

# *British Guild Of Beer Writers*

*Newsletter* — July/August 2005

We can play our part in helping and supporting the beer cause by trying to do more to influence the media's key decision makers... All of us can write to editors and suggest they pay more attention to **beer**.

All of us can get letters published in the op-ed pages. All of us can talk a little more loudly about what we love and enjoy in this world...

Andrew Pring gets back to basics *inside*...

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# The Chairman Reports...

**THE GUILD'S AGM is always a good measure of whether we're making progress or not. At Hammersmith last month, discussion amongst the members suggested that there were some positive signs, but also some less positive indicators. I believe there are more of the former than the latter, but each individual Guild member must be the judge of that. For the committee's part — and as re-elected Chairman, I believe I can speak for them — we are convinced things are going in the right direction.**

Membership is higher than it's ever been; subs have not risen for several years; the awards attract more entries than at any other time in Guild history — and give more prizes and prize money than ever before; corporate membership is strong and near universal; trips are varied and plentiful; credible and committed people give up much time to serving on the committee; and our website functions well and attracts many visitors. For these reasons, I firmly believe, the Guild continues to be held in esteem, and maintains the traditions and aims of its founder members. Yet it was clear from the AGM that not everyone is quite so convinced the Guild is punching its true weight. Some members believe that the prime purpose of the Guild — to advance the cause of beer writing and inform more widely about the beauty of beer — is carried out less successfully than it might be. They point to the absence of beer articles in the national press, and the colonisation of food and drink pages by wine writers. If we can't get more coverage in the national media, *de facto* we are failing as a Guild. Up to a point, I'm sympathetic with that view. I, too, wish beer was better regarded. I, too, wish there was more opportunity for members to ply their talents on the biggest stages. I, too, believe the Guild should be judged by the success or failure it has in achieving those aims. But that said, we must temper our idealism with the realities around us.

The forces that led to the Guild's creation in 1988 grow stronger annually. Consumer tastes have changed and will keep changing. Although we can all point to real ale success stories amongst the regional and micro brewers and similar triumphs amongst lager brewers, both great and small, we must acknowledge beer has to fight its corner increasingly desperately against an array of other drinks and products. That's not the Guild's fault. Brewers, many of whom are Guild members, know they have not done enough to promote beer over the past 20 or so years. It's why the British Beer and Pub Association launched its Beautiful Beer campaign to win back lost ground. But I'm advocating realism, not fatalism — otherwise there'd be no point to the Guild. And we can play our part in helping and supporting the beer cause by trying to do more to influence the media's key decision makers.

All of us can write to editors and suggest they pay more attention to beer. All of us can get letters published in the op-ed pages. All of us can talk a little more loudly about what we love and enjoy in this world. So what more can the committee do this year to help the cause? We can communicate with each other and the outside world better — through both the newsletter and the website. We can stage more inspiring and newsworthy debates. And we can talk more to brewers about how we can work more closely together. And that, let me assure you, is what we'll be doing. Judge us on our progress at the Brook Green Hotel next year.

## NEW COMMITTEE

I'M DELIGHTED TO say that almost all the old committee were keen to stand again this year — and were re-elected. Kamini Dickie graduated from 'co-opted' status to full committee membership, and former secretary Peter Haydon took the reverse route. I have already paid tribute to his great efforts as Secretary for the past two years, and the AGM attendees gratefully acknowledged his contribution. Happily, we have a new Secretary, in the shape of Adrian Tierney-Jones. He is committed to taking on the development work Peter was carrying out on the newsletter — and I know we're all keen to see that communication reach its full potential. Adrian won his spurs on the committee by organising so many interesting and well-attended visits last year. His role is now taken on by Tim Hampson, who will maintain his duties as Guild 'webmaster', with notably proficient and expert input from fellow committee member John White. Sadly, Glenn Payne has had to step down to give more time to his new life at Meantime Brewery. Thanks for all your efforts, Glenn. Taking his place is Pete Brown, author of *Man Walks Into A Pub*. Welcome on board, Pete, your marketing background will be every bit as valuable to the Guild as your enthusiasm.

## ABSENT FRIENDS

THANKS TO ALL of you who sent their apologies to the Secretary in advance of the AGM. You were missed, and none more so than Peter Ogie, former president of the Brewers Guild and long-time Guild supporter, who has recently undergone heart surgery. We all wish him a speedy recovery. Ted Bruning, although famously not a Guild member, is another friend we also send our very warmest wishes to. He is recovering well from a serious operation, and we look forward to seeing him back at the helm of *What's Brewing* as soon as possible.

