

British Guild Of Beer Writers

Newsletter — April 2010



The Chairman Reports...

TIME — IT IS the enemy of all journalists. There is never enough. Time is also the enemy of accountants. Time costs money. Time ties up costly raw material in expensive capital equipment. Time stops products getting to market. Too much time slows cash flow and damages balance sheets.

But time is needed to make good beer and it is time that elevates the best to an even higher plane. And I had the time to visit the opening of Meantime's new venture next to Discover Greenwich in East London, where London's second brewery has brought back the Royal Hospital's Old Brewhouse into use after 140 years.

The Old Brewery is in the grounds of the Old Royal Naval College, part of the spectacular World Heritage Site of Maritime Greenwich and a stone's throw from the world's last tea clipper, the legendary *Cutty Sark*. The brewery that once supplied the pensioners of the Royal Naval Hospital with a two-quart daily ration of beer is now a restaurant, bar and café containing a micro-brewery devoted to the creation of historical and modern beers.

It was the Hospital Porter I was looking forward to try. Meantime's creative master brewer Alastair Hook promised a bottle to take home. Where I would have the time to savour. Slowly and with reverence. To sip and enjoy. Respect. Sometimes words are superfluous. They are barriers to a sensual experience. This beer promised a tsunami of complexity. Its quiet eddies would drift over my tastebuds. Prose would shackle the experience.

The Hospital Porter was brewed for the opening of the Old Brewery. And it doesn't need burnt barley to make it black. It is a blending of two 8% beers — one of which has been oak-aged for 12 months in Bunnahabhain whisky casks from the Isle of Islay. Established in 1881 the distillery sits on the northeastern tip of Islay, looking out to the Sound of Islay. The whisky is very lightly-peated. Floral and fruity tones dominate with the peat

influence in the background. What would time from the whisky-sozzled casks bring to the beer? Only time would tell. What flavours would there be — rich malt, liquorice, caramel, chocolate?

The Old Brewery itself sits upon the foundations of a brewhouse built by Joseph Kay in 1832, rebuilt after a fire in 1843, which then fell out of use by 1870; and it is here that Hook is brewing his English lager. 'The quintessential English lager,' he says.

It is a beer which too has been given time. In a traditional top-fermented English ale, it is the yeast that dominates. Pleasing the palate with its yeast derived fruit and citrus flavours. The yeast is the star with the malt and hops playing a supporting role.

But by lowering the temperature, using a bottom fermenting yeast and giving the beer time — eight weeks — the Kent Golding hops and Maris Otter malt from East Anglia will step out of the shadows into the limelight.

The Old Brewery's signature beer will slowly be matured in one of the eight majestic 1,000 litre copper clad tanks which dominate the restaurant. From the unique vantage point of the main hall diners will be able to witness the activity around the copper vessels.

And like the very best Franconian beer gardens the beer will be piped, clear and vivacious, unfiltered and unpasteurised using only air pressure from the conditioning tanks in the bar's cool cellars.

The spirit of the original brewhouse will be kept alive in a wholly contemporary way as the brewers plan to revive ancient recipes that used ingredients such as bog myrtle or wormwood, while also creating avant garde beers such as Mojito Pilsner and Juniper Pale Ale, beers specifically crafted to match the flavours and aromas of the modern cuisine.

Adjoining the main hall is a cosy annex bar and tranquil courtyard. Displayed against the exposed brickwork are but one-tenth of the beer bottle and glass collections of the seminal beer writer, the late Michael Jackson.

But what of the Hospital Porter? Reluctantly it was time to go. And the bottles of Hospital Porter that has stood so seductively by the exit, waiting for the guests to leave, were gone. My timing was

CHAIRMAN: Tim Hampson Tel: 01865 245711; 07768 614283 tim@infopub.co.uk

TREASURER: Paul Nunny paul@nunny.fsbusiness.co.uk

SECRETARY: Adrian Tierney-Jones Woodcote, 2 Jury Road, Dulverton, Somerset TA22 9DU
Tel: 01398 324314 tierneyjones@btinternet.com

www.beerwriters.co.uk

wrong I had left it too late. I was too busy in conversation. The best of beer culture needs time too.

But I know, one day my time will come and I will get to try the bottled Hospital Porter. And if you get the time visit this world heritage site in Greenwich. In fact make time.

Tim Hampson

Go with Podge

IF YOU fancy a spot of beer-hunting in the Low Countries, then Guild member Chris 'Podge' Pollard's recently announced programme of activities for 2010 might just whet your whistle. First of all, there's **Beer & Battlefields**, which runs Friday April 30-Tuesday May 4. This tour will include many visits and some guided tours of outdoor sites, bunkers, trenches and memorials, plus several specialist WW1 museums. The trip will also look at what soldiers were drinking during the war and how Belgian breweries fared in both occupied and unoccupied Belgium. There will be several brewery and beer café visits.

Bamberg, Nuremberg, Annafest and In Search of Zoigl Beer is the title given to the next tour, which runs Wednesday July 21/Thursday July 22 to Monday July 26/Tuesday July 27.

