

British Guild Of Beer Writers

Newsletter — September 2005

Each and every one of the Guild's members is a passionate disciple

for **beer** — and we all of us

communicate this to people in our circles of friends and colleagues.

That encouragement to others to try beer, and explore its depth and character, is every bit as valuable as our writings for the media.

Andrew Pring gets passionate *inside*...

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The Chairman Reports...

IT WAS GREAT to see so many Guild members enjoying themselves and their beers at Olympia for the Great British Beer Festival the other day. It was even more impressive as many of them I bumped into on 'trade day', the first day of the Festival, had been carousing late into the night at the White Horse the previous evening. No one seemed to be stinting on the beers at Mark Dorber's pre-GBBF reception — many supplied by Guild corporate members: thank you, everyone — yet they seemed fresh as daisies the following day. Your Chairman has still to master this particular trick.

It was, as ever, a magnificent festival, and it will seem rather odd to be heading for Earl's Court next year rather than its traditional home. But that said, the new venue may well offer opportunities for improving the overall ambience of this real ale showcase. I know CAMRA's decision to move has been welcomed by all the brewers I spoke to when I dropped by their stands on the Tuesday. If GBBF does achieve a smartening up — and let's hope it does so without losing the bonhomie and sheer *joie de vivre* of Olympia — then perhaps it might put an end to silly season commentaries in the national press about sandals and beards.

Roy Bailey can't have been alone in being incensed by a particularly silly piece in the *Times*: well done, though, for taking the trouble to write in pointing out the asinine nature of the piece. No doubt his letter failed to elicit the courtesy of a response, and it was clearly never going to be published.

Returning to Mark Dorber's event for a moment, I just thought I'd share with members not able to be there just how much affection and esteem I sensed in the room that night from brewers for what the Guild does. We clearly are at the heart of the beer world and are valued for the role we play. As I pointed out then, each and every one of the Guild's members is a passionate disciple for beer — and we all of us communicate this to people in our circles of friends and colleagues. That encouragement to others to try beer, and explore its depth and character, is every bit as valuable as our writings for the media.

And speaking of writing, it's Guild awards time again. Tim Hampson is publicising the categories as widely as possible — and there are details in this newsletter of how to enter. Thanks to our sponsors: Cains, Interbrew UK and its Artois Bock, Shepherd Neame and its Bishops Finger and Budweiser Budvar — there are some very generous prizes on offer.

Please do enter your work of the past year. There's been some brilliant writing, and the awards and the dinner are a celebration of that. So do enter, and let's celebrate at the annual dinner on December 7.

See you there!

Andrew Pring, Chairman

The Secretary's round...

DON'T FORGET THAT the Guild awards are upon us and after that the dinner is rushing up to meet us. Again just a brief mention that this year it is Wednesday December 7, once more at the Ironmongers Hall. Former and esteemed Guild secretary Barry Bremner has decided to retire from the Guild — see below for Barry's email and Roger Protz's appreciation of his immense contribution to the Guild. Two other members, Mark Turner and Clive La Pensée have also handed in their quills. Clive has retired and Mark, whose stunning photographs appear in Roger Protz's *A Brewery In Bedford* (a highly recommended history of Charles Wells), emails to say that 'Due to a long term illness, I have just been placed on some new medication and I am not allowed to drink alcohol anymore. It seems a bit silly to belong to a beer writers guild, when I not allowed to touch the stuff. Also in addition to this, my other business interests are now taking me in different directions to the beer industry.' I am sure everyone wishes Mark the best of luck in his future endeavours. On the other hand we can welcome new member Jeremy Blake, known as Jez, a frequent contributor to US-based website www.ratebeer.com and occasionally to www.whitebeertravels.com — other new members are waiting in the wings and will be noted in the next newsletter. The Guild also received an interesting communication from Austrian beer sage Conrad Seidl, which is printed opposite — it contains several thought-provoking points on the way beer is perceived. Nearer to home, Rodney Bennett-England gets in touch to say that he is trying to put together recipes for an *Imbiber's Cookbook* which use beer or cider. Any members' suggestions would be warmly welcomed. He can be contacted on: rodney.bennettengland@virgin.net. One final thing: my recent communication about the need for membership cards received a lot of replies, with the majority of correspondents querying the need for them. However, several members do want to continue with them and what I will do is produce them for those that do. So if you do want one please get in touch.

