

# British Guild Of Beer Writers

Newsletter — May 2009



## The Chairman Reports...

**SO WHERE is the best beer town in the UK? Manchester, Liverpool — or Sheffield as some claim? Well, one league Newcastle is not bottom of is the one for the quality and variety of its pubs, as a recent Guild trip to the Northeast showed, as several members visited the home of two of England's most iconic images: Angel of the North and Newcastle Brown.**

Organised by Guild member Alastair Gilmour in conjunction with Northumberland Tourism the trip took us from the feet of the Angel to Hadrian's Wall on the Scottish border. At the Angel of the North, which has become a contemporary icon for Newcastle and Gateshead, we enjoyed a glass of Wylam Angel Ale, while our coach driver was being questioned about why he had parked in an illegal area — it wasn't quite *Gef Carter* but on the way back into the city we did pass the now-derelict Trinity Centre, the multi-storey car park in Gateshead from which Jack Carter threw Cliff Brumby in the 1971 film (though the dead man did miraculously return as a mayor in somewhere called Weatherfield)..

There is a campaign to save the building — though it is pretty unsightly and unusable and does stand in the way of a retail redevelopment. Perhaps it could end up in the Beamish museum? Built on former National Coal Board land the Beamish museum is a motley collection of historic buildings, which have been taken down and rebuilt on the site.

At the Sun Inn we enjoyed a pint of Sunderland Beer courtesy of the Bull Lane Brewery just as people did in 1913. Originally sited in nearby Bishop Auckland, the whole pub, lock, stock and casket was lovingly transported to its current home at the Museum to recreate the authentic atmosphere.

Back to the pubs of Newcastle. We arrived on the day Alan Shearer relinquished his comfortable seat in a television studio for the job of steering Newcastle United out of the relegation mire, a fact that made me realise the potent hold football has over the lives of many.

Within moments of sipping my first beer in the Cumberland Arms — a truly traditional pub, focussed on serving good beer — talk turned to whether Newcastle with Shearer at the helm would escape the drop. Thus it was at the Crown Posada — one of the city's must-visit pubs — where the regulars fell into two camps: Shearer's appointment was either the equivalent of the

coming of the Messiah or the arrival of Mary Poppins.

Legend has it that this glorious pub was bought by a Spanish sea captain for his mistress but it now stands as one of the most famous pubs in Newcastle and the second oldest in the city. The pub is a Grade-II listed building with a Victorian exterior, an elaborately panelled entrance and original stained glass windows. My next Shearer conversation was in the Bridge, situated next to the historic High Level Bridge and the Castle Keep for over 100 years. The Bridge is a traditional pub with areas, cosy snugs, stained glass windows and an outside terrace providing excellent views of the Quayside.

The Shearer banter continued at the Centurion in Central Station, which was built in 1893 as a sumptuous waiting lounge for first class passengers. A major feature is its extensive tiling, worth an astonishing £3.8 million. Voted 'Newcastle's most impressive watering hole' by the *Observer*, the Centurion is a former first class passenger lounge welcoming an eclectic clientele of football fans.

Later on we watched the sun set over the Tyne and its seven bridges from the bar of the Free Trade Inn. 'Newcastle's going down faster,' quipped one local.

Later on that evening we enjoyed a beer-themed dinner at Blackfriars. Dating back to 1239, Blackfriars Restaurant originally housed the refectory for Newcastle's Dominican Friars, and was the favoured hostel of Henry III on his visits to the city. At the Blackfriars the chef uses only the best quality fresh local produce, prepared using simple, honest and traditional techniques to create a modern twist on British cuisine, which was matched with local brews.

The trip also took us to the High House Farm Brewery, in rural Northumberland, and the Newcastle Federation Brewery, home of Newcastle Brown Ale, where watching a health and safety video about how to watch a health and safety video providing a surreal note.

Sanity was restored with a visit to the Maxim Brewery, Houghton le Spring, now home of the former Vaux brew Double Maxim, and, finally, Wylam Brewery, Heddon on the Wall, Northumberland — another rural enterprise, set up in an old farm dairy near Heddon on the Wall.

This was a fantastic, well-organised visit, which leaves me with a one nagging question — what's the difference between Alan Shearer and Newcastle? Shearer will be on Match of the Day next season...