## AWARDS SPONSORS

I'M DELIGHTED TO report that the search for new sponsors for this year's awards continues well. **Interbrew UK** is to sponsor the National Beer Writer of the Year category, while **Cains** will sponsor the Regional Beer Writer of the Year. The Trade and Technical Category is under discussion and I hope to make an announcement soon. To add further attraction to this year's awards, **Shepherd Neame** is sponsoring a new category, Beer and Food Writer of the Year, for which we are very grateful. As we are, of course, too for **Budweiser Budvar**'s continued — and increased — sponsorship of its bursary for Best Article about Beer Overseas.

## FINALLY...

**WE ARE LUCKY** at the Guild to have such a strong supporter in Young's. Once again, they let us have free use of rooms at the Brook Green Hotel for the AGM — and lavished superb hospitality upon us. Additionally, it allows us to meet at a number of its pubs throughout the year for committee meetings — on similar terms. Fuller's has also been extremely generous to the Guild, as has every brewer that has hosted trips in the past year at places such as Kelham Island, Thornbridge Hall, Ridley's, SAB-Miller, St Peter's and Mauldons. Thank you all so much. We appreciate your support immensely, almost as much as your beer.

*Andrew Pring — Chairman*

## CALENDAR 2005/2006

<b>August 1</b>	Guild's pre-Great British Beer Festival Reception
<b>August 2-6</b>	Great British Beer Festival, Olympia, London
<b>September</b>	Launch of <i>Good Beer Guide 2006</i>
<b>September 12-17</b>	Drinktec Interbrau, Munich
<b>September 18-22</b>	Worldwide Distilled Spirits Conference (IBD) Edinburgh

<b>Sept 29-Oct 1</b>	Great American Beer Festival, Denver, Colorado
<b>October</b>	CAMRA Awards Lunch
<b>October</b>	CAMRA Cider Month
<b>October 19-20</b>	Cellar to Seller Conference, Burton-on-Trent
<b>December 7</b>	Annual Dinner and Awards, Ironmongers Hall
<b>December 14</b>	All Parliamentary Beer Group, Christmas reception — HOC

## The Secretary's round...

**THERE ARE** two boxes of documents (and several Guild ties) in my office, a gavel and hammer resting on a filing cabinet and the newsletter is out. Renewal forms should be enclosed and within the newsletter members are reminders that the time is fast coming when examples of their work are needed for the annual awards to be announced at the December dinner (see Editor's page for early details). I am also proud to have been nominated and elected Secretary of the Guild and hope I can follow in the illustrious footsteps of my successors. Enough flannel, what I hope to do in the next 12 months is stimulate even more discussion about beer and brewing within the pages of the newsletter. One of the things I believe that the Guild should be about is the pure pleasure of beer writing, whether it be the epic excellence of a beer style, the mystery of a brewery's approach towards its craft, eccentric asides from members, issues that matter and anything that deals with beer. The annual dinner is also coming up fast and I remind members that this year it will be held on Wednesday, December 7, a week later than is usual, just so you can organise your hotels and trains in good time. Also to remind you that if you have any thoughts on who should be the winner of the British Beer and Brewing Award please let us know. Nominations are sought to honour the individual or company who has done most for beer in the past year, and they need to be with the Secretary by Monday, October 24. Members of the Guild are ineligible for nomination. The committee have their thoughts and members will have theirs. I think that's all for the moment — unless anyone wants a tie...

### SUFFOLK TRIP

**IF BEER TOURISM** is to ever get serious in the UK in the same way as it has in Belgium, then you can bet your last bottle of Thomas Hardy that St Peter's will pull 'em in. Hidden away in the Suffolk countryside, south of Bungay, located in the stables and outbuildings surrounding a medieval manor house, the first sighting is breathtaking. Across the fields, there it stands, ash-white stone among the green fields, surrounded by a moat, approached along a track where hares run. The beer's not bad either, as six Guild members discovered in June on a trip to several Suffolk breweries.

St Peter's fame comes from the variety of beers which fill their distinctive bottles, based on an 18th century design. On our visit, fruit beers, honey porters, organic bitters, and a ravishing cream stout were amongst the beers on view. MD Colin Cordry was our generous host, while head brewer Mark Slater took us around the

brewery as the bottling line clattered away in the background. Brewing in such a lovely location does have its advantages he agreed, but as the brewery keeps growing the day of setting up shop in an industrial estate possibly comes closer.

