

# *British Guild Of Beer Writers*

*Newsletter* – Dec/Jan 2007/2008

‘For 19 years the British Guild of Beer Writers has been on a journey to raise people’s awareness of **beer** and beer writing. The success of our annual dinner is a very public example of the Guild’s central aim of improving standards of beer writing and extending the public knowledge of beer.’

Chairman Tim Hampson celebrates *inside...*

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# The Chairman *Reports...*

**ON DECEMBER 5th the Guild organised the biggest and best gathering for beer writers in the country — and what a celebration it turned out to be!**

Thankfully there were no speeches on licensing laws, lager louts or the tax on beer. Instead, the night was all about the company of friends and pride in beer. Once again, we showed that beer is a modern sophisticated drink — equal to the finest vintage wines.

This year chef Brian Turner and his team created something quite special. Palm Speciale was paired with a scallop mousse with smoked salmon dressing. A gloriously chilled glass of Deus Brut des Flandres, served from champagne style bottles, accompanied a sorbet. Spiced loin of Castlebridge beef went with Thornbridge Jaipur IPA. There was a wonderful marriage of Lord of the Hundreds cheese with Adnams Broadside and the evening finished with a glass of Innis & Gunn Oak-aged Beer and gingerbread with nutmeg ice cream.

There are always issues when organising a dinner for 180 people. One correspondent writes that the first course was actually too good, while another says the starter was too eggy and disappointing. Can they both have been at the same meal?

I happen to respect the views of both people — and they highlight the challenges of organising a meal for so many people, who all expect to be fed at more or less the same time. However, many people also commented that the awards dinner has now become 'one of the must-attend events of the beer world'. I take this observation as a clear sign of the progress that beer writers are collectively making.

For 19 years the British Guild of Beer Writers has been on a journey to raise people's awareness of beer and beer writing. The success of our annual dinner is a very public example of the Guild's central aim of improving standards of beer writing and extending the public knowledge of beer.

And if all of this was not enough the quality of entries to our awards was judged to have been higher and from a wider range of publications than ever before. This is all good news for beer.

'Within the world of food and drink,' wrote the late great Michael Jackson, 'there lives a family blessed with eternal life — the family of the fermented. There is an elemental appeal to those foods and drinks that are fathered by fermentation.'

Beer is a member of this blessed family — and I believe that beer has now grown up — and is no longer a callow sibling in the shadow of its bigger sibling wine.

This year's dinner wonderfully showed off the richness and diversity of beer. Now our task is to make next year's event even better.

**TIM HAMPSON, CHAIRMAN**

## **CALENDAR 2008**

Jan 16-19, 2008 National Winter Ales Festival  
Manchester  
March 6-7, 2008 SIBA AGM and Conference  
York

April 24-26, 2008 Tuckers Maltings Beer Festival  
Newton Abbot

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

## Those 2007 awards in full

**Beer Writer of the Year**

Alastair Gilmour

**National Award**

**Gold:** Jonathan Ray, Freelance Drinks Writer and *The Daily Telegraph*

**Silver:** Roger Protz, Freelance Beer Writer

**Cains Finest Lager Award**

**for Regional Journalism**

**Gold:** Alastair Gilmour, *Newcastle Journal*

**Silver:** Duncan Brodie, *East Anglian Times*

**Wells & Young's Trade & Technical**

**Journalism Award**

**Gold:** Adam Withrington, *The Publican*

**Silver:** Christine Boggis, *Off Licence News*

**Bishop's Finger Award for Beer**

**and Food Writing**

Fiona Beckett and Will Beckett

**Whitstable Bay Organic Brewed**

**Sustainability Writing Award**

Kate Prout, ITV News

**Budweiser Budvar John White**

**Travel Bursary**

Adrian Tierney-Jones, Freelance Journalist

**Brewer of the Year**

Mike Powell-Evans, Adnams Brewery

## Flaveurs, Bières et Caprices in Montreal

LOW TEMPERATURES and a snow storm didn't stop the first edition of *Flaveurs, Bières et Caprices*, held in Montreal at Le Windsor, Salles de bal from November 28 to December 1. The event was organised by the Mondiale de la bière, who next year, from May 28-June 1, will celebrate its 15th anniversary — in Montreal of course. At Flaveurs more than 100 beers from Quebec, the US, Belgium and Germany were ready to be tasted by more than 800 visitors. Italy was the guest country with an inspiring choice of bread, cheeses, 'salumi' and, of course, beers from three emerging microbreweries: Birra del Borgo, near Rieti in Lazio, Babb, near Brescia in Lombardia and Piccolo Birrificio from Apricale, a small village in Liguria. The tasting sessions were conducted by experts such as Tony Forder,

## WE'VE GOT A TRUMPET AND WE'RE GOING TO BLOW IT — COMMENTS ON THE DINNER

Thanks for all your hard work guys. An enjoyable evening once again.