FROM BARRY BREMNER

Dear All, I have decided not to retain my Guild membership. I have decided that, as I am now fully retired with no contact with the brewing industry, membership is no longer necessary. I first joined the Guild in 1992 and I have thoroughly enjoyed my membership, particularly my six years as Secretary. Not only was my membership of great value to me but it brought me many new friendships, particularly with the Chairmen under whom I served, namely Barrie Pepper, Susan Nowak and Roger Protz and, of course, long-time Treasurer, Peter Coulson. I mentioned above that my membership has been of great value to me, but I always endeavoured to put plenty back into the Guild in return. The fact that I am no longer in a position to contribute to the well-being of the Guild is another reason for my decision to stand down. Please convey my best wishes for the continuing success of the Guild in the next newsletter — and please never forget that it is as important to relay the beer message to members as it is to the relevant media.

A TRIBUTE FROM ROGER PROTZ

Voluntary organisations tend to give scant praise to their officers but Barry Bremner's decision to end his membership of the Guild

CALENDAR 2005/2006

September	Launch of <i>Good Beer Guide 2006</i>
September 12-17	Drinktec Interbrau, Munich
September 18-22	Worldwide Distilled Spirits Conference (IBD) Edinburgh
September 21	Brewing Research International (BRI) course: Beer Appreciation
Sept 29-Oct 1	Great American Beer Festival, Denver, Colorado
October 15	CAMRA Awards Lunch

October	CAMRA Cider Month
October 19-20	Cellar to Seller Conference, Burton-on-Trent
October 27	Brewing Research International (BRI) course: The History of Brewing & Beer Styles
November 16/17	Brewing Research International (BRI) course: Introduction to Brewing
December 7	Annual Dinner and Awards, Ironmongers Hall
December 14	All Parliamentary Beer Group, Christmas reception — HOC

as a result of his retirement from press and public relations work cannot pass without comment. But for his efforts, in tandem with Peter Coulson for most of the 1990s, the Guild would probably have been wound up and long forgotten.

In the early 1990s the Guild was in crisis. The then Treasurer – whose blushes I will spare by not naming him — had not banked a single cheque for a year. The Guild was insolvent and possibly trading illegally. The Secretary had not been paid her small stipend and resigned, while work commitments kept Chairman Michael Jackson out of the country for many months of each year.

Michael graciously agreed to stand down in favour of a Chairman who could devote more time to the day-to-day running of the Guild. As the founding member, and with the full backing of the committee, I approached Peter Coulson and Barrie Pepper, and asked for their help. Both immediately agreed to stand for office, with Barrie becoming Chairman and Peter taking on the dual role of Treasurer and Secretary. They threw themselves with great energy and commitment into their jobs and the Guild regained financial stability and began to plan and carry out the vital work of raising the profile of beer writing with the media.

As the Guild grew and began to acquire serious recognition in the media and the brewing industry, Peter's dual role became unsustainable. Barry Bremner agreed to become Secretary and brought a quiet professionalism to the organisation. Media enquiries were responded to by return, an informative monthly newsletter appeared and the Guild's annual dinner and other events were given the prominence they deserved. Barry and Peter ensured that the annual dinner became not only the high spot of the Guild year but was run meticulously and planned down to the last knife and fork (though they always forgot the bottle openers!).

My appreciation of Barry's work deepened when I became Chairman. I marvelled at his dedication and professionalism. We spoke almost every day and sometimes several times a day. We moved from being acquaintances to friends, our daily conversations talking in not only urgent Guild matters but also the fortunes of our respective football teams. Barry loves to tell the story of the Guild dinner where I had forgotten to switch off my mobile and Ironmongers Hall was suddenly regaled by a chorus of *I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles*.

Barry never stopped working for the Guild, even when ill health struck. On one occasion he phoned me to say the newsletter would have to be delayed while he underwent an operation. A week later, the newsletter arrived, one of the biggest editions ever to appear and produced as soon as Barry left hospital.

Barry Bremner helped put the Guild on a sound footing. The success of seminars and other events in recent years owe a great deal to his patient and painstaking work behind the scenes. He was a brilliant servant of the Guild and we are all in his debt. Enjoy your retirement, old friend. *Roger Protz*

Smoke gets in your eyes...in Bamberg

JUST OCCASIONALLY you are allowed a glimpse of paradise. Even if it is only through a dark glass of smoke beer. Recently Guild members including Chris Marchbanks, Iain Loe and Tim Webb joined a party organised by fellow member John White for a visit to Bamberg in Germany. Besides being a World Heritage site, boasting many historic buildings, the small city in northern Bavaria is home to 10 breweries, numerous atmospheric pubs and bier cellars and, of course, the distinctive rauchbier brewed from smoked malt kilned over beech logs.

We managed to visit a number of the breweries (or at least their brewery taps, though Chris Marchbanks always seemed to be able to talk his way into the brewery, even when no visit was arranged). Official trips included the famous Heller Brewery and its remarkable tavern, the Schlenkerla, and Mahr's Brau, which

FROM CONRAD SEIDL

THERE IS A trend in the media to regard the brewing industry more and more as just another profit-generating part of the economy and beer simply as the product that can generate more or less profit depending on the right strategies in branding and distribution — but not in taste. Even the influential German trade magazine *Brauwelt* tends to treat 'beer' as 'beer'.

