

British Guild Of Beer Writers

Newsletter — November 2007

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Chairman **Tim Hampson** gets hungry *inside...*

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The Chairman Reports...

DEAR DIARY — on Wednesday, December 5 at 6.30 pm I will be at the Millennium Gloucester Hotel for the British Guild of Beer Writers Annual Dinner and Awards Presentation. This year's celebration of the very best of beer writing should be a fantastic event — and the time to book your ticket is NOW!

Last year's successful dinner was a sell-out, and I anticipate that demand for this year's event will be even higher. The Awards are the culmination of the Guild's annual activities — and I think members should be rightly proud of the work they have done in recent months to advance beer writing and beer culture. I am firmly of the opinion that Guild members do far more than write about beer, but that we are at the forefront of changing attitudes, both of the brewing industry and the media, as to the life-enhancing properties of what was perhaps the first agricultural product known to civilisation.

There is something elemental about the magic of fermentation and this was wonderfully shown by a tasting of Cooper's Vintage Ales earlier in October, when Roger Protz led us through seven of the Australian brewery's Vintage Ales.

Vintage ales are generating much interest at the moment, as brewers discover that, as with fine wines, certain beers can improve with age. Cooper's Vintage Ales are specifically developed to be matured over time, but can also be enjoyed straight from the shelf. At the tasting we discovered that the brewery's Vintage Ale grows

more interesting and complex with time. Drunk immediately it is a strong (7.5%) flavoursome ale with robust malt, hop and yeast characters. But if left to develop over a period of around two years this can mature into a softer, more malty ale with toffee notes. But left even longer it takes on even more wondrous qualities and the beers become as exciting as a concert by Pete Docherty's old mates, the Libertines — loud yes, sometimes off key, but wonderfully complex, driving rock'n'roll.

At the Guild's annual seminar three of the world's leading brewers led a discussion on the positive effects that storing beer in wooden barrels can have. Held at the innovative Thornbridge Brewery and organised perfectly by Adrian Tierney-Jones, attendees were able to sample the flavours and aromatic qualities that different wooden barrels can bring to beer. Beer might have an ancient relationship with wood, but wood aging is at the leading edge of new thinking on brewing. Wood aging unleashes a chorus of tastes and flavours, making the beer drinking even more exciting and rewarding.

Many wine drinkers search out world famous vintage wines for the attributes that wood can bring to its taste. Those drinkers can now experience an even greater selection of stimulating flavours in beer.

The link between the two events is that both were inspired by Guild members, and are a clear indication of how we are helping to push forward the boundaries of people's understanding of beer.

I am sure that innovation will be part of many people's entries into our Awards. And if anyone is thinking is there still time to enter — sorry it is too late. The chairman of the judges, Ben McFarland, has put together an excellent team: Ian Dixon of Shepherd Neame, Kate Oppenheim of Sky and Iain Murray of *Marketing Week*.

Iain Murray is a welcome addition to our panel of judges, and his recent challenging piece on beer writing in *Marketing Week* is probably one of the best advertisements the Guild has ever

CALENDAR 2006/2007

Nov 2	All-Party Parliamentary Beer Group (APPBG) visit to the Coors at Burton for tour and food and beer matching.
Dec 5	BGBW Annual Dinner & Awards, Millennium Gloucester Hotel

Dec 17	APPBG/BBPA joint Christmas reception in the House of Commons.
Jan 16, 2008	CAMRA National Winter Ales Festival, Manchester

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

had for its work. Hopefully, the judges will have a difficult but not impossible task in choosing this year's winners. So please come and celebrate with us the very best of beer writing.

Dear Diary — on Wednesday, December 5 at 6.30 pm I will be at the Millennium Gloucester Hotel for the British Guild of Beer Writers Annual Dinner and Awards Presentation. I must book my ticket now. **TIM HAMPSON, CHAIRMAN**

Annual Dinner

MEMBERS SHOULD have received booking forms for the Guild's awards and dinner — if you haven't please let Adrian Tierney-Jones know. This year we remain at the Millennium Gloucester Hotel in Kensington, and the date is Wednesday, December 5, while celebrity chef Brian Turner is once again preparing the menu. With the price of a ticket remaining at £50 for members this is definitely a date not to be missed.

