

British Guild Of Beer Writers

Newsletter July 2011



I KNOW I am biased but of all the dinners and events I go to over the course of a year I reckon our Guild Awards and our Annual Dinner is one of the best. The dinner is rightly the prestigious showcase for our activities and is now a must-attend event for many writers and brewers and a fantastic opportunity for meeting friends and networking.

Building on the success of holding the event in modern, stylish surroundings, not normally associated with fine cuisine and beer, we have a new venue and are working with a new award-winning chef. This year on 1 December we will be in the Thames Suite of the Park Plaza Riverbank. Situated on the first floor at the front of the hotel, the room, with its floor-to-ceiling windows, offers stunning views of the River Thames including the Tate Britain, Houses of Parliament, Big Ben and the London Eye.

We have a larger space than last year available for pre-dinner drinks and in a move that should please our sponsors, we want to give more time to drinking and talking before we start the dinner itself.

The chef's food style is perhaps best described as Pacific Rim with an Asiatic twist and he is getting excited about pairing his creations with some of the world's greatest beers. He also wants to use beer as an ingredient in some of his batters and dressings too. The chef says the multi dimensional flavours his food has, offers the range of taste and textures necessary to show the full potential of beer as a partner to fine food.

I WOULD like to thank all members who attended our AGM at the Devereaux on the Strand in London. It was good to see so many people there — and it was very pleasing to see so many new faces. Our collective expertise grows and encompasses beer communicators from bloggers to trade journalists, consumer writers to technical writers, scientists and historians, meaning the Guild's membership now extends from tweeter to contributors to Oxford University Press' Companion to Beer, which is due for publication in October. The range of expertise is reflected by your new committee, which now includes Adrian Tierney Jones, Paul Nunny, Pete Brown, Larry Nelson, Ros Shiels, Robert Humphreys, Dave Bailey and Mark Dredge.

I AM sure that many British Guild of Beer Writer members and supporters will be saddened to learn that Peter Ogie, who spent more than 35 years working as a brewer before turning to journalism, has died. A former president of the Brewers' Guild he was brewing correspondent for Brewing & Distilling International and The Brewer. He won a Guild award for his contributions to the Sky Pub Channel and was a judge at many brewing competitions.

Tim Hampson

Guild pre-GBBF reception

August is of course the time when the Great British Beer Festival rolls into London — which means it's also time for the Guild's annual eve-of-GBBF event. This year it's once again being held at Brewwharf and members should have received an invitation. It starts at 6.30pm. If you have not received an invitation could you email the secretary at tierneyjones@btinternet.com and he will make sure you receive one.

British beers triumph at Montreal

ALMOST AS unlikely as Jenson Button's recent victory, coming from last place to win at the rain-

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soaked Giles Villeneuve circuit, was the triumph of a boatload of British beers at Mondial de la Biere, held the same weekend in Montreal. I arranged to send 60 beers from 10 UK brewers over specially for the occasion, the 18th time the event has been run and the largest to date. The new downtown location welcomed over 96,000 'bier-trotters' during the course of the five-day festival celebrating beers from every corner of the Globe. Over 600 beers were featured, nearly 250 of which were new brews, or new to the Canadian market.

The organisers asked me to judge the MBEER competition, present and take a stand for ALL BEER whilst introducing a range of UK beers. They were delighted with the range we managed to take and made a special feature of the British beers at the opening ceremony. England was represented by Hawkshead, Acorn, Thornbridge, Hobsons, Wells & Young's, Moor Beer and Badger Ales, Scotland by Williams Brothers and Fyne Ales, and Wales by Otley. It was such a diverse range that I set up a dedicated ALL BEER FINDER micro-site on www.allbeer.co.uk/mondial, so users could select their choice of the 60 British beers on show. It was the first time such a facility has been available at a festival anywhere, and won a lot of supporters.

Many of the beers sold out, notably Fusion from Somerset's Moor Beer, which won the Platinum medal at the Greg Noonan MBEER contest. I was delighted to accept the certificate and medal on behalf of Justin and the Moor team, it's an exceptional beer. It caused a real buzz amongst judges, festival staff and bier-trotters alike, so it was no surprise it sold out. When told about the award, Justin said, 'it's a real boost. We hope it gets the world to notice the growing beer scene in the UK. For many years, the world has perceived British beer as being old fashioned, bland and boring. However, there are now a number of innovative micros like us that are helping change that image. Fusion is one of those beers turning heads — a forward looking, barrel-aged beer with a nod to tradition and the local area. We're thrilled with the beer and very proud of the recognition it's received. Thanks to Alex for taking up the challenge of repositioning British brewing in a global context, and making it modern and user-friendly through the ALL BEER FINDER project.'