Talking of industrial estates took members to the next destination, Mauldons in Sudbury. Now run by Alison and Steve Sims, this is a stunning new-build brewery with a massive open glass frontage and gleaming stainless steel brewing vessels where head brewer Steve Birch bosses over beers such as the award-winning Blackadder, a complex strong stout with an array of aromas and flavours, including treacle, licorice, demerara sugar, roast malt, espresso coffee, smoke and vanilla. Both formerly of Adnams, Steve and Alison Sims brought the brewery in 2000 and have built and prospered on the reputation Mauldons achieved under its original founder Peter Mauldon.

Finally, the theme of beautiful beer and breweries continued with a visit to the Old Cannon brewpub where we were staying the night, courtesy of Richard Eyton-Jones. Hidden away in a gorgeous looking square, minutes from the centre of Bury St Edmunds, the Old Cannon is that rare thing — a pub not selling Greene King in its home town. From the outside, it's Victorian solidity and the former home of the Old Cannon brewery. Inside, it has the look of a gastro-pub, clean well-scrubbed wood surfaces, bare floorboards and terra-cotta floor tiling on which the gleaming mash tun and copper stand, next to the front window. Unlike a gastro-pub, however, several handpumps of home-brewed beer stand alongside Erdinger, Bitburger and Val Dieu fonts. It is in this pub that every Monday Richard closes the pub during the day and brews beers such as Blonde Bombshell and Gunner's Daughter. This is a place with great atmosphere, good food and great beer. Book that Suffolk holiday now!

• *Thanks to St Peter's, Mauldons and Old Cannon for their hospitality.*

### RIDLEY'S

**BACK IN** February the Guild organised a trip to Ridley's, deep in the heart of the Essex countryside. I had never visited before and the beauty of its location was literally jaw-dropping. The beers weren't bad either, especially the Old Bob and the resurrection of Tolly Cobbold's Original. My jaw dropped once more when I heard about the impending closure of Ridley's following the Greene King buyout. Another family brewery bites the dust and the brewing community is all the sadder for its loss. Whatever the pros and cons of the event, I, for a start, will always cherish that first sighting of Ridley's and remember it with great fondness.

## The loneliness of the long-distance beer-writer...

Writing books — in common with coal mining and a certain form of sexual activity — could best be described as 'dark and lonely work (?? — *unworldly ed*), but someone has to do it'. Where beer books are concerned, the problems are compounded by the nefarious work of large brewers.

I was in the mad throes of passing the final proofs of *300 Beers To Try Before You Die!*, when, in short order, I heard that Greene King had bought Ridley's and planned to close the brewery, while Heineken had taken over the Stepan Razin brewery in St Petersburg.

Both feature in the book. My editor at CAMRA Books, Guild member Joanna Copestick, felt after a nanosecond for reflection, that *297 Books etc* didn't have quite the right ring for the bookshops. So it stays at 300. Greene King tell me they may well continue to brew Ridley's Old Bob at Bury St Edmunds and, following my pleas, will give consideration to also continuing with Witchfinder Porter.

As for Stepan Razin Porter, a magnificent example of the strong porters and stouts first brewed at the time of Catherine the Great by London brewers for the Russia and Baltic markets, who knows what awaits it. Heineken, in common with the other global brewers busily gobbling up Russian breweries, are interested solely in pale lagers. Many dark Russian beers are disappearing as consumers are offered such delights as Foster's and Tuborg.

If the book goes well, I think a second, revised edition may soon be needed. In the meantime, would my friends at S&N, Coors, Interbrew, Carlsberg, Wolves & Dudley and Greene King, mindful of all the comfort and help I have given them over the years, lie doggo for a few months and not close any more breweries until my book has been on the shelves for Xmas. **Roger Protz**

● *300 Beers To Try Before You Die!*, £12.99, will be published on 5 August by CAMRA Books at the Great British Beer Festival.

## Eve of Olympia bash

Members are reminded that once again the Guild's annual pre-GBBF reception takes place at the White Horse, from 6.30pm onwards on Monday, August 1. All Guild members are invited. Special invitations are also extended to our corporate members and sponsors. This is now a regular event on the beer writers' calendar and a chance for beer writers from home and abroad and corporate members to meet and mingle and talk beer on the eve of one of the most popular celebrations of the world's favourite beverage. Thanks from the Guild go to the supporters of the event and, of course, to the indomitable Mark Dorber at the White Horse for hosting it.