In search of the perfect pour

GUILD MEMBER Alastair Gilmour joined Ryan Johnson, SAB-Miller's head brewer in Milwaukee, and Vaclav Berka, Pilsner Urquell's equivalent from Pilsen, as a judge in the International Master Bartender Awards held in New York in the middle of October. Fifteen finalists from all over the world were judged on a written test, individual interviews with the judging panel and a 'perfect pour' event to determine the winner of the weekend-long competition. Finalists had already competed in their national championships — and won — and had studied a distance module on the history, social significance and production of beer in general and Pilsner Urquell in particular.

'It was a great honour to be invited to join the panel,' says Alastair. 'Michael Jackson had done it last year with the other two judges and recommended me to the organisers during the summer as the final clashed with the Great American Beer Festival. Sadly, he never made the awards ceremony as planned, but we paid our own tribute to him in appropriate fashion. I feel, however, he would have been proud of the spirited contribution from a Guild member and the fact that Ryan and I ended up with exactly the same one, two and three in the competition in the exactly same order.

'He would have also been amused at Vaclav's attempt to promote the Czech finalist way beyond his capabilities, which apparently he tried to do last year, and tested the Jackson temper, I'm told. Having said that, the three judges laughed it

off and got on extremely well together in a show of international friendship and co-operation that can only come through the love of good beer.'

For results of the competition, visit www.pilsnerurquell.com; and, to get bored rigid about New York, beer and bars, talk to Alastair.

Cask Marque news

AS WELL as having a surge in its accreditation scheme — ie licensees with the Cask Marque Award, a number which is up by 13.5% this year — three companies have become Cask Marque corporate members. They are Timothy Taylor of Keighley, Hook Norton and the Orchid Pub Company which runs managed houses with a high food split. Apart from using the Cask Marque accreditation scheme these companies will be taking up the cellar management training offered by Cask Marque to improve beer quality and staff knowledge. Paul Nunny, Director of Cask Marque, said, 'We are delighted to have these companies join us in supporting our beer quality drive'.

Visits

THERE IS a proposed Guild trip to Marston's Wolverhampton Brewery (where the Banks's brands are brewed) on November 22, starting time 11am. Please contact Adrian Tierney-Jones for details — at the moment due to lack of numbers there is a chance it will be cancelled.

Beer biogs

OCTOBER SAW the 9th online update to the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, with the addition of 111 biographies of noteworthy men and women. This included 20 new biographies on some of Britain's best-known brewers and distillers, many of which have been written by the leading historian of the brewing industry, Professor Richard G Wilson. These new lives supplement the *Oxford DNB's* existing coverage of 100 biographies of manufacturers of alcoholic drinks. Until the end of November the *Oxford DNB* online (www.oxforddnb.com) is also offering a free, interactive map featuring the lives of 30 well-known brewers and distillers from across the British Isles, including all those newly added in this update. The brewers and distillers in the October 2007 include: Henry Boddington (1813-1886); John Smith (1824-1879); the Tetley family (per.c.1778-1959); the Tennent family (per.c.1740-1890); Samuel Arthur Brain (1850-1903); the Simonds family (per.c.1768-1960); the Meux family (per.c.1757-1910)

Copy deadline for next issue

PLEASE NOTE that if you want to submit something for the next issue that the copy deadline is November 30 — it should be out immediately after the dinner and awards.