Do we have an answer to that, or do we only focus on telling the same old stories about tradition (ie: pub culture, old times and charm of an old brewhouse) and our firm belief that globalization is bad because it replaces locally produced beer (and other products) by standardised global brands? I believe we could all learn from the wine industry and those 'snobbish' wine writers who have embraced globalization, internationalisation and competition. They have managed in a period of two or three decades to establish wine as something 'exceptionally interesting' by focusing on:

- Rare products: portraying wines that were not even available at the point of time when the story was first published.
- Expensive products: for instance, informing the public that the auctioning of François Mitterrand's wine-collection resulted in €15,000 (June 2005) helps build a common perception that some wines (that no average drinker would ever get to sample) are really worth the money. So some wines that cost a few euros more than the average might well be worth the premium.
- Imports and competition: the opening of wine markets for imports has taught producers even in very traditional growing regions that there is more choice and a different definition of 'quality' if you take into consideration what other producers in different regions have achieved.

What could we beer writers learn from that?

- Portray and promote rare and, yes, strange beers, even if they are virtually unavailable; get small brewers to send samples to editors or provide you with samples you can send with a few teaser lines to the editor of media where you would like to place a story.
- Mention wherever you can that the most expensive beer in the world costs \$300 — if you are lucky enough to find a bottle of Sam Adams Millennium. Compare that to the value of a €10-a-bottle Oude Gueuze compared to an international premium beer at €1...
- Even if national brewer's associations advise you otherwise, inform editors (and consumers, if you can reach them) that the world is changing rapidly: Some of the best examples of 'British', 'German' and 'Belgian' style beers are brewed by small brewers in places where you would never expect it.

I have done all that with some success (and many disappointing experiences, I have to admit). Only recently I presented a Döllnitzer Ritterguts Gose (a very lively, very refreshing and rather sour beer brewed in Leipzig) at an event in Hannover — only to read in the *Hannoversche Allgemeine* that that beer should rather be dumped in the most remote corner of the seven seas instead of being drunk. On the other hand there were some people — educated ladies, not the usual Joe-sixpacks — that loved the Gose. I know you have to win them one by one...

was voted the best brewery in the world by an American magazine, and is known for its Ungespundet Hefetrub. Try asking for that after a few glasses. Fortunately, it's popularly known as 'U'.

We also ventured out into the Franconian countryside, where every village seemed to have a brewery or two. Tim Webb rejected the sensible rail-and-walk option in favour of a bike, but failed to force his way into contention for next year's Tour de France (though the Trappist Tour of Wallonia is a possibility as long as there are no hills).

A fascinating few days which were over far too quickly. For those who couldn't make it, John White is organising another trip to Bamberg next year and it is not to be missed.

And if anyone has any suggestions what to do with 46 unused dumplings, please let me know. **Brian Glover**

Guild Awards

NOMINATIONS AND entries are once again being sought for the British Guild of Beerwriters' awards. This year there is a new category, The Bishops Finger Beer with Food Award, sponsored by Shepherd Neame, the objective being to encourage journalists to write or broadcast material on the subject of matching beer with food, an area usually dominated by wine. Given that beer and food gets a lot more coverage than in the days of the landlord's special delivered with the ping of a microwave, there should be plenty of interesting entries. The other categories are National Beer Writer of the Year (sponsor: Interbrew UK); Regional Beer Writer of the Year (sponsor: Cains); Trade and Technical Category (sponsor: to be announced); Travel Bursary (sponsor: Budweiser Budvar).

Entrants do not have to be members of the Guild, but they should communicate about beer or beer culture, new products, or the ingredients or brewing of beer. There is no limitation to the number of categories that an individual may enter, but they may only submit four examples of their work in an individual category. To enter the competition send four copies of each entry, published or broadcast in the 12 months up to September 30, 2005, by October 7, to Beer Writers Competition, c/o Morrice Partnership Ltd, IT Centre, York Science Park, Heslington, York YO10 5DG.

Guild Olympians

GUILD MEMBERS were out in force doing tutored tastings and book signings at the Great British Beer Festival in August. Roger Protz launched his excellent *300 Beers To Try Before You Die!* and conducted tastings of beers from the book and of the festival winners. Jeff Evans, Christine Cryne, Sue Nowak, Adrian Tierney-Jones and Tim Webb also did their bit. See below for Tim's unique and intriguing approach to tasting Belgian beers.

