

British Guild Of Beer Writers

Newsletter — February 2005

Six people sat down to turn a bold vision into exciting reality at the first meeting of an ad hoc group that believes Roger Protz's dream of a **beer** museum in London can be made to come true...

Andrew Pring and the Beeropolis challenge *inside...*

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The Chairman Reports...

OVER A DECENT Thai lunch in a Fuller's pub in Chiswick last month, six people sat down to turn a bold vision into exciting reality. It was the first meeting of an ad hoc group that believes Roger Protz's dream of a beer museum in London can be made to come true.

Cudgelling their brains as they grappled with the magnitude of the task were Georgina Wald of Fuller's, Michael Hardman of Young's, Peter Haydon of Meantime, Brian Pipe of the local CAMRA branch, Roger and myself. Slowly but surely, ideas crystallised, plans emerged and tasks were assigned. It will be a long march towards Beeropolis, but the first steps have been firmly planted. If you would like to be part of the march, Roger would be delighted to hear from you.

One of the main aims of the Guild, though we don't state it quite so bluntly, is to generate more commissions for members. Well, if this year's Beer With Food Week (April 2-8) doesn't do just that, I'll be staggered. The aim of the week is to get licensees across the country promoting beer with their meals. The beers don't need to be exotic, and nor do the meals. Just as long as the message comes across that wine has no exclusive lien on the dining table.

Before anyone accuses me of any potential conflicts, let me declare proudly that my paper, the *Morning Advertiser*, is organising the week

with Greene King. But many other brewers are likely to take part, and the writing opportunities exist with all types of publications as well as radio and even TV. My advice would be to contact your local and regional press and sell them into the week. Give me a ring if you'd like to know more about it.

I wonder how many Guild members realise how popular our website has quietly become? Committee member John White, who looks after the site with Tim Hampson, tells me that over 7,000 people visit www.beerwriters.co.uk every month (that's not 'hits', whatever they are, but actual individual site visits). It's an impressive record, and shows how the Guild continues raising its profile, as they say, 24/7.

Here's one for a rather recondite pub quiz: what's the connection between William Makepeace Thackeray and the British Guild of Beer Writers? You'll never get it, so here's the answer. It's the Guild's tie. And why? Because Al Murray, the Pub Landlord, always sports the black and blue whenever he performs. And Al, of course, is directly related to the *Vanity Fair* author. I'm indebted to Peter Coulson for this tidbit. He tells me Al won a special award for humour at the Guild's annual awards some years back, and the prize included our tie. He's worn it on stage ever since, and sees it as a lucky mascot. In fact, so attached is he to it that when his prized possession went missing once, he was quickly on to Peter for a replacement.

I've never seen the great man in action — Al, not Peter, that is — though I will have by the time you read this. But what strikes me is that for all the pub's centrality in British life, he must be the only comedian who's ever identified so closely with the licensed trade (Lord Young, of Beer Orders fame, aside). Can anyone think of another?
Andrew Pring, Chairman

CALENDAR 2006

February 18-25	CAMRA National Pubs Week
March 2-4	SIBA Annual Conference, Bristol
April 2-8	Beer with Food Week
April 7-8	Helsinki Beer Festival
April 7-9	CAMRA AGM, Blackpool
April 10-11	World Beer Cup 2006, Seattle
April 11-13	Pub & Bar, Olympia, London

May	CAMRA's Mild Month
June	Guild's AGM, date and place to be confirmed
July 5	All-Party Parliamentary Beer Group Annual Awards Dinner

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

The Secretary's round...

WE ARE now in the second half of the Guild's year, with the AGM planned for June. In the next issue I plan to have a definite date for it and also hope that we will be at our familiar venue of the last several years, the Brook Green Tavern. I would also be interested in feedback on this year's Directory, the more people put into it the more it can be improved. Down below is a piece from member Pete Brown on how Young's fell foul of the ASA for suggesting that drinking their beer might make you suitable for membership of a gentleman's club. I always thought the ads straight out of Dennis Wheatley's pulp horrors and believed they depicted a Satanic goat until Pete put me right. Sheps have also fallen foul of public perceptions of taste with their latest Spitfire ad being withdrawn, because the letters SS were written in a style more familiar to members of the Far Right than beer drinkers. Sheps make excellent beer and are valued sponsors of the Guild but personally I wonder how on earth the use of such a repugnant symbol could have even gone beyond the planning stage...

THIS IS A RAM'S WORLD...

OH HANG ON, NO IT'S NOT

LAST MONTH, Young's Bitter became the first brand to fall foul of tightened rules governing the advertising of alcoholic drinks. Two posters were banned: the first, showing a bloke with a ram's head standing by a swimming pool surrounded by beautiful girls, was ruled to imply that drinking Young's helps you pull women. The second, showing the same ram at the centre of attention in a gentlemen's club, was judged to infer that drinking Young's made you socially successful.

When I'm not writing I provide marketing consultancy to the brewing industry, and two years ago I worked with Young's ad agency to write the strategy that led to these ads. When they were banned, it felt a bit like one of my children being expelled from school. What on earth had we done wrong?

Many people drink in order to ease social

interaction or lower inhibitions, but alcohol is one category where you are not actually allowed to tell the truth about the product. To a great extent you can see why – we shouldn't do anything that might encourage vulnerable or insecure people to drink to excess. The intention behind this campaign was never to suggest that beer is an aid to social or sexual success.