**TIM HAMPSON, CHAIRMAN**

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## AGM

THE GUILD'S AGM is now officially called for Thursday June 11 at the Melton Mowbray, 18 Holborn, London EC1 2LE — nearest tube stop Chancery Lane; it will kick-off at 6.30pm with a buffet to be served at 8.30pm. Once again we have Fuller's to thank for their kind hospitality. Tim Hampson has indicated he is happy to continue as Chairman, but any members wishing to stand should let the Secretary know; while both Secretary and Treasurer are also happy to continue. At the time of writing, there are no vacant places on the committee available but any members wishing to stand should let the Secretary know — and the time-honoured procedure of nominations, seconding and then having a vote will be undertaken. There is no stipulation in the Constitution to do so before the meeting, but if there is anyone interested in standing, please let the Secretary know at least a week before the AGM. However, any motions that members want on the agenda must be sent to the Secretary at least seven days before the AGM.

## 21 Years

In the last newsletter, you might have noticed in the calendar a reference to the AGM/21st celebration. There were initial plans to hold both events on the same day, but it has been decided that the 21st celebrations will be better as a stand-alone event, which, at the moment according to the sub-committee dealing with the matter, now looks to be planned for September, so, as the magisterial Shaw Taylor used to growl, 'keep 'em peeled'. ATJ

## Visits

### Roosters & coffee: June 24

ARRANGEMENTS HAVE been made for a sensory awayday to Yorkshire on Wednesday June 24 to Roosters Brewery in Knaresborough and then Taylors Coffee Roasters in Harrogate (perhaps better known as part of Bettys and Taylors of Harrogate!).

The planned programme is as follows: 11am assemble at Knaresborough railway station then a minibus to Roosters Brewery (HG5 8LJ). Meet with proprietor Sean Franklin, who will lead a tour of the brewery, which is the home of Roosters' Yorkshire Pale Ale, World Cup 2008 winner of the English Style Summer Ale Class; this will be followed by a teach-in on hops and hop flavours in Roosters' beers, a tasting, discussion on the current local craft beer scene and a visit their own pub for a buffet lunch.

2.30pm; transfer to Harrogate to Taylors Coffee and Tea @ Pagoda House, Plumpton Park, HG2 7LD.

3pm: Discussion on coffee types and coffee tasting led by Mr Mike Riley. 4.30pm: disperse.

Those interested in attending — on a first come first served as numbers are limited — please send their names to CJM by June 3 at [cjmarshbanks@aol.com](mailto:cjmarshbanks@aol.com).

*Guild trips — if you have never been on a trip before do try and make the effort — they are one of the great boons of Guild membership; they provide a good chance for breweries to interact with Guild members, feed them stories, show off their pubs, get members' thoughts on forthcoming plans and new beers; beer and food matchings are often organised and the local media roped in (Guild members often find themselves being interviewed on local radio or snapped by the local newspaper). It's also a chance to get out away from your desk and do original research. The visits are open to all Guild members and all you have to do is place some copy on the trip. Watch the newsletter for future brewery visits.*

## By royal appointment

THE QUEEN has presented the Guild's founder secretary, Michael Hardman, with the insignia of a Member of the Order of the British Empire at an investiture at Windsor Castle. Hardman, one of the founders of CAMRA, created and edited both the best-selling *Good Beer Guide* and CAMRA's monthly newspaper *What's Brewing*. He said the Queen talked to him about the brewing industry and recalled the late John Young, chairman of Young's Brewery in South London. Hardman, whose MBE was awarded 'for services to the Campaign for Real Ale and the brewing industry', was Young's head of public relations for 27 years. He also devised and handled PR programmes for the Brewers and Licensed Retailers Association (now the BBPA), the Association of London Brewers and most recently SIBA, the Society of Independent Brewers. Hardman, a former Fleet Street and BBC journalist, is now running a communications and publications consultancy.

## The Beer Academy Presents...

### BEER APPRECIATION FOUNDATION COURSE

May, 11 London, The White Horse

May 15, London, Fuller's Brewery\*

May 20, Burton, Marston's Brewery

June 5, London, Beer Academy HQ

June 12, Dorset, Palmers Brewery\*

June 19, Oxford, Hook Norton Brewery\*

July 3, Wiltshire, Wadworth Brewery\*

\*Includes a brewery tour

Contact: Dan Cannas at [dan.cannas@ibd.org.uk](mailto:dan.cannas@ibd.org.uk) or on 020 7290 6087 for more details.

## CALENDAR 2009

June 3-7	Mondial de Biere, Quebec
June 11	Guild AGM, Melton Mowbray, London
June 12-14	Beers of the World Live, Birmingham
Aug 4-8	Great British Beer Festival, London
Sept 24-26	Great American Beer Festival, Denver

October 12 British Guild of Beer Writers Seminar on Barley Wine, Thornbridge Hall

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