I recommend attending Mondial de la Biere. It's a great format, a bit different to UK beer festivals, with most beer in keg or bottle, but plenty of brewers were there serving their own beers and chatting to the crowds. It was inspiring to see that much of the crowd are young, at least compared to me, and a really good mix with 40-50% of the drinkers female, coming both with boyfriends and in all-girl groups.

If Montreal next June is too long to wait, Guild members may wish to visit the European little sister event at Strasbourg in October. Though smaller in scale the same approach applies, with world brewers including plenty from Canada, USA, South America, France, Italy and Germany. My challenge this year is to get some hand-pull cask beer on. Now that will be popular! **Alex Barlow**

Tour Meantime prior to the GBBF

MEANTIME WILL be happy to host a brewery tour for Guild members and beer bloggers at 9.30am on August 2. The tour will be timed to ensure that everyone will get to Earls Court in time for the start of the GBBF trade session. I would like to emphasise that tube travel between North Greenwich and Earls Court is fast and direct. Guild members are welcome to visit Britain's most modern brewing facility and London's largest new build brewery since 1936. Please RSVP to Peter Haydon on aheadahat@gmail.com. Numbers are limited and spaces will be allocated on a first come first served basis.

Peter Haydon

Shepherd Neame hop invitation

FAVERSHAM'S 21st Annual Hop Festival takes place on the September 3-4 and Shepherd Neame would like to extend an invitation to Guild members to visit it. We will begin on the Friday afternoon ahead of the Festival, arriving in Faversham before proceeding to Tony Redsell's hop gardens. You will have a chance to pick hops for yourselves, before a Q&A session in the hop barns with renowned hop researcher Dr Peter Darby and Shepherd Neame head brewer David Holmes. Guests will then be taken to their overnight accommodation at our nearby inns ahead of a meal in the evening. The following morning, guests will be taken on a brewery tour, including a Q&A session with the brewers and a sneaky peek at some of our new beers. The morning will be rounded off by a Hop Pickers lunch at the Visitor's Centre. Guild members are welcome to some or all of the above, although complimentary accommodation places are limited and available on a first come, first serve basis. Please let me know if you are interested by providing an email address and daytime telephone number. John Humphreys (Communications Manager, Shepherd Neame, 01795 542263, jhumphreys@shepherdneame.co.uk)

Pub is the hub news

NOT-FOR-PROFIT organisation Pub is The Hub has published the results of an independent evaluation commissioned to establish the impact of pub rural services schemes on local society, the environment and the economy. Established nearly ten years ago with encouragement from the Prince of Wales, Pub is The Hub has advised local communities, licensees and pub owners to work together to support, retain and locate local services, where possible within the pub. Pub is The Hub also assists licensees with guidance on the availability of local and regional project funding, and by having a thorough

CALENDAR 2011

- Pre-GBBF event, Brewwharf, Aug 1
- Great British Beer Festival, London, August 2-6
- Great American Beer Festival, Denver, Sept 29-Oct 1
- BGBW Awards and Dinner, London December 1

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

independent understanding of the pub business, is able to advise on and facilitate the best way to progress individual schemes to suit communities.

Independent research group Ecorys surveyed 71 pubs that have delivered, or were in the process of delivering, a rural services scheme, plus 100 local residents that live near six existing Pub is The Hub schemes. The report, *Pub is The Hub: Evaluating the Impact of Initiatives 2011*, highlights that Pub is The Hub has evolved considerably over time, developing into an independent force for change at national policy level, as well as maintaining its key original objective of assisting rural communities and local pubs to address their service priorities.