What we wanted to do with Young's was position it between lager and real ale. It's a very welcoming beer, easy to get into for anyone who has grown up with lager and may be curious but intimidated by dark, moody ales. Drinkers in their late twenties and early thirties are settling down and looking for a little more substance in their stylish lives — they're in long term relationships, perhaps buying a property for the first time, and their social lives are starting to change. Lager still very much has its place, but... is that all there is? They're cooking from Jamie Oliver, enjoying a decent bottle of wine, surely there's something more exciting in beer?

But their drinks choices have always had an element of image about them. What you order at the bar says something about you, so you have to know it's saying the right thing. We wanted to suggest that Young's was the drink you chose when you were successful in life and knew your own mind. Mature success isn't about pulling that bird or blagging your way into that exclusive nightclub or dreaming of scoring that goal — it's about being seen by your peers as someone who has developed intrinsic qualities and earned success in your chosen field; substance as well as, not instead of, style. If the bloke in the ads didn't have a ram's head on, he wouldn't be a 20-year-old lad; he'd be in his early forties.

The ads were trying to suggest that this is the beer you would drink if you'd made it to this position, not something that helps you get there: a Rolls-Royce doesn't make you rich, it's a symbol of success. Having long hair and a denim jacket doesn't make you a heavy metal fan, it's a signifier that you are one. Young's can't make you a popular member of a gentleman's club, it's what you'd drink if you were.

The third ad in the campaign (which hasn't been banned) shows the ram man on a golf course — you see how it fits with the logic above. If the authorities' reading of the campaign was correct, then they would have to argue that this ad is

suggesting drinking Young's makes you better at golf. I guess the absurdity of this accounts for why we haven't heard about this particular execution.

The saddest irony is that the Young's campaign ultimately promoted responsible drinking. Young's Bitter is 3.7%. The ads were aimed at people who have grown up getting smashed on premium strength lager and alcopops, rarely drinking anything below 5%. To buy Young's Bitter, you have to go into a pub or an offie, where Young's will probably be the weakest alcoholic drink on offer. Every drinker who buys it instead of Stella or Kronenbourg is someone who is less likely to get pissed and stupid — you can't actually get drunk and irresponsible on Young's, I've tried. The fact that the ruling fails to take into account the context in which the product is seen is misguided, and means it ends up working against the broader aims of the new rules.

And what was the extent of public outcry that led to the decision to ban the ads? One person complained about them. One. Welcome to the dictatorship of the Green Pen Brigade.

Pete Brown

Guild Trips

MARCH There are still a few places left for a visit to **Cains** in Liverpool on March 15/16. It should be an interesting trip as Cains has seen a marvellous resurgence in recent years.

APRIL Hall & Woodhouse has invited the Guild to visit it in Blandford Forum in Dorset on April 26/27. Currently the brewery is drawing up plans for a massive redevelopment of its site, including the relocation of the brewery, and the trip will provide the opportunity for discussion on the issues that this raises together with information on the development of its beer brands.

JUNE Moorhouse's has invited the Guild to its brewery in Burnley, Lancashire on June 21/22. It is likely to kick off at lunchtime at the brewery, and later, after a short break at our hotel, there will be an evening tour of some of the innovative company's pubs.

SEPTEMBER September 26 could be a possible invite from NE/Yorkshire Beer & Pub Association to a beer and food lunch in York.

OCTOBER October 5/6 sees a tasting and tour of **Shepherd Neame** followed by a Hop Blessing at a local church the next day.

● To be considered for any of the Guild trips contact Tim Hampson on tim@infopub.co.uk; please include details of where you may be able to place a story.

Bitter Finnish for A-B

FINNISH GUILD member Mikko Montonen sends word that towards the end of 2005 the Finnish High Court decided in the long court battle between Budweisers in favour of the Czech brewery over Anheuser-Busch. The court case started in Helsinki in 1996, while the European Union had its say in the case in 2004. Both Budweiser and Budvar are available in Finnish supermarkets and pubs, and this will continue to be the case. The Czech beer will in the future, as now, be known as Budejovicky Budvar and the American brewer was ordered to pay the Czech brewer's court costs of €60,000.

CHEESE AND WINE

MUCH CONSTERNATION in cheese-making quarters after a report in the *New Scientist* from a couple of US researchers arguing that wine makes all cheese taste the same. Members of the West Country Farmhouse Cheesemakers hit back with wine and cheese suggestions and also mentioned beer as an alternative. Guild members will already know that cheese and beer is a formidable combination and dare we say much preferable to wine. A couple of years ago the great Garrett Oliver did a magisterial cheese and beer tasting at the GBBF, where the likes of Summer Lightning was paired with Caerphilly, Lees Harvest Ale with Colston Bassett Stilton and Garrett's own Brooklyn East Indian Pale Ale with Montgomery's Cheddar. Read his section on beer and cheese in his formidable *Brewmaster's Table* and you'll never want a wine and cheese party again.

NEW MEMBERS

A COVEY of new members in the last few weeks include award-winners Jonathan Ray and Graham Holter, while Dominic Roskrow, Paul Ambler, John Simpson, Alex Hall and Jeff Pickthall have also come aboard. Paul is head brewer at Black Sheep and writes technical articles for brewing magazines; John (the second John Simpson in the Guild) runs beertasting courses and offers field trips to Belgium; Jeff is a columnist for *Difford's Guides*, Alex Hall is a Brooklyn-based columnist for *Ale Street News* amongst other things, while Dominic (as many Guild members will know) edits *Beers of the World*.