

British Guild Of Beer Writers

Newsletter — March 2008

‘Recently, when in Italy, I visited Teo Musso of Le Baladin, a charismatic brewer who puts headphones on his fermenting vessels so that he could play different music to his ‘muses’. He was insistent that the vibration of the beat influenced the final brew. I don’t know if the beer I drank rocked to Led Zeppelin or chilled out to Sigur Rós, but what a story.’

Chairman Tim Hampson rocks and rolls *inside...*

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

The Chairman Reports...

SOME YEARS ago when researching a book on the history of the brewing industry, I chanced upon a self-serving, vanity published book by a fourth generation scion of the beerage.

In it, the heir to a brewery, now long since gone, described how during the summer months the brewer was dispatched to buy poor quality ingredients in order to make a beer which could slake the thirsts of the town's visiting working-class holidaymakers. Times have changed, even though too much of British beer culture nestles in the arms of those who lament the dumbing down of the British brew culture and its pubs.

This puts brewers on the defensive — and one example of this is the new campaign by SIBA, which recreates Hogarth's stark analysis of how people drink alcohol, when they could be extolling great beers produced by inventive brewers.

The Society has commissioned two up-to-date drawings based on Gin Lane and Beer Street, the 1750s engravings by William Hogarth. In the new pictures, Gin Lane is renamed Binge Lane — a scene of violence, unconsciousness and under-age drinking in the midst of shops selling cheap beer, alcopops and Vin de Toilette. Beer Street becomes Pub Street, a peaceful place of real ale, good food, bar games and live entertainment, according to one of the pub signs in the picture.

When the original Hogarth's were produced beer was praised as a happy produce of our isles, which warmed each British breast with liberty and love. SIBA's message is well made, but it is just a shame that they have to make it.

IN SOME parts of the world a love of beer is aligned with the Slow Food movement. Ordinary people hold beer tastings, brewmaster's dinners and beer-pairing dinners, while guest speakers hold forth with beer tastings, brewery tours and home brewing seminars. People get excited about beer. They take risks and seek new sensual experiences.

Recently, when in Italy, I visited Teo Musso of Le Baladin, a charismatic brewer who puts headphones on his fermenting vessels so that he could play different music to his 'muses'. He was insistent that the vibration of the beat influenced the final brew. I don't know if the beer I drank rocked to Led Zeppelin or chilled out to Sigur Rós, but what a story.

Worldwide there is now a movement of new people creating great beers. Denmark has over 100 craft beer producers. The great wine countries of France and Italy have large inventive micro-brewing communities. While, in what has become a true American success story, the craft beer market again grew by double digits in 2007.

The US Brewers Association reports estimated sales by independent craft brewers up 12% by volume for 2007. Craft brewers' share of the beer category is 3.8% of production and 5.9% of retail sales. Today, the US has 1,449 total breweries and nearly 70% of craft breweries are brew-pubs that sell most or all of their beer on-premises.

Since 2004, dollar sales by craft brewers have increased 58%. The strength of this correlates with the American trend of buying local products and a preference for more flavourful foods and beers. Beer from Britain's local breweries has also had a spectacular year, with a growth in sales of almost 11%.

Against the background of the most challenging year for beer retailing for decades, the continued strong growth of demand for local beer is spectacular. Counter to the trends of a market

CALENDAR 2008

March 6-7	SIBA AGM and Conference, York
March 11	MA Top 100 Independent Multiple Retailers, Business Briefing, London
March 18	The Publican Awards, London
April 15-16	World Beer Cup, San Diego
April 24-26	Tuckers Maltings Beer Festival Newton Abbot
May 28-June 1	Mondial de la bière, Quebec
June 13-15	Beers of the World Live NEC, Birmingham

Aug 5-9	CAMRA Great British Beer Festival, Earls Court, London
Sept 12-14	First European Beer Festival, Copenhagen
Oct 10	SIBA Local Brewing Business Awards
Dec 10	Joint Beer Group/BBPA 2008 Christmas party, venue TBA

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

which saw consumption decline across many beer types, the average volume growth in sales of local beer was 10.7%. Clearly, there is an accelerating consumer movement towards principled and ethical purchasing, and buying local is a big plus.

I want to see more questioning drinkers, who care about what they sup, be it from an international, national regional or local brewer.

Beer drinkers should not be seen as being indiscriminate drinkers, but knowledgeable people who want to know more about the product they are buying. A questioning drinker may be a challenge to some brewers. But not to those who understand that consumers are becoming more questioning about what they buy.

TIM HAMPSON, CHAIRMAN

Beer goes down the Tube

AS YOU may know, I'm not a proper beer writer at all. However, for the last five years, I've managed an award-winning, beer-specialising off-license in Leeds (Beer-Ritz, in Headingley), and my natural inquisitiveness has propelled me towards other related activities.

I set up a website to advertise beer tastings as corporate entertainment (www.thebeerboy.co.uk), and filled the site out a bit with a collection of writings around beer. The cheekily-titled blog on the website (Are You Tasting the Pith?) is where this ends up.

At the start of this year, I decided to add a 'video blog'. This is a short piece to camera each week, using the idea of 'a year in beer' as an anchor point — traditional festivals, seasonal beer specialities, beers related to seasonal foodstuffs, and so on. So I'm not fasting for Lent, but will be using it as excuse to talk about and drink (sorry, taste) the liquid bread of the Trappist brewers.

I settled on the idea of a video blog for two reasons. Firstly, wine writer Jamie Goode started one on his blog, and I thought it looked like an interesting idea, and secondly, I thought the 'year in beer' premise was good, but I couldn't get it commissioned as a monthly column (although *Beers of the World* are going to publish it as a calendar towards the end of this year).