Beer books at bedtime

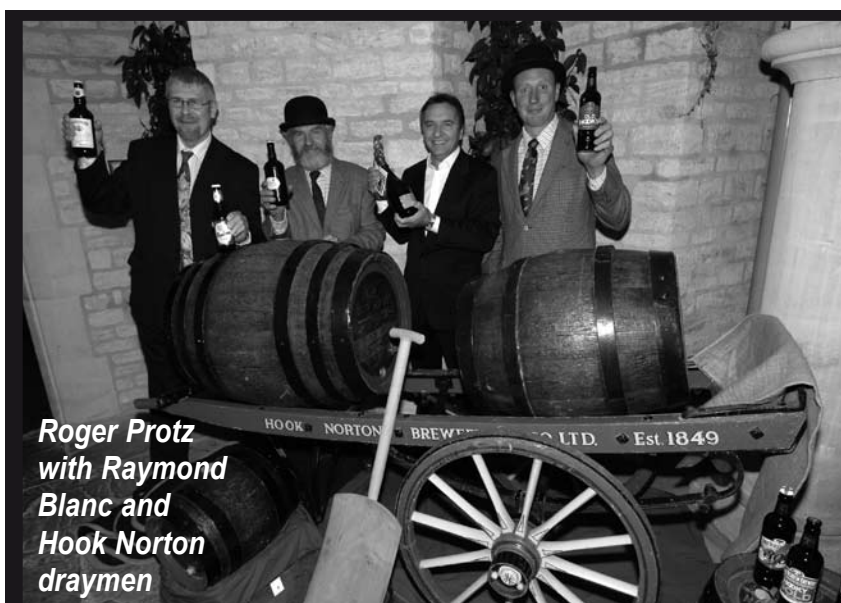
A COUPLE of essential additions to everyone's beer library have appeared this month. First of all there is the intriguingly titled *Beer & Philosophy* by Steven D Hales, professor of Philosophy at Bloomsberg University in the US. This is gloriously eclectic selection of essays on the metaphysical nature of beer; or is it a case of I drink Beer Therefore I Am?. Brooklyn Brewery brewmaster and film buff Garrett Oliver draws on *The Matrix* to ponder on what is real beer and food and what isn't; while Dogfish Head supremo Sam Calagione discusses the beer style with which he is most associated: extreme beer. Other essays have titles such as *The Truth About Beer, Mill vs Miller* (that's JS Mill rather the machine that grinds malt) and *Beyond Grolsch and Orval: Beer, Intoxication and Power in Nietzsche's Thought!* There's also an introduction by Michael Jackson, written in his traditionally off-centred style. Don't be put off by the title, this really is a superb and accessible book, that dares to take a different angle towards beer-writing. It's funny, knowing and well-written and much

recommended (*Beer & Philosophy, Steve D Hayes, Blackwell Publishing*).

Former *What's Brewing* editor Ted Bruning will be known to many members as a bit of a philosopher, but with *The Microbrewers' Handbook* he has produced a valuable and essential manual for all those who want to set up their own brewery. This thoroughly researched and clearly written gem covers all aspects of making beer and beyond, from the basics of brewing to planning finances to selling the beer in the market and even dealing with the intricacies of Customs & Excise. There are case studies of breweries dotted throughout the book and a comprehensive list of services and suppliers at the end. This is the bible for anyone who wants to chuck in the day job and start mashing. It's not easy but do it right and you will get (and give) a lot of satisfaction (*The Microbrewers' Handbook, Ted Bruning, Navigator Guides*). ATJ

A life on the ocean wave

GUILD MEMBERS might know that Pete Brown is currently sailing to India with an IPA cask for his next book. After several tribulations, including a burst cask, he has managed to get a replacement flown out to Brazil with the help of fellow Guild member Jeff Pickthall. As you read this, Pete and his new cask are snug and sound in a container ship heading east.



Roger Protz
with Raymond
Blanc and
Hook Norton
draymen

Saisons beer

THE CAMPAIGN to match beer and food was given a major boost in September when Roger Protz joined forces with top chef Raymond Blanc to present a beer dinner at Blanc's celebrated restaurant and hotel Le Manoir aux Quat' Saisons in Oxfordshire. The five-course meal was accompanied by two Oxfordshire beers, Brakspear Organic and Hook Norton Old Hooky,

along with Bavarian *Weizen Schneider Weisse* and *Aventinus* and Liefman's *Framboise* fruit beer from Belgium. 'The dinner was sold out and those attending enjoyed a superb meal prepared by Raymond, who has just hosted the BBC series *The Restaurant*,' said Roger. 'He comes from northern France and has a genuine love of good beer. Le Manoir's beer list is most impressive.' The dinner was also attended by Guild chairman Tim Hampson and committee member Alastair Gilmour.