The findings identified that Pub is The Hub schemes bring clear social, economic and environmental benefits. Key highlights include:

- 100% of respondents agreed that their local Pub is The Hub scheme is either 'very important' or else 'important' to the community.
- Nearly three quarters of respondents agreed that a Pub is The Hub scheme allowed them to meet more local people than they would have done otherwise.
- Over four fifths of respondents agreed that the Pub is The Hub scheme improved their access to a key service and helped overcome local deprivation issues.
- Almost all respondents agreed that Pub is The Hub schemes saved them time.
- Over four fifths agreed that Pub is The Hub schemes contribute to making the area they live in more attractive.
- Many schemes have recruited additional full time employees, as well as securing the retention of some employees, primarily benefiting people living in the local area.
- Customers saved time by travelling to a Pub is The Hub scheme, rather than the nearest alternative. This equates a cost saving of approximately 81p per visit.
- Pub is The Hub schemes encourage less car use, with a clear environmental and cost benefit. Nearly three quarters of people agreed that projects save them money; the average travel cost saved per visit is over £1.50.
- The majority of schemes either break even or generate a small profit for the licensee but the real benefits are a sense of well being and community spirit.
- Over one half of licensees stated that their Pub is The Hub scheme had increased the number of customers to the pub.
- Virtually all of the respondents believed that the Pub is The Hub scheme supported local suppliers and businesses. Licensees also frequently cited that they use a wide range of local suppliers to stock their scheme.

For more information visit: www.pubisthehub.org.uk.

Quilon's new beer menu

LONDON'S INTERNATIONALLY acclaimed, Michelin starred Indian restaurant, Quilon, has unveiled a new beer and food matching menu devoted solely to British

beer. It was launched at Quilon at the second Britons Backing Beer event, which was attended by brewers, chefs, farmers, maltsters, catering schools and beer-brewing celebrities. Quilon and the British Beer & Pub Association were the sponsors. The five course menu opens with an appetite whetter of popadums and tomato chutney paired with the light and fresh Ceilidh Lager by Williams Bros from Alloa in Scotland. This is followed by lotus stem chop with mango sauce and spiced stir-fried oysters, paired with Fuller's Bengal Lancer. The Chef's own special creation follows, the Quilon Salad, of mixed greens with patty pan dressed in lavender and kokum infusion. After that, baked black cod paired seamlessly with the delicate vanilla and citrus of Innis and Gunn Blonde Oak Aged Beer from Edinburgh. The menu then moves on to a flavoursome lamb biryani followed by coconut asparagus and mange tout accompanied by Chalky's Bite from Sharp's brewery in Cornwall. A lentil cappuccino served with cardamom short breads, fig and pressed honey ice cream finishes the meal nicely accompanied by Sam Smith's Organic Cherry Beer from Yorkshire.

Dea Latis rocks Brighton

INDUSTRY GROUP Dea Latis brought beer to the women of Brighton last month, holding a beer and food tasting at the city's acclaimed seafront restaurant Due South. Beers were provided for the tasting by eight national and local brewers, including WJ King, Hepworth, Fuller's and Hammerpot. Due South's head chef Michael Bremner created a dish to match each beer, resulting in a menu with an exciting range of flavours: think seabass ceviche paired with a blonde beer or lobster with a stout. Bremner said, 'I've always believed that beer is a great match to food as it has such a diversity of tastes from crisp, blonde ales to dark, chocolatey porters. We had a lot of fun creating this menu and I hope it will have persuaded our guests that when it comes to choosing a drink to enjoy with food, there is life beyond wine!

Ros Shiels

News

- If you need good beer photography don't forget there is plenty at www.beergenie.co.uk — and it's free.
- If a reason were needed to drink more beer and eat more chocolate then this is it. Guild member Jane Peyton of the School of Booze has been experimenting with Divine Fairtrade chocolate brands and matching them with beer. Her suggestions are at www.divinechocolate.com/getinvolved/tasting.aspx.
- By the end of the year, there will be a vacancy for someone willing to take over the artwork production of the *New Imbiber* magazine, which is published bimonthly. It usually consists of 28 A5 pages, black-and-white apart from the cover. There is a small fee payable for each issue produced. Applicants would be free to

**DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE IS
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re-design the magazine if so desired and use whatever publishing software programme they are familiar with from which press-ready pdf files can be obtained for the printer. If you are interested or need more information, please get in touch with me via ronaldatkins1@aol.com or by telephone on 01273 486787. **Ronald Atkins**

Life begins at 67

IT WOULD seem unusual that five years at St Thomas' Hospital, London was ideal training for a brewer! There are several reasons to support this curious start.

- 1) Much of my time in medical school was spent in the bar.
- 2) The biochemistry of a yeast cell is strangely similar to that of a human cell (with the exception that it eats sugar and produces alcohol, whereas the human cell tends to do the opposite!).
- 3) I believe I have made a better brewer than I would have made a doctor, arguably saving many patients' lives from my career switch.
- 4) I had a lousy bed-side manner (with invalids anyway).

