

British Guild Of Beer Writers

Newsletter — October 2007

'The beer world has lost its most influential and passionate advocate. His writing style was wonderfully erudite and bubbled with humanity and humour. His knowledge of beer was unsurpassed. His genius was to be able to write simply and beautifully about beers and the lives of the people who created them. He was an inspiration to hundreds of brewers, writers and consumers worldwide.'

Chairman Tim Hampson and Guild members celebrate the life and work of Michael Jackson *inside...*

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MICHAEL JACKSON, BEER HUNTER
BORN MARCH 27 1942, DIED AUGUST 30 2007.

THIS EDITION of the British Guild of Beer Writers newsletter is dedicated to the memory of Michael Jackson..

WHO WOULD have thought that a train ride from Amsterdam to the Catholic south of the Netherlands would forever change the world of beer, beer writing and brewing? It was 1969 and tyro journalist Michael Jackson was enjoying his first foreign posting. The Sixties was in full swing, and Michael revelled in the city's rock'n'roll and jazz cafes with beer and whisky his drugs of choice. As John Lennon and Yoko Ono enjoyed a bed in the Amsterdam Hilton, Jackson decided to travel to the southern Dutch border to write an article on the wild parties he had been told took place at the region's pre-Lenten carnivals, and to try some different beers.

Jackson throughout his life soon tired of uniformity and he was bored with drinking the city's ubiquitous Pils beers. He wanted to experience the wider range of beers a friend had said was available. And in an unnamed town, where revellers danced to the sounds of the Beatles, a barman in a John Lennon mask handed him a chalice with a darker beer. It was a Trappist beer from Belgium, and in a gulp his life changed. Beer was suddenly much more than an alcoholic liquid in a glass.

The following day he travelled to Belgium for the first time — sampling the marvels of De Konnick, Westmalle Dubbel and Tripel and an unidentified Gueuze. John Barleycorn had grabbed his heart.

And as the beer flowed, so did the words. He dedicated more than 30 years to discovering, recording and then sharing the world's finest beers and whiskies in his many books, articles and TV programmes. It was a journey that took him from Alaska to Patagonia and on to Sri Lanka. He developed a classification system for the world's classic

beers styles and in doing so created consumer interest that saved many beers from extinction. His writing set the standard for beer enthusiasts and brewers alike. He wrote in depth about different brewing techniques, ingredients, flavour profiles, cultural differences and food pairings.

The beer world has lost its most influential and passionate advocate. His writing style was wonderfully erudite and bubbled with humanity and humour. His knowledge of beer was unsurpassed. His genius was to be able to write simply and beautifully about beers and the lives of the people who created them. He was an inspiration to hundreds of brewers, writers and consumers worldwide.

Michael's achievements are enormous. He was the first Chairman of the Guild, seeing it through its early and difficult years, and, without his inspiration, the Guild would not be what it is today.

His awards were numerous and include three British Guild of Beer Writers Gold Tankards. And two years ago who could forget the spontaneous and long lasting standing ovation he received when he stood to accept the Guild's Lifetime Achievement Award.

Since Michael's death I have been asked many times — what should the Guild do as a fitting tribute to his life and work? Several organisations have approached us to see if they could name an award in his honour — I am minded, when we do something that it should not be linked to any other organisation or company, but I would welcome members' views on this. I certainly believe that we should dedicate this year's annual dinner to his memory.

Glenn Payne tells me that in the USA brewers and drinkers plan to unite across the nation and toast Michael's memory at an appointed time. Maybe we could do something similar? Perhaps we should raise money at our annual dinner for a Parkinson's charity. If everyone who attended gave £5 we would raise about £1,000. What does everyone think?
TIM HAMPSON, CHAIRMAN

CALENDAR 2007

Oct 11-13 Great American Beer Festival, Colorado Convention Centre, Denver
 Nov 2 All-Party Parliamentary Beer Group (APPBG) visit to 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.

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

THEY HAD to hire a coach to take all the Americans from the airport to Michael Jackson's funeral. That was the measure of the respect he was held in the United States: an Englishman who had been at the forefront of the American beer revival.

