

British Guild Of Beer Writers

Newsletter October 2011



PLANS ARE going well for this year's awards dinner and everyone should have received an electronic flier with details on how to buy tickets. The event takes place on 1 December 1 at the Plaza River Bank opposite the houses of Parliament. We are confident it will once again be a sell out event, so to avoid disappointment now is the time to buy a ticket.

As well as our awards for writers, we will also be presenting our Brewer of the Year accolade. This award is given to the person the Committee believes has made the greatest contribution to brewing the previous 12 months from the nominations made by members. Sometimes the choice is easy, but indicative of how dynamic and creative brewing has been in the last 12 months, not only was there more nominations made than I can remember, but any one of them would have been a worthy recipient of the award.

At the last committee meeting, we also agreed to make changes to the Guild's website. The current site has served us well, but it now needs to evolve to take advantage of developments in electronic media. We plan to make greater use of social media and endeavour to make the site a central hub for beer writing.

Plans are now well underway for a day's seminar to be held on the ingredients of beer. We have enlisted the help of former brewer Harry White, who was one of the judges for last year's awards. He plans to put together a list of top people who will be able to inform and entertain us with talks on malts, hops and brewing.

We are currently looking for a date some time early next year, with the venue being the National Brewing Centre at Burton-on-Trent. The event will be open to all members and will be a great way for people to get together, and if all goes well it will include a walking tour of some of the town's greatest pubs. If there is a demand we may make the event open to non-members too, though it is likely they would be expected to pay a small charge. We are also looking at holding a second seminar, with yeast as the topic.

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We have a trip organised to the Welbeck Abbey Brewery, which is being hosted by Dave Wickett. It should be quite a special trip, and there is still room for a few more members to attend. Contact the Secretary if you would like to come.

As part of our plans to add even more value to membership, all members who have paid this year's subscriptions will receive a copy of the British Beer and Pub Association's excellent *Statistical Handbook*. And if this is not enough members will also be receiving a copy of the *Cask Report*. It shows that cask ale is appealing to a new audience of younger, affluent and sociable drinkers. So put away your flat cap, leave the whippet at home and get off to the pub. **Tim Hampson**

Brussels sprouts good beers

AGE SLOWS the reflexes. So when Adrian Tierney-Jones rang to ask if I would like to join a trip to Belgium, it must have taken me a full half-second to respond.

We met at St Pancras — Tim Hampson, Mark Fletcher, Marverine Cole, Jerry Bartlett, Adrian and me — where we were joined by the lovely Sophie Bouallègue and Stephanie Gauthier-Bujold from the Belgian Tourist Office, who were to be our guides for three days of great beer, great food and wonderful company.

We barely had time to check into the beautiful Dominican Hotel before we headed off to church. And in the awesome beauty of the Cathedral of St Michael and St Gudula we joined the blessing of the beers, a ceremony of pomp and dignity, music, prayer and incense.

It was a blessed short walk from here to the stunning cobbled square of the Grand Place, focus of activities for the Brussels Beer Weekend. Of course, every weekend is beer weekend in Brussels, in this city of hundreds of bars and thousands of beers. Cramming the centre of the square with 40-something open-air trade stands merely

removes the need for all that tiresome barhopping. That it was Belgium's hottest weekend of the year, and that I was with the funniest, cleverest, thirstiest bunch of beer writers it has ever been my pleasure to spend time with, made for a memorable mini-break.

The beer festival boasted the A to Z of Belgian brewing from Abbaye to Zot, and though — despite Jerry's very best efforts — we couldn't try them all, we did tick off most of the major styles: lambics and gueuzes, lagers pale and dark, fruit beers and Saisons. Sophie and Stephanie, wine drinkers both, were soon converts too.

Beyond the festival there was plenty of time to visit some of the city's best bars — the atmospheric Le Cirio, idiosyncratic La Becasse