BREWING STARTED for me with Bass in Burton-on-Trent in 1965. I had no idea what a brewer did and certainly had never heard of Burton on Trent. The real interest happened at the subsequent interview when I was advised of a starting salary of £800 per year, rising to £2000 by the time I would reach 30 years old if I performed well. The final clincher was that an anticipated salary at retirement could approach five figures!

Needless to say I jumped at the opportunity since my only other option was a job in a bank that my father was keen for me to accept. I gained my diploma in brewing after six years and was awarded a small scholarship of £200, which was supposed to allow me world travel (in 1909!). I worked with Tuborg in Copenhagen followed by a period in Canada with Carling O'Keefe. Since I seemed to be able to travel on an aeroplane I was made Export Director for Bass International travelling in just about every country in the world trying to sell English Ale (not an easy task, however I did open one account which I described to my boss as the highest selling Bass account in the world — a pub at 15,000 ft in the Andes at Quito Equador).

Another high spot in my export career was the opening of the first pub in Disney World in Orlando Florida. I managed to persuade the company to part with \$1million dollars for a ten-year lease.

Brewing has always been my greatest love and in 1994 I was able to indulge this passion in a micro-brewery in the Bass Museum where I spent many a happy year resurrecting beers that had been deemed non commercial: needless to say, these were some of the finest beers brewed in their day. In 2003 I was honoured by the British Guild of Beer Writers, being voted Brewer of the Year and in 2006 gained a similar honour from the All-Party Parliamentary Beer Group, both awards being my personal high spot in a career spanning close to 50 years. I have never for a moment, regretted being part of the brewing fraternity. I have met great people, been part of great companies and have been truly happy in this great industry. Had I stayed in medicine, I believe you always see the worst of people, but in brewing it is

certainly the total opposite. I hang up my dipstick at the end of August but will continue to be involved in the industry for some time yet; after all, today's 67 is yesterday's 47 (I hope!). **Steve Wellington**

Baltic porter for a week

IT WAS a mad idea. Of course it was — the best ones always are. Master brewer Tim O'Rourke thought it would be a jolly wheeze to invite the UK's brewers to create their take on an Imperial Russian Stout, and load a barrel of each one onto a chartered racing clipper and sail from London to St Petersburg. Brewery representatives and anyone else who fancied crewing the boat were invited along for anywhere between a one-week leg and the full five-week journey. Guild member Chris Marchbanks went along for a week between Copenhagen and Stockholm, and shall henceforth be known as Private Godfrey, the name he acquired instantly upon boarding the *Thermopylae Clipper*. Glory seeker that I am, I missed Chris, joining in Helsinki for the final leg. As Vinnie Jones might say, it was emotional. Having abandoned my wife for three months last time I went to sea with beer, I insisted she came along this time. On the first day, when we were woken at 4am to stand our turn on watch, as many of the crew lay vomiting and we were hurled around the cabin by the rollercoaster waves and force-six wind we were sailing straight into, she harboured serious thoughts of divorce. By the end of the voyage, during which we were boarded by the BBC, kept alive and sane by a crazed publican from Histon, and fattened by infinite, inexplicable packets of custard creams, she declared it the best holiday of her life.

But what about the beer? What did the journey do to it? When we blind-tasted the 14 beers in London before they were stowed aboard, here's what I wrote about my least favourite of the lot:

'My first Lambic stout. Experimental? Intentional? Dunno, but either way, it's horrible.' And here's what I wrote five weeks later in St Petersburg, about my favourite beer, again tasted blind: 'Different — a very spirituous nose. Lots of aged characteristics. Just gorgeous — so much complexity, everything harmonising, winey, spirituous, fruity, balanced, acidic — perfect.' It was, of course, the same beer. Results will be announced at a ceremony in September. Get there if you can, and taste the Baltika Imperial Stout that we mashed in in St Pete's, which will be coming the other way. **Pete Brown**

Beer Academy dates

- **July 9, One day foundation, White Horse, London**
- **July 12, 90 minute tasting, Uncle Sam's ales, White Horse, London**
- **July 14, How to judge beer, White Horse, London**
- **July 26, 90 minute tasting, Scotland the brave!, White Horse, London**

Go to www.beeracademy.co.uk for more details