*Jeff Evans*

Congrats on the dinner — the food and beer was lovely. I really enjoyed the evening!

*Lisa Harlow*

Thought it was a great event and wish we could have stayed longer.

*Simon Webster, Thornbridge Brewery*

I thought it was fantastic. It really is developing into one of the events of the year. I love the idea of the celebrity chef and I think the food is getting better each year and overall it was absolutely fantastic.

*Georgina Wald, Fuller's*

I thought it was the best yet. Venue: good, modern, airy, light. Brian Turner: great, it was good to allow him full rein both in choosing the beers and in talking solo. It was powerful — and an important celebrity endorsement for beer.

*Rupert Ponsonby*

publisher of *Ale Street News*, while the public could vote the best Italian beer of the event (the winner was Re Ale by Birra del Borgo, an aromatic best bitter in the 'Italian Style'). A real discovery, at least for this writer, were some beers from the Quebec region, produced by brilliant brewpubs such as Le Dieu du Ciel!, whose Rosée d'Hibiscus was really fascinating, or by Du Lièvre microbrewery, who stunned palates with their Ginger Beer.

Next year Flaveurs Bières et Caprices will take place November 14/15: same city, same place.

*Maurizio Maestrelli*

## Glasgow Good Food Show

ROGER PROTZ gave three tutored beer tastings at the first-ever BBC Food Show staged in Glasgow in late October. All the tastings were sold out. Roger said: 'It was a positive step forward for beer appreciation in Scotland. Gordon Ramsay and James Martin



**ALASTAIR GILMOUR** (centre), with Ben McFarland (left) and Brian Turner, reflects on what it means to be Beer Writer of the Year for a record fourth time

Some things you can never get used to. I can honestly say I didn't expect the awards. I felt I had submitted quite a strong hand but I recognise the quality of other writers and thought maybe this year I'd miss out (I can perhaps reveal that I had slightly fancied my chances for the John White Budvar travel bursary, but I'm really really pleased for Adrian who deservedly walked off with it). Then, when there were only two categories to go (Regional Writer and National Writer) I definitely thought I

did get few more at their events but support for the beer tastings was heartening'. Along with Guild members Jeff Evans and Tim Webb, Roger also gave further tastings at the main BBC Food Show in Birmingham at the end of November.

## Michael Jackson on Youtube

FOR THOSE Guild members who use Youtube there's a poignant but fascinating interview with Michael Jackson that was conducted several weeks before his death. It was done by Dan Shelton (from beer importers the Shelton Brothers) and is well worth seeing. Go to Youtube and do a search for Michael Jackson and beer (make sure you don't get the other chap with the gloves and live-in chimp) and you should find it.

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had little chance as both are traditionally tough categories.

My hands were shaking; at the announcement of both awards I felt I was in a dream sequence and on my approach to the dais I fully expected to see somebody else bound up the steps past me — perhaps I had mistakenly heard my name being read out.

The Guild's gold tankard is a magnificent accolade; I'm extremely proud of it and to be included in the long list of great writers who have won it over the years is particularly inspiring. The reaction of Guild members, friends, family and colleagues has been doubly pleasing and I hope to use the title well in the coming year. Then, after that, who knows? Maybe it'll be time to step aside and watch somebody else bound up those steps.

### A MARRIAGE MADE IN HEAVEN

Our eyes met across the handpumps  
You sparkled like fresh poured beer,  
Our love grew amongst the regulars  
Soft words swirling beneath the banter  
Then one magical night I proposed,  
You smiled, nodded and kissed me,  
Everything would be suitably arranged.

Now I am in heaven,  
About to marry my real ale girl  
In the brewhouse by the mash tuns  
And behind the steel vessels,  
Two glorious stained glass windows,  
Truly a Church of Ale with incense  
Of malt and Kentish hops divine

After the ceremony,  
In the brewery bar,  
We will drink to our future  
And know that our well crafted love  
Will condition for many years,  
And we will savour each other always  
Like our favourite guest beer.

Les Bayton

Note: Shepherd Neame was the first brewery in the country to obtain a licence for civil marriages