

British Guild Of Beer Writers

Newsletter — April 2009

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Chairman Tim Hampson shares his learning *inside...*

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The Chairman Reports...

BOOKS GLORIOUS books. I love books and I love beer. Put the both of them together and I just want to reach out for a favourite brew, relax in a comfy chair and while away an afternoon. But no such luxury — our secretary Adrian says he must have newsletter copy from me before he and I go on a trip to Newcastle and Northumberland, which has been organised by Alastair Gilmour.

'From man's sweat and God's love, beer came into the world,' so says Saint Arnold of Metz, the patron saint of brewers, quoted in the front-piece to Roger Protz's latest book, *A Life on the Hop — Memoirs from a Career in Beer*.

The book is a glorious, understated romp through a lifetime in beer. Seventeen chapters cover a journey that takes Roger from the east end to the streets of Zywiec with stops in the likes of Belgium and the US in between. In truth, this book must cover only a few steps on the way for someone who has spent more than 30 years seeking out the best beer and pubs in the world.

So is sex better than pork? Who are the big hitters who accompanied Protz to Poland (no there shouldn't be an s before hitters) and where is he happy to hang his jug? The answers lie somewhere in the pages of this highly readable book.

Decoction! is the title of Ronald Pattinson's latest book, billed as Volume IV in his Mini Book Series. Ron is best known for www.europeanbeerguide.net which covers European breweries, pubs and other beer-related topics. There can be few of us who have not plundered this site for its beery jewels when writing about continental brews. For anyone wanting a toehold into the structure and culture of other countries' brewing industries this site has to be a first sip.

It is bit of an honour to have a copy of *Decoction!* —only 10 have been produced. As mentioned above the book is the fourth in a series of 11 — why 11!

have no idea. But Ron tells me they won't be for sale: 'They are too good for the shops.'

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Well the jury is out on that — but Ron describes how in North Germany in the 1890s rice beer gained popularity from year to year: indeed it was renowned for its pleasant taste and clear pale colour. At the time rice was more popular than sugar and what's more potato starch and saccharin found their way into fermenters too.

One of my favourite Belgian towns for a lost weekend is Brugges. Chris (Podge) Pollard and Siobhan McGinn's *Around Bruges in 80 Beers* is ideal for all those seeking to lose themselves in the heart of this medieval city. The book is an update on the first edition, which appeared in 2006. If you still own one it must now sadly gather dust as much has changed on the beer front.

This edition features 25 new venues and nearly half the beers reviewed are new to the guide. The Belgian beer scene is indeed dynamic despite the strong-arm tactics of Anheuser-Busch InBev. Podge says people should use this book to dig a little deeper and be a bit more adventurous in their beer choices. Well I am sure we would all drink to that.

American writer Bill Barich wants everyone to have *A Pint of the Plain*. His latest book is an account of his search for the perfect Irish pint. He journeys from hectic Dublin bars to dwindling rural counterparts. He examines the phenomena of the export of the authentic Irish pubs around the world, and as the Irish fiddlers interrupted his mediation and rose to a crescendo that broke like a wave, and all fell silent again, he took a sip of stout, felt relaxed, uplifted. And as for ordinary cares — he had none.

Good beer writing is hard to beat.

Malcolm Gluck has angered many with his superplonker writing on beer and beer writers in recent weeks. Indeed several Guild members have tried to prick his impervious ego on the *Guardian's* web pages.

But, if you think he is probably not on the Christmas

CALENDAR 2009

April 6-13	National Cask Ale Week
April 23	SIBA South West Tuckers Maltings Festival, Newton Abbot
May 2	World Beer Festival, Raleigh, USA
June 3-7	Mondial de Biere, Quebec
June 11	Guild AGM/21st event: TBC

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

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

card list of some Guild members then he is certainly not going to be sharing a glass of chilled Chardonnay with many wine writers either.

In his latest book *The Great Wine Swindle* he says: 'the world of wine is populated by liars, scroungers and cheats. It runs on misrepresentation and ritualised fraud. Wine drinkers are duped by wine producers, wine merchants, wine waiters and wine writers.'