And was it Michael's puckish sense of humour that had chosen Mortlake Crematorium as the venue for his funeral? The crematorium is cheek-by-jowl with the infamous brewery of the same name where Watneys Red Barrel was fizzed up in the 1970s and is now home to 'American' Budweiser. There was a wonderful irony in the fact that Michael's final resting place is alongside a factory that pumps out the kind of plastic beer he wouldn't cross the road to drink.

Among the Americans present were Steve Hindy and Garrett Oliver of Brooklyn Brewery, Daniel Bradford, publisher of *All About Beer* magazine, Dave Alexander, owner of the renowned Brickseller bar in Washington DC — where Michael gave regular talks and tastings — and Charles and Rose Ann Finkel of Pike Brewery in Seattle, another venue for many of Michael's tours-de-force over the years.

Outside the crematorium the Americans talked to British beer and whisky writers, publishers and his close friends and relatives. The lay service was conducted with quiet dignity by Nick Redman and the tributes were interspersed with music from John Coltrane, Billie Holiday, Lester Young, Duke Ellington, Mahalia Jackson, Ben Webster and Coleman Hawkins to stress Michael's great love of jazz.

The tributes were read by Mark Dorber, former landlord of the White Horse, Parsons Green — a fortress of good beer — Garrett Oliver, Martine Nouet, Buz Teacher, Christopher Davis, Michael's step-daughter Sam Hopkins, his sister Heather Campbell and his partner Sandy Gunningham. Sam's charming tribute created laughter when she recalled she had struggled with English at school and regularly got Ds for her essays. Then Michael stepped in and the following week Sam got A minus.

'Did someone help you with this?' Sam's teacher asked. 'Yes, my father.' 'What does he do?' 'He's a writer — and he won't appreciate the minus!'

The funeral was followed by a reception in Fuller's Hock Store at Chiswick, another scene of many of Michael's talks and tastings. The large gathering raised a glass — several in fact — to his memory while episodes from his seminal TV series *The Beer Hunter* were shown on a screen. It was a fine and moving farewell to a great writer who always got straight As.

ROGER PROTZ

The Guild was represented at the funeral by Jaclyn Bateman, Mark Dorber, Jeff Evans, Alastair Gilmour, Michael Hardman, Peter Haydon, Mikko Montonen, Glenn Payne, Rupert Ponsonby, Roger Protz, Nick Redman, Adrian Tierney-Jones and Georgina Wald.

I'D READ the books of (the non-singing) Michael Jackson before I became Safeway's beer buyer in 1997 and then joined him many times in the following five years at beer events around the country. Me, a know-it-all supermarket buyer, and *The Beer Hunter*, who knew more than anyone about beer, life and all related subjects.

Things changed in 2002 when I was first invited to judge at the Great American Beer Festival in Denver and bumped into Michael in the corridor of the hotel where judges were looked after.

'Are you here to judge?' he asked. 'Yes. And pretty nervous about it as well,' I replied.

We talked in that spot for a good hour as he reassured me that all the brewers and journalists were very collegiate and there to help. He was right and none more than he. That was the start of a great friendship that encompassed music, sport, food and drink and a love of America. The only thing we disagreed on was rugby: naturally, as a Yorkshireman it was League and with my Welsh roots it was Union. I never

did make it to see Harlequins at the Stoop, as many Americans did and nor did he come with me to see Llanelli at Stradey.

I believe a good portion of my books and CDs are amongst Michael's collection and vice versa. We both loved the blues and often went to jazz clubs on either side of the Atlantic. I loved Michael's humility and the way he stuck to the principle our mothers taught us: 'If you can't say something nice about someone, don't say anything at all.' I never heard him badmouth a beer, brewery, brewer or journalist.

We'd planned to visit Californian breweries sometime in the future as well as Bathams in the Black Country. Ah well, next lifetime!

GLENN PAYNE

MICHAEL JACKSON picking his favourite beers of the world persuaded me to head north to join Caledonian — the quote was 'And my favourite beers from Britain are Marston's Pedigree, Taylor's Landlord and the Caledonian' Beers from Edinburgh!'

He also spoke at the Caledonian's celebration of 10 years since the management buy-out in 1997 and I had a very pleasurable time driving him around Glasgow and Edinburgh so he could write his pre-Festival piece for the *Guardian*.