Details of further trips throughout will appear in future newsletters, or if you need more information please contact Podge on 01245 354677 or podgehome@blueyonder.co.uk. Places are limited to the number of rooms booked, so book early to avoid disappointment. Please see www.podgebeer.co.uk for further information.

The Office

AFTER SIX months of freelancing, Alastair Gilmour has had enough of working from home and is about to share premises with a couple of like-minded companies. The only problem is that the new office is in Newcastle's Ouseburn Valley and anybody who is familiar with the city will know that this is the home of the Cumberland Arms, The Cluny, The Tyne and the Free Trade Inn. 'The new place is dangerously close to all four pubs,' says Alastair. 'The Cluny is about 50 metres away so we've been having meetings there and although we don't move in until June, we're already wondering about the wisdom of the choice and how we'll get some work done. Seriously, we're working together on a couple of really exciting projects which will take off very soon. I'll circulate the details when that happens.'

The Guild takes a trip to Wales

THE GUILD is arranging a visit to South Wales for members on Wed/Thurs 26/27 May. The draft proposed programme is: **Wed, May 26:** 1.45/2.00pm, meet at SA Brain, The Brewery, Crawshay Street, Cardiff CF10 1SP for a tour of the brewery, discussion with brewery executives on the local South Wales beer scene followed by a beer tasting; in the evening a visit to some Brains hostellers in Cardiff to chat and sample the ambiance with the Brains staff. Overnight at a local Cardiff Hotel hopefully at a special price (tbc). **Thurs, May 27:** early start to visit one or two local craft breweries up the valleys, meet, discuss and taste with their staff their beers, local priorities and successes. Detail of this programme to be finalised. Disperse early afternoon in Cardiff. Numbers will be limited and will be on a first come first served basis: please let Chris Marchbanks know if you wish to attend at cjmarshbanks@aol.com — or on 01283 561626. The deadline for contacting him is 5 May, 2010.

CaskFinder

CASKFINDER has been launched, a new i-Phone application available **free of charge** from the Apple store. CaskFinder is designed to help consumers enjoy and appreciate cask ale wherever they may be in the UK. Combining data from

the Cask Marque pub quality inspection scheme and the Cyclops® Beer Standardisation Initiative, which are both industry sponsored bodies, CaskFinder uses the location-awareness of the iPhone to show consumers nearby pubs, brewers and events. Finding a Cask Marque quality approved pub couldn't be easier — there are over 6,000 in the UK and they are growing all the time — just click on the Cask Marque pub icon on the downloaded application and CaskFinder shows you automatically on a map where your nearest pubs are. Once you have found a pub, you can click on its icon and find out what beers it serves, based on its Cask Marque quality inspection. If you are unfamiliar with the beers or just want to try something new, you can click on the beer logo and immediately view the Cyclops® Beer database on which there is information held for over 1,000 beers. The Cyclops® database contains standardised tasting information compiled by trained inspectors, including head brewers, so you'll know they know what they are talking about! However, consumers can rate their favourite beers so that they can keep a record of beers that they specially like. If consumers find a beer that interests them, they can search in reverse ie find nearby pubs where the beer is served, using a 'Where to Drink' facility. If you like a particular brewer's beers, you can find out more about the brewer and even see what other beers they produce — and find out which pubs you can drink them in. Or you could just browse through the database and choose any one of the beers at random! In addition to finding pubs and beers, CaskFinder includes a number of other useful features — a list of Beer Festivals complete with contact details, admission prices and maps to show you where to go; a beer blog from award winning writer Pete Brown that gives you an inside track on the beer industry and Beer of the Week, a featured beer of interest from your region. In addition to this application if you visit the Cask Marque website www.caskmarque.co.uk you can download a programme to your Sat Nav so that you will have no difficulty in finding your nearest Cask Marque pub. Also available is a text messaging service whereby you enter CASK followed by a FULL STOP and your post code — ie CASK.CO4 9HT — and within 30 seconds you will be sent details of your two nearest pubs. With a 46% consumer awareness of Cask Marque by cask ale drinkers these new information services will be of great benefit to the Cask Marque award winning pubs and cask ale drinkers.

Other matters

MEMBER BARBARA GLEISS writes: 'As some Guild members helped me a lot with my research, they might be interested to find out that I have successfully finished my PhD thesis on Women in Public Houses. A Historic Analysis of the Social and Economic Role of Women Patronising English Public Houses, 1880s-1970s (University of Vienna).'

BEN SHERMAN, brother of Guild member David, is standing for Parliament at the forthcoming general election for the new political party Reduce Tax On Beer (RTOB). The party's policies aim to reduce duty on beer by 50% with immediate effect and to abolish VAT on beer as it is a nutritious food stuff. For further enquiries contact David Sherman at reductaxonbeer@live.co.uk.

CALENDAR 2010

Beer Academy courses for April

see www.beeracademy.co.uk/courses/ for more details

March 29 April 5 Cask Ale Week 2010

April 10 World Beer Cup 2010, Chicago

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