

British Guild Of Beer Writers

Newsletter — March 2009

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Chairman Tim Hampson does a reverse Robert Peston and says that it’s not all bad news *inside...*

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The Chairman Reports...

NOW HAS to be a good time to try and place a story about beer in the media. A recent email from Emma Hibbert at Adnams suggested I circulate to members a Norwich Evening News feature called 'Love your local', which encouraged readers to use pubs or lose them.

Well it has certainly fallen upon fertile ground — one member is already working on a similar idea with the *Kent Messenger*, while one of the country's best known brewers is talking to local papers within its trading area and a national organisation has asked its PR company to see if similar campaigns can be rolled out across the country.

The latest news from SIBA is also positive reading, a panacea to the doom and gloom that fills so many column inches. The Society's annual report finds its members in growth despite challenging market conditions. In marked contrast to the decline in volumes reported by national and global brewers, the local brewing sector grew by a total of 10% in 2008. Of this, 3% was contributed by new brewers not operational throughout all of 2007, leaving 'like for like' volumes up by an impressive 7%.

The growth of the local brewery industry has been achieved through both increased distribution — the average number of pub customers per brewer grew from 79 to 94 last year — and increased rate of sale (throughput of local beers grew by an average of 9% over the last two years). While draught ale, through the pub, is the mainstay of the local brewer, accounting for 86% of volumes, bottled beer is also growing fast. Last year, bottled beer volumes increased by over 50%, which helped to grow total sales turnover by an average of 20%.

So with this good news in mind, it is entirely appropriate that come Easter Britain's brewers, pubs and consumers will be uniting to celebrate British cask ale — also known as real ale — with a week of festivities. Hundreds of events will take place

throughout the UK for the first ever National Cask Ale Week (April 6-13), organised by Cask Marque, CAMRA and leading British brewers and pub chains.

It will offer lots of regional opportunities for stories with breweries being encouraged to open their doors to the public and there will be 'be a brewer for the day' competitions in the media. Wednesday April 8 has been designated FemALE Day and at a national level there will be opportunities to interview/attend a tasting session with a female head brewer and/or the UK's only female beer inspector. At a regional level there will be opportunities to visit local pubs/ breweries for tastings/tutorials on why women should be swapping their glass of wine for a glass of Britain's finest beer!

The following day will see celebrities and journalists being invited to introduce a friend to cask ale, while on Friday April 10 and Saturday April 11 many breweries will be offering free brewery tours and tastings. Finally, Saturday April 11 will also see thousands of drinkers in thousands of pubs raising a simultaneous toast to our national drink in the World's Biggest Toast. This is all good positive stuff next time you've had a bellyful of Robert Peston.

TIM HAMPSON, CHAIRMAN

Visits

Moorhouse's Brewery: March 25-26

PLEASE CONFIRM to Chris Marchbanks by March 10 if you wish to attend the visit cjmarshbanks@aol.com; there are still several places going on what will be — if previous visits are anything to go by — an extremely ebullient and enjoyable event.

Northeast by northeast: April 1-4

ALASTAIR GILMOUR has organised a press trip to Newcastle and Northumberland, which will include significant micro-breweries, restaurants capitalising on local produce, the home of an icon, some characterful pubs and the opportunity to meet key players in the northeast food and drink sector. A few surprises will be included. Full funding is just about confirmed and all fares/hotels will be catered for.

Timing: Arrive afternoon/evening Wednesday April 1 (with an option to visit the Newcastle Beer Festival), followed by two full and physically demanding days — seriously — before departing on the morning of Saturday April 4. It would be helpful if those interested could suggest where they plan to place copy for beer, food, travel or culture stories (although this is only an indication). In the event of the trip being over-subscribed, the organising partners may have to take this into consideration. One or two Irish and Norwegian

CALENDAR 2009

March 6	SIBA National Brewing Conference Stratford upon Avon
April 6-13	National Cask Ale Week
April 23-25	SIBA South West Tuckers Maltings Festival, Newton Abbot
May 2	World Beer Festival, Raleigh, USA

June 3-7	Mondial de Biere, Quebec
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

BRITISH GUILD OF BEER WRITERS NEWSLETTER MARCH 2009

journalists will also be invited. A full itinerary will be available when all is confirmed, hopefully by March 1. Names to alastair.gilmour@hotmail.com asap.

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 cjmarchbanks@aol.com.

Paging all book lovers

THE INSTITUTE of Brewing and Distilling is having another book sale/auction, where there will be a variety of books on brewing, pubs and beer for sale. If you are interested go to www.ibd.org.uk, then go to Library Archive Group via About Us and Stand Committees to find out more.

Top of the hops

IN WHAT promises to be a bibulous year of books from Guild members (for instance Pete Brown's epic global journal with Barry and Kevin is out in July), Roger Protz's *A Life On the Hop* is the first out of the blocks. Drawing on 30 years of writing about beer it's a merry trawl and a roistering record of his worldwide search for perfect pints and pubs. From memories of East End pubs to the boozy world of Fleet Street to his long-lasting work for the Campaign for Real Ale, as well as celebrations of Belgium, the US microbrewery scene and the Czech Republic before and after the Velvet Revolution, the book is a beery delight that will give even the most hardened oenophile a penchant for a pint. It is available from CAMRA Books, price £12.99 (£10.99 members).

National Cask Ale Week

OVER 5000 PUBS will be participating in National Cask Ale Week during between April 6-13, with the key themes being: 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.