Oh well, back to trying to write something for Adrian.

TIM HAMPSON, CHAIRMAN

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.

National Cask Ale Week

AS YOU read this National Cask Ale Week will be well underway with over 5000 pubs participating between April 6-13. Key themes will be: National Beer Day on Monday April 6; FemAle Day on Wednesday April 8; Introduce a Friend on Thursday April 9; Visit a Brewery Day on Friday April 10, Saturday April 11, with the latter being also the day for the World's Biggest Toast, when thousands are expected to raise a glass to cask beer. For more details go to www.cask-marque.co.uk or www.caskaleweek.co.uk; or contact the Cask Marque office on 01206 752212.

Bush tucker maltings

ROGER PROTZ went Down Under last month and discovered that there is far more to beer in Australia than Foster's. The craft brewery sector is growing fast, a fact reflected at the annual dinner for the Australian International Brewing Awards in Melbourne.

'Craft brewers dominated the awards and the Feral Brewery in Western Australia picked up three awards and also the overall championship,' he reports. In front of a vast audience in Melbourne at the dinner, Protz was interviewed on stage by MC Paul Mercurio, a top

TV chef, 'who, unlike our TV chefs back home, actually likes beer and cooks with it in front of the cameras'.

Protz then moved on to Beer Expo, a new showcase for craft brewers from Australia and New Zealand, hosted by *Beer & Brewer* magazine at the Melbourne Showgrounds. He conducted a series of tastings in front of large and enthusiastic audiences and was bowled over by the quality of the beers.

'Oz and Kiwi brewers are fascinated by style and are producing proper Pilsners, IPAs, stouts, porters and Belgian-style wheat beers. I also had the pleasure of meeting such prominent beer writers as Kirrily Waldhorn — the self-styled Diva of Beer — Willie Simpson and Matthew Kirkegaard. I also met Chuck Hahn, the American brewer who kick-started the micro revolution with his Malt Shovel brewery near Sydney.'

Protz also squeezed in a visit to Adelaide to visit the iconic ale brewery Cooper's. 'You just have to love a family-owned company where the philosophy is simple: We brew cloudy beer — if you don't like it, drink something else. When the brewing giant Lion Nathan tried to buy the company, 97% of shareholders, mainly family members, said they couldn't give a XXXX and voted to remain independent.'

Briefly away from beer, Protz took the tour of the MCG, Melbourne Cricket Ground, the biggest ground in the world with a capacity of more than 100,000. 'Amazing. No decent beer but what a venue! The cricket club shares the ground with Rules Football. Don't ask me to explain that -- looks like a long punch-up played with a Rugby ball.'

Watch for a full report on www.beer-pages.com.

The Beer Academy Presents...

THE BEER ACADEMY has started a series of new monthly beer appreciation events aimed at consumers who like beer but may not know too much about it. The events are called 'The Beer Academy Presents...' Each session has a different theme, for instance Beer & Food Matching, United Nations of Beer, Beers over Britain. People will spend a fun, practical, interactive and informative 90 minutes learning the basics of tasting and sampling a variety of beers from across the globe. The Academy's aim is to encourage more people to appreciate the world of beer, ales and lagers. However, the Academy says that it can not do it alone and is asking beer experts, beer writers, beer lovers, and everyone in the beer industry whether they would be able to help them spread the word — this includes Guild members. This could be by writing about it in the trade or consumer press, emailing contacts, mentioning it on blogs or in other forums, telling friends and colleagues, or encouraging publicans to invite the Beer Academy to run the event in their pub.

COPY DEADLINE FOR
NEXT ISSUE IS APRIL 27, 2009

BEER APPRECIATION FOUNDATION COURSE

Monday April 6, London, Beer Academy HQ
Tuesday April 7, Burton, Marstons Brewery
Friday April 17, London, Fullers Brewery
Monday April 20, Dorset, Palmers Brewery
Friday April 24, Oxford, Hook Norton Brewery
Tuesday April 28, Edinburgh, Caledonian Brewery

MAKING BEER & FOOD DANCE

HALF-DAY COURSE

Thursday April 30, London, The White Horse
Contact: Dan Cannas at dan.cannas@ibd.org.uk or on 020 7290 6087 for more details; for more information on the Beer Academy go to www.beeracademy.co.uk.