I was also on my way with samples to see Michael the morning he sadly passed away. He inspired people to be passionate about beer and wrote so beautifully about it — he gave gifts for beer marketing with those words. Like: 'A beer (Deuchars IPA) with a chic in its own city unmatched by any other UK beer!'

A very sad loss — but what a contribution to beer in the UK, Belgium, the USA and beyond.

Cheers Michael

STEPHEN CRAWLEY

IFEEL THERE are so many people who knew him so much better than me, but what made him special for me was the side of him that was perhaps most unexpected. He loved talking about the old days of hot metal journalism, for instance, and we shared a love of rugby league and spoke about it often. He was a real Yorkshireman when it came to his sport: a traditionalist who had no time for airy-fairy marketing and silly outfits. Professionally he was old-fashioned too — he had no time for the cult of personality and always lived by the belief that a journalist should never be the story. Ego-free, humble and brilliant. And much missed already.

DOMINIC ROSKROW

I HEARD THE news on the Thursday, just before I had to go down to Brussels for an event with the Belgian brewers. Understandably everyone in the beer world there was shocked by the news and felt the loss personally. I too shall miss him. Not only was he a fellow Yorkshireman but a good friend. I remember getting a call one day from him. He had arrived in Amsterdam and did I want to meet up later as he'd like to sample some beers with me? We meet up late afternoon in Café Gollem, found a table, ordered some beers, started tasting them and he began making notes. This went on till well into the evening by which time, despite bread and cheese in-between for nourishment, what had started out as neat writing in his notebook was beginning to look like a spider crawling out of the inkpot. Eventually we decided to call it a day, well an evening, and as Michael put his notebook away he sighed saying 'it's a hard life being a beer writer'.

GUY THORNTON

TO ME he was the writer who 20 years ago opened up my eyes to the glorious world of beer, while his *Independent* columns in the early 1990s were eagerly awaited on Saturday; I recall sending off for a special offer of Bavarian wheat beers, which sparked off a love for this beer style that has remained. I can never forget when a piece about beer and food was linked with the paper's then cookery writer Sophie Grigson, who came up with

appropriate recipes. However, no one told the illustrator whose work was full of images of cans of Newcastle Brown and Boddington's — alongside an article about glorious beers from the likes of Schneider and Traquair.

When I was starting to write about beer I didn't really know a mash tun from my elbow so when I was judging at the Beauty of Hops in 2000 I was seated next to Michael and felt a bit overwhelmed, yet he put me at my ease by saying that he had never been able to guess a beer at a blind tasting. I look back now and wonder if he was just helping me to relax, which was such a good thing to do. I find it unbearably poignant that the last long chat I had with him was at the Guild's award dinner last December, in the company of John White.

ADRIAN TIERNEY-JONES

I'M PLEASED that I saw Michael speak at the Guild drinks gathering in August. I'm very sad that I'll never get the chance to sit and chat with him over a glass of something bracing. His books, his newspaper articles and his television work have helped to introduce millions to the delights of world beer culture.

JEFF BELL

MICHAEL WAS irreplaceable, his loss is a crushing blow to all of us. His 30 years of inspired writing and educating changed so much for the better in the world of craft beer (and whisky). Michael's spirit lives on in his works, which I'm sure will continue to spread his vast beer knowledge for generations to come. In America, he has left a legacy of many thousands (or even millions?) of beer-knowledgeable people who otherwise would probably still think the beverage comes in just one flavour.

Since I was a teenager just discovering craft beer, he was an inspiration and a major part of my own beer education. The last time I would ever see him was here in New York a few months ago, at the unlikely (for a British writer in his 60s) location of Barcade, a lively and unique microbrew-only bar with a 1980s video game theme. To the amazement of the assembled beer enthusiast crowd, Michael just calmly strolled in and started chatting with people over some samples. In his passing, the craft beer world has lost its greatest ally. Sleep well Michael.

ALEX HALL

FAMILY, FRIENDS, beer associates and whisky comrades filed into the chapel of rest at Mortlake Crematorium to the sound of John Coltrane and *A Love Supreme*. They came from all points — Seattle, New York, North Carolina, Berlin, Helsinki, Islay — to pay tribute to a writer and raconteur whose like we'll never see again. The door clicked shut behind us as a cue to be left alone to think and talk about Michael in the way that family, friends, beer associates and whisky comrades do best — with great affection and much love through intimate memories, humorous interludes and moments of utter irreverence.