## Moorhouse's 140 not out

Guild members mingled with a Mr Pickwick lookalike and several other Dickensian coves at the recent party to celebrate Moorhouse's 140th birthday. The fun begun with a steam train ride between Bury and Ramsbottom, followed by a reception held at the town's Grant Arms. Guests heard the brewery chairman Bill Parkinson — he that tried a pint of Pendle Witches Brew and liked it so much that he bought the brewery — describe the history of the company, while managing director David Grant spoke about the brewery, its staff and the beers of today, including the fine IPA which was specially brewed for the anniversary. *Steve Sharples*

## Helsinki calling...

Guild member Mikko Montonen ([mikko.montonen@kolumbus.fi](mailto:mikko.montonen@kolumbus.fi)) gets in touch from Finland to say that the Helsinki Beer Festival's 'Original Oktoberfest' is on September 9-10, at the Cable Factory in Helsinki. It includes a special unique-to-the-festival Oktoberfest brew from Germany. There is also music and food prepared by the city's Chez Dominique, which has two Michelin stars. Jacques Chirac take note...

## Guild Awards

As the Editor mentions nominations and entries are once again being sought for the British Guild of Beer Writers' awards. This year there is a new category, The Bishops Finger Beer with Food Award, sponsored by Shepherd Neame, the objective being to encourage journalists to write or broadcast material on the subject of matching beer with food, an area usually dominated by wine. Given that beer and food gets a lot more coverage than in the days of the landlord's special delivered with the ping of a microwave, there should be plenty of interesting entries.

The closing date, to be confirmed, should be in the first week of October, and work enclosed must have been published or broadcast in the year up to the end of September — so get shuffling through your work from the last 12 months. Entrants do not have to be members of the Guild, but they should communicate about beer or beer culture, new products, or the ingredients or brewing of beer. There is no limitation to the number of categories that an individual may enter, but they may only submit four examples of their work in an individual category. Complete details of the competition will be emailed or sent to members in August, but in the meantime, for more details on the awards you can contact Tim Hampson on 07768 614283, who has once again kindly agreed to look after organising things.

## Date of AGM

Some of you will be aware of Guild member Roy Bailey's recent email communique on the dates of the AGM. For those who haven't seen it, Roy was proposing that the Guild AGM be moved

from its present date in June to the Monday immediately prior to the opening of the Great British Beer Festival in August. Several members have already shared their thoughts online and this is something which the committee will be discussing in their next meeting. If anyone else has any thoughts on the matter, please let the Secretary know.

## Renewals

Don't forget that you should have your membership renewal form in this copy of the newsletter. Once again the membership fee has been held at last year's price and your directory entry awaits.

## Membership

The Guild's membership continues to grow and the next issue will give details of at least half a dozen new members who have or are about to join the Guild.

## SIBA news

*As mentioned in the last newsletter, the committee, after a presentation from SIBA chiefs, decided to put regular information about the brewing organisation in the newsletter, which hopefully will be of use to members. This is the first communique.*

'Think global, act local' is one of the better known buzzwords used by multinationals in their attempts to gain more market share, whatever the business. But SIBA has always had 'think local, act local' as its unspoken motto. Now the Society is about to make that local focus even more evident and will be adopting the slogan 'your local brewery' as its strapline on all internal and external communications.

This is a response to what appears to be a rising tide of support for localism by wide-ranging groups from consumers to politicians. The British pub has always been known as 'the local' and the growing support for campaigns such as 'The Pub is the Hub' seeks to consolidate that position. National and indeed global retailers, such as Waitrose and Asda respectively, now place local sourcing at the heart of their buying policies, doubtlessly encouraged by the support expressed for local produce wherever it is sold from farmers markets to local companies' e-commerce channels. DEFRA estimated in 2003 that regional and local produce represented 6% of total food and drink sales — it has surely mushroomed further since then.

'Your local brewery' conveys three key attributes: a sense of community involvement and ownership, geographical proximity and a place of production. 'Brewery' was chosen over beer as SIBA is not looking to position itself as a wholesaler selling beer, despite its innovative and increasingly successful efforts to gain wider access to the on-trade for its members' beers through its Direct Delivery Scheme.

The Society's rebranding process began with this year's renaming of its industry review as the Local Brewing Industry Report. Local beers distributed through the Direct Delivery Scheme will be supported, where possible, by point-of-sale material featuring the SIBA logo and new strapline. Other initiatives will follow. SIBA wishes to capture and advance the momentum of localism by demonstrating the relevance and central place of its members' activities in the localism agenda. There can be few products more capable of evoking a sense of place and fostering local pride as beer. *Steve Griffin*