A Boot Up the Lakes

THIS WEEK I visited the Newcastle Beer Festival with the intention of meeting some Guild members, a rare opportunity for this apprentice writer living in remote Lakeland. Being the new kid on the block it was perhaps a little daunting to be with experienced beer writers, will I be accepted as one of them? It came as a surprise when Adrian asked me if I could write something for the Guild newsletter. Must be desperate for copy, I thought. OK, so what subject? After the group offered several uninspiring topics I was asked if I did a beer festival at my pub. 'Yes, it's great, much better than this one,' I said, as I looked around the dark oppressive environment and lamented the poor quality of the beer. 'Well compare yours to this.' How could I turn down the opportunity for shameless promotion of my pub? At our beer festival there are the amenable surroundings of three great pubs, tucked away amongst beautiful scenic mountains. There is a great choice of beers that have been uniquely crafted, conditioned and cared for as the brewer would intend and they are served by people who are passionate about beer (like CAMRA members) and do it as a profession. Plus, you can even have a clean glass for each beer you try. Boot Beer Festival is June 4-7, 2009 (www.bootbeer.co.uk). Accommodation is booked up already but Guild members wishing to visit can contact me and I'll find somewhere for you to stay. **Dave Bailey**

Tyne waits for no man — two views of the latest Guild trip

THE SAGE GATESHEAD concert hall sums it up perfectly: a Norman Foster-designed, giant polished steel armadillo, with windows arranged to evoke the funnels of the ships that used to come and go on the Tyne. It's a very modern Gateshead landmark that stands across the river from the oldest surviving buildings in Newcastle: history and modernity in harmony. It's not too much of a leap to make the same sort of link with beer and brewing in the region. Newcastle's iconic Brown Ale, in growth at home and abroad, is now produced on a scale that boggles the mind; the Maxim Brewery, producing a range of heritage brands (Vaux and Ward's, as well as their

own) can be found on a modern, incredibly efficient brewplant; High House Farm Brewery, squeezed into a Grade II listed barn since 2003, produce all their own barley on the farm; the Sun Inn at Beamish open-air museum, was painstakingly moved 20 miles from Bishop Auckland and rebuilt for posterity in an historically correct 1913 high street setting; the omnipresent Angel of the North, and its eponymous ale from Wylam brewery. Then there's the no-nonsense pubbiness of Free Trade Inn, with its picture-window views of the truly European-feeling Newcastle Gateshead quays — the Millennium Bridge, the Baltic and the Sage. The synthesis of past and present seems to point towards a happy future for the region (thanks to Alastair Gilmour for organising and hosting the trip). **Zak Avery**

TAKE SEVEN beer writers, simmer first in a beer festival, then add three brewery tours in a day, plus another. Blend with at least 10 pubs and three restaurants, and you have the recipe for an action-packed visit — and a hangover. Organiser Alastair Gilmour warned Tim Hampson, Adrian Tierney-Jones, Zak Avery, Chris Marchbanks, Steve Hobman and myself that we'd need plenty of stamina and he was right. But it was well worth it. Double Maxim, Wylam and High House Farm all provided fascinating brewery visits and showed that real ale is thriving in the northeast of England. Pubs like the Crown Posada and The Cluny in Newcastle were packed with handpumps, while the Blackfriars provided a tasty beer-themed dinner. Other highlights included a step into the past at the Beamish Museum's Sun Inn, a guided tour of Newcastle's historic pubs, relaxing in the sun at the award-winning Barrasford Arms near Hexham and the impressive Bamburgh Castle rising out of a Northumberland sea mist. Low lights included too many views of the Angel of the North, Alan Shearer hysteria and the never-ending health and safety video before being allowed round the Newcastle Federation Brewery, which should have come with its own health and safety warning. But a great trip, from what I can remember. **Brian Glover**

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 being snapped by the local newspaper). It's also a chance to get out there and do some 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.