The thoroughly dependable Nick Redman held the proceedings together as Michael's sister Heather Campbell, with Mark Dorber, Garrett Oliver, Martine Nouet (via Ian Wisniewski), Alastair Campbell, Sam Hopkins, Paddy Gunningham and Rebecca Campbell shared their heartfelt observations. And, even hearts of stone would have been moved by Duke Ellington's *It Don't Mean A Thing*, Mahalia Jackson's *The Lord's Prayer* and Rebecca's faultless reading of Dylan Thomas' *Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night*. They were deep-breath moments but as close to religion as it got, save for Heather's recollections of Jewish food and Garrett's experience of a rugby league match — accompanying Michael after a long liquid-laced lunch — when the word 'Jesus' spilled out in surprise at his unexpectedly forceful and vocal support from the Fulham stands.

Many Guild members have reason to be grateful to Michael for the extraordinary amount of time he would give over even the shortest of quotes, his sound advice, and the ready invitation to tap into his extensive network of contacts —

plus he was never too big or too remote to do the same in reverse. He once told me that Cameron's Strongarm was his favourite beer. We were in a Cameron's pub at the time, drinking Cameron's beer, being entertained by Cameron's directors, and I'm sure he twinkled when he said it. It proved that, when required, diplomacy was also a Jackson speciality. I've since raised a glass or two of the stuff to him. Long may the star twinkle.

ALASTAIR GILMOUR

● See www.beerwriters.co.uk for more members' tributes; thanks to Peter Haydon for the picture of Michael at Meantime Brewery's Greenwich Union.

GUILD NEWS

I RECEIVED A number of messages querying the publication in the *Guardian* on September 17 of an obituary of George Bateman, who died in June. The implication of some of the messages was that I had been dilatory in my duty to George. In fact, I wrote the obit within days of George dying. I was both distressed and embarrassed by the delay, as it is hurtful to his family to see an obit appearing so long after his death. I don't have to explain to Guild members that freelance contributors have no say over when their copy appears. I did point out to the *Guardian's* obits department that if George had made Swedish films on topics so depressing they made viewers wish to commit suicide then his obit would have appeared the next day. But I may be pushing my luck. I was criticised by one CAMRA member for publishing in the *Guardian* an obit of Michael Jackson four days after he died. By *Guardian* standards, that's fast.

ROGER PROTZ

ARKELLS TRIP

SIX STALWARTS from the Guild took part in a highly informative and enjoyable visit to Arkell's Brewery in Swindon at the end of August. What most impressed us was the confidence and enthusiasm shown at all levels of the company, from Managing Director James Arkell, through Head Brewer Don Bracher, down to the man painting the pub signs in the brewery yard. Thanks to the determination of that man Humphreys, the trip actually got underway the evening before, so to speak. Barry Hunt and Philip Mercer from Arkell's bravely accompanied the thirsty Guild members and a local journalist around five of the Arkell's estate and gave us a great insight into their pubs and the chance to talk to both the people behind the bar and the customers. One of these pubs — the Tawny Owl in North Swindon — was a new build, a £2m establishment and Arkell's 103rd, another indicator of the confidence running through the company. The evening ended with what, on the morrow, was felt to be the less than sensible consumption of a bottle of port. The next day gave us the chance to meet with senior people at the company followed by a detailed tour of the brewery led by Don Bracher. As you would expect with a company going back to 1843, the site, its equipment and its people had so much of interest that it was difficult to pack it all in in the time available. In a period when many family brewers have thrown in the towel, it was very encouraging to visit one whose intention could not be described as being anything but different. When we all returned home our e-mail in-boxes were filled with the news about Michael Jackson. I am sure he would have been totally supportive of us Beer Hunting, even at the time of his sad passing away.

JOHN CRYNE

ALL AT SEA

SEND ANY spare oilskins you have to Guild member Pete Brown who, as you read this, is making his epic journey in the company of a barrel of Burton IPA called Barry across the high seas to India, with the aim of replicating the epic sea journeys of IPA in the 19th century. He's already fallen off his narrow-boat in a canal between Burton and Rugby so anything can happen.