Cellar to Sellar 2009

At the request of the Exhibitors it has been decided to postpone C2S 2009 to give us all time to see what happens to the economy between then and now. New dates are October 19-21 (not 20-22 as erroneously printed elsewhere) and it will be still at the Centennial Centre, Birmingham. Full details will appear later in the year.

Keith Hornby Priestnall

Institute of Brewing and Distilling Activities

March 12, 2009: visit to Copper Dragon Brewery

March 18, 2009: Marston's, Burton — talk on Old English Beer Styles

March 23, 2009: French and Jupps Maltings, followed by visit to the new McMullen's brewhouse

If members of the BGBW are interested in attending contact simon.jackson@ibd.org.uk.

There is also a study visit to Budvar Brewery, April 21-23 2009; contact Dan Cannas at dan.cannas@ibd.org.uk for details.

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.

The first event is 'Beer — The Best Match for Food', on Tuesday March 10, 7-8.30pm. Cost per person is

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NEXT ISSUE IS MARCH 20, 2009**

only £20 and tickets must be purchased beforehand. Location: Beer Academy HQ, 33 Clarges Street, London W1J 7EE. 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.

Guild member Mark Dorber is also hosting Beer Academy courses at the comfortably coastal Anchor in Walberswick with the next one happening on March 19; Radio Suffolk will be recording the event and broadcasting sections of it during National Cask Ale Week. At the Anchor NCAW will be celebrated with a variety of tutored tastings that look at specific beer styles and barley varieties and where possible focusing on the produce of local growers of barley and hops in East Anglia. For more details contact Mark at info@anchoratwalberswick.com.

Curious case of the beer festival without a name

HAVE YOU heard of CAMRA? Stupid question, but the BBC believes it shouldn't be named. Most of you will have watched part or all of *Oz and James Drink to Britain* on BBC2. If so, you will have been as bemused as I was with the episode screened on February 10.

Our heroes made a stab at home brewing during the series and on February 10 Oz announced he had arranged to have the beers judged by 'experts'. He told James he was taking him to a beer festival run by 'passionate and intense people'. As journalists, we would expect the usual information: who were these passionate and intense people, and where was the beer festival staged? Answers came there none. We were shown some large white tents in a field and inside people busy arranging casks and tasting beer. The venue remained a mystery — it was Worcester — and the tents were strangely bare of the usual brewery logos and posters that adorn the walls. The most bizarre aspect of this segment of the programme was that viewers were given no information about who was running the event.

If you were paying close attention, you might have spotted the familiar CAMRA logo on the polo shirt of the organiser, Brett Laniosh. But blink and you missed it. The absence of any reference to CAMRA is absurd. It's a crucial part of the story. As Oz and James toured the country (including rather oddly, the Irish Republic, which when I last checked is not part of Britain) they called at many pubs and breweries to sample cask beer. Without the efforts of CAMRA since 1971, it's safe to say that cask beer would not exist in Britain. But no mention of CAMRA's role was permitted. I wanted to write about this for my *Morning Advertiser* page and phoned the Beeb. After three days, during which a promised statement never arrived, I was told I had to speak to the independent production company that made the series. The only information I was given by a BBC press spokesman

was that the 'organisers of the festival had agreed to take down their banners'. Brett Laniosh tells a different story: he was informed by the production company they would not film if the banners remained in view and he reluctantly agreed to remove them.

I then spent two more days in discussion with RDFMedia, makers of the series. The company told me it is governed by Ofcom rules, which say that undue reference to organisations is not permitted to be screened. The BBC is not governed by Ofcom, which only oversees independent television and radio. We now enter the *Alice in Wonderland* world of this curious affair: because RDFMedia may sell on the series to other independent television companies, the way the programmes are presented does come within the remit of Ofcom. I therefore spoke to Ofcom — you will, I trust, be impressed by my perseverance in this matter — and they emailed me their code of conduct. It comes down strongly against 'product placement', so why in the same episode of the series was Denis Gwatkin's cider factory shown and named, with a bottle and label for his perry in close up?

The rules also state if an organisation is not named in a programme — as the Ofcom rules do not permit overdue prominence to any organisation — it should be listed among the credits at the end of the programme. When I asked RDFMedia why CAMRA was not given a credit, a now thoroughly peeved spokesman told me 'they were under no obligation to give CAMRA a credit'. It's worth pointing out that, unlike Gwatkin's Cider, CAMRA is not a commercial organisation but a not-for-profit consumer movement run by its members, with all income ploughed back into campaigning. We move on to the episode of the series screened on 17 February. This showed Oz and James partaking of liquid refreshment amongst Morris Dancers outside a pub in Cornwall. The pub was not named (it was — thank you, Mr Hon Secretary — the Blisland Inn). But the camera several times focused on our heroes carefully brandishing pint glasses bearing the name Tribute. So there was no credit for the pub but a most obliging plug for St Austell Brewery. This is known as product placement, outlawed by Ofcom. Curiouser and curiouser.

*I appreciate that my reference above to 'my page in the *Morning Advertiser*' amounts to promotion and product placement. I apologise unreservedly. Roger Protz

Navigator's Arms

IF YOU fancy a trek in the Yorkshire Dales and a good pub night out then Guild member and author of the Inn Way guidebooks Mark Reid is your man. He's currently organising two-day navigation skills courses in his neck of the woods and if you book by May 1, there's a 10% discount; go to info@teamwalking.co.uk for more info.

Ding-dong

THERE'S JUST enough to space to congratulate Melissa Cole on the occasion of her marriage to Ben on Feb 28.