Producing yet more pages on the internet seemed a waste of a good idea, and I thought that if I turned the idea into a series of short videos it might be more engaging. I'm aware that

the whole enterprise lies somewhere between 'inspired and impassioned' and 'another bearded beer geek involved in a Youtube vanity publishing project'. Is a video blog the same as beer writing? No, but it's a different medium with the same aims. I joined the Guild to try and improve standards of beer writing, and also to extend the public knowledge of beer, and here, in the 21st century, I think that message should be disseminated through as many media channels as possible.

Zak Avery

Calling Pianeta Birra

DESPITE THE absence of big companies such as Heineken and Peroni (who between them control more than 50% of the Italian beer market), Pianeta Birra in Rimini registered a steady interest in its activities from the public.

Once again, craft beer producers have been the real protagonists and are now showing their skill by brewing new kind of beers such as 'wine-beers'. As an example, Nicola Perra, of Sardinian microbrewery Barley, produced the powerful BB10 made with must of Cannonau. In Piedmont Riccardo Franzosi of Montegioco microbrewery has made the delicate Tibir, with must of Timorasso. Seems to be that the cross-pollination between beer and wine producers could be the new face of Italian brewing...

Pianeta Birra also focused on matching pizza and beer. It's a long Italian tradition to have a pizza with a beer, but it's also a truth that pizzerias, which make up more than 32% of the restaurants in Italy, are often the worst places to drink a beer.

Educating the owners in discovering different styles of beers and teaching them the correct way to serve a beer is something that journalists and producers have to face as soon as possible.

Maurizio Maestrelli

Beers of the World goes Live

Beers of the World comes to life in June 2008, bringing its first premium international beer show to Birmingham's NEC. Running alongside the BBC Summer Festival, Beers of the World Live will showcase beer in a stylish environment with sampling as the core of the event, alongside great food and beer pairings, masterclasses, live stage presentations and themed educational zones. There will also be an on-site delivery

service where people will be able to order any beers they want to enjoy at home. It is open 12-6pm, Friday-Sunday June 13-15.

Trips

THE MARCH 20 trip to Springhead has been postponed until a proposed date of May 14 — there are still places left so please contact Adrian Tierney-Jones if you would like to go.

Beer in the Borough

OWNERS OF the Rake and Utobeer — Mike Hill and Richard Dinwoodie — have joined forces with Guild members Glenn Payne and Melissa Cole to create a unique business that aims to promote a better image of beer. Lovebeer@borough, based above the Rake in the world-famous Borough Market, will offer a range of tasting experiences for corporate clients as well as an intimate space for brand launches or meetings.

The aim of the business is to offer people the chance to learn more about beer, whether they are novices or already interested in what goes in their pint. Corporate tastings will start from £35 per head for beer-only sessions and there will be a range of different themed packages available, as well as a bespoke service.

Starting with a simple introduction to beer styles in general to more esoteric packages like the Trappist Beers of Belgium, the idea behind the packages is to educate people on the complexities of beer without the jargon. Given its location lovebeer@borough is also in a unique position to offer great beer and food matches, by working closely with suppliers from Britain's best market.

Commenting on the launch Melissa Cole says: 'There's no doubt that there is a big trend back to quality beers with provenance — whether local, regional or international — and we are keen to improve people's knowledge and respect for what we feel is the ultimate drink, but in a vibrant way.

'So many people have been to stuffy wine tastings and been confronted with weird flavour profiles and jargon that has left them feeling slightly ignorant but we are the antithesis of this approach, we bring fun and interactivity to the beer tasting experience, helping people reconnect with their national drink.'

Echoing this sentiment Glenn Payne says: 'I've been involved in the beer industry for many years and can honestly say there is more innovation

and excitement in the category than at any other time, and we should be shouting about it.'

Adding his thoughts Mike Hill states: 'It's been obvious to us, from the growth and success of all our businesses, that great quality beer is back in demand and opening lovebeer@borough just seemed like the obvious next step and we're delighted to be working with Melissa and Glenn.'

San Francisco meets Somerset

DEEP IN the folds of eastern Somerset, laid siege to by the green hills of Dorset, rural life came face to face with the urbane urban ales of San Francisco's Anchor Brewery when the Queens Arms of Corton Denham hosted a beer dinner with a distinctly West Coast flavour. Several members of the groundbreaking Frisco brewery, including assistant brewmaster Mark Carpenter and director of sales and marketing John Dannerbeck, were over on a whistle-stop tour of English breweries — they had been at Black Sheep, Marston's, Holts, Lees and Adnams, as well as enjoying a beer dinner at Mark Dorber's Anchor the previous night. Now it was time for a bit of West Country air.

Pub owner Rupert Reeves (who used to work alongside Dorber at the White Horse) is a longtime aficionado of Anchor's beers and saw the event as a great opportunity to showcase the brewery's beers. He already stocks them in both bottle and draught at the Queens and was pleased how well the concept of a beer dinner went down well with locals as well as neighbouring brewers such as Moor Beer's Justin Hawke, whose imperial IPA JJJ was designed with help from the Queens' resident beer-lovers.

It was a memorable evening with several stars performers, especially a Glitzy Chocolate Pudding matched with Anchor's rich and luscious Porter and the redoubtable barley wine Old Foghorn squaring up to a trio of artisanal cheeses including Stichelton's unpasteurised Stilton, which this writer couldn't stop matching... ATJ

And finally...

BREWERS' GUARDIAN is recruiting a full-time reporter and details are posted on www.brewersguardian.co.uk...

the IBD is having its ninth book sale. The list can be accessed via www.ibd.org.uk and items bid for by email.