"On August 5, 2005 I hosted a blind beer tasting at the Great British Beer Festival, intended to compare four classic Belgian beers with 'foreign' imitators in the same style. An audience of 70 beer lovers got a chance to vote on which of four pairings of beers tasted the more authentic and which they preferred as a beer. The 'young pretenders' performed remarkably well. US-brewed Ommegang scored an impressive victory over its (Trappist) Belgian counterpart, Chimay Grande Reserve. Another US brew, Allagash White tied with one of the best Belgian wheat beers, Sint Bernardus Wit. Finally a remarkable oak-aged ale from Italy, Panil Barriqué, scored a narrow victory over Belgium's best known oak-aged ale, Rodenbach Grand Cru."

Ale Caesar!

GUILD MEMBER Maurizio Maestrelli has produced what he calls 'the first attempt in Italy to write an objective guide to Italian pubs and brewpubs'. Covering 725 places to go for a decent glass of beer in Italy, it's called *Birrerie d'Italia*, and published by the Touring Club Editore, costing €10. Contact Maurizio on mmaestrelli@yahoo.it if you want a copy.

Renewals

DON'T FORGET that if you haven't sent in your membership renewal please do so now. The Directory will soon be in the production process and as normal if any subs haven't been received by the end of September, then members will have deemed to have resigned.

Website Awareness

AWARENESS OF the Guild's website would be greatly improved, writes *John White*, if members could quote it in their articles. For instance, instead of just writing something like 'the event was hosted by the British Guild of Beer Writers', how about 'the event was hosted by the British Guild of Beer Writers (www.beerwriters.co.uk)'. This can also be done when mentioning the Guild in on-line articles, but here it improves the importance of the Guild's website,

with regard to search engine ranking, if 'www.beerwriters.co.uk' is made a hyperlink to the Guild's website. Alternatively, the text 'British Guild of Beer Writers' can be made a hyperlink (to <http://www.beerwriters.co.uk>), but it is better if the actual hyperlinked address can be quoted, since then it can be read if the on-line article is printed. Please note that this can be done retrospectively for existing on-line articles. So, if you could also do this, or ask the webmaster of your sites to carry out this work, it would be much appreciated. In the same vein, if your website has a links page, then if the Guild's website could be added to it, we would be most grateful. Please note that, when supplied, members' website addresses are included in the Guild's on-line directory of members, so please provide these if this is of interest to you; just as with the Guild's website, this will help your with your search engine ranking. If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me: *John White*, john@whitebeertravels.com.

SIBA news

As mentioned in the last newsletter, the committee, after a presentation from SIBA, decided to put regular information about the brewing organisation in the newsletter, which hopefully will be of use to members.

THIS YEAR'S GBBF was a great way to celebrate SIBA's 25th anniversary and the awards presented at Olympia were a massive vote of approval for the skills and dedication of our members. Not only was the coveted title of Champion Beer of Britain once again awarded to a SIBA brewer, but this year the Society's members swept the board by taking all three placings in the overall winners category. SIBA's members won gold in seven of the eight categories and took 19 of the total of 27 awards given. It was fantastic news, not only for Crouch Vale with their Brewers Gold as overall champion, but also as a mark of appreciation for the quality and diversity of local brewers' beers. Yet the commercial issue remains as ever how can both licensees and the wider drinking public participate more fully in such high profile appreciation and acclaim? Data from the Institute of Grocery Distribution (IGD) shows that local produce enjoys a 6% share of the food and drink market. Contrasting this with the 3% share taken by local beers in the on-trade reveals both the impact of the special trading conditions that apply in pub retailing and the gap we still have to close. SIBA is making progress in ensuring that the nation's licensees can benefit from the commercial opportunities offered by beer drinkers' obvious appreciation of the wonderful variety of locally brewed beer but there is still a long way to go. *Steve Griffin*

History of Brewing & Beer Styles

GUILD COMMITTEE member Kamini Dickie gets in touch to let members know that Brewing Research International (BRI) is running a History of Brewing & Beer Styles Course, which is designed for those with an interest in the traditions of the industry and the rediscovery of old beer styles and their raw materials. Discover how the history of brewing throughout the ages, worldwide, and the evolution of the different styles of beer have brought us to what we are familiar with today. Also included is a talk on the History of Beer & Health, illustrating how attitudes to the health aspects of beer drinking have changed over time. The course provides a unique opportunity to learn more about and taste ancient beer styles including Mesopotamian, Medieval and more recent beers. So why not rediscover the exciting evolution of beer – from its humble beginnings to the wide variety of beers we enjoy today? Date of course is October 27 and cost per delegate: £199 + VAT. Contact: Brewing Research International, Lyttel Hall, Nutfield, Surrey RH1 4HY.

And one more thing...

The BRI has a number of guest/complementary tickets for Drinktec 2005 in Munich September 12-17. If any member is considering attending and would like a free entry ticket please contact me. More info about this trade fair is on: www.drinktec.de *Kamini Dickie*