Booze history is one of my passions and it turns out that a news agency journalist I know is also keen on that subject. He was fascinated to hear that for thousands of years it was mainly women who brewed beer because it was commonly made at home and consumed daily to provide a tasty source of valuable nutrition. I supplied him with the necessary facts to send out over the news wires. When the *Daily Mail* contacted me with a number of queries I realised something was amiss. It turned out that the news agency journo had exaggerated certain things, conflated others, and in some cases got it wrong. And then some other print and web journalists had written their twisted version of an already inaccurate story.

I awoke the following day to a report on the *Daily Telegraph* website that stated 'men only started drinking beer 200 years ago'. Ouch! A brief check on-line revealed dozens of reports around the world suggesting that without women beer would

not exist, or that only women were allowed to drink beer and own brewing equipment. All the reports included my name, describing me as an academic (my school maths teacher would howl to hear that) and thereby suggesting the reports were credible. Trouble was I had not said any of it. I spent the next few hours on damage limitation contacting Adrian Tierney-Jones (who asked me to write this piece), and Tony Jerome and Tom Stainer at CAMRA, and placing a disclaimer on my websites. And then the emails and phone calls started coming in. Messages from journalists in Poland, Belgium, Sweden, Germany; individuals in Turkey, Australia, India, Canada; and food and drinks bloggers in the USA and Britain got in touch to request the background information. There were also requests for interviews on radio stations in Dublin, the US, Five Live, and Radio 2 on which I was able to give the real story.

But that still leaves the internet and I can do little to correct the myriad sites that lifted copy from the original press release or nicked content from other websites without checking whether it was accurate. Now I know why there is so much rubbish on the net. The positive aspect of this experience is that countless people now know that women had a major role in brewing history, and as a female beer lover who works hard to encourage more women to drink beer that is priceless.

Jane Peyton

Other matters

PAUL NUNNY writes to thank everybody for their support of Cask Ale Week, which was deemed to be a great success. The launch of the Cask Marque iPhone app to coincide with the week meant that 2,500 people downloaded it in the first 10 days and the dwell time is an amazing 8 minutes. It proves that consumers are keen to learn more about Cask Beers and Great Pubs. He also mentions that Cask Marque are to sponsor the CAMRA's 2011 *Good Beer Guide*.

THINGS TO DO AFTER YOU'VE DANCED ROUND THE MAYPOLE... why not pop to Parsons Green where the White Horse will be hosting its local brewery beer festival. There should be beers from London companies like Fuller's, Meantime, Sambrook's, Twickenham and Brodie's as well as ones from further afield such as Rebellion in Marlow Bottom and Ha'Penny Brewing in Ilford. It runs from April 30-May 3.

THE SCOTTISH BREWING ARCHIVE ASSOCIATION (SBAA) is holding a half-day conference to explore and celebrate the diversity of the brewing industry in Scotland, and to explore its future. The place is Edinburgh, the date September 17 and the time 10am-2pm. For more details contact Forbes Gibb at forbes.gibb@cis.strath.ac.uk.

CALENDAR 2010

Beer Academy courses for May

- One day foundation course, Beer Academy, London, May 8.

see: www.beeracademy.co.uk/courses/foundation-course/

- 90 Minute Tasting Session, Beer Academy, London, All Around The Globe in 90 Minutes, May 11.

See: www.beeracademy.co.uk/courses/ninety-minute-tasting/

- British Guild of Beer Writers AGM

Crosse Keys, London, Thursday June 24 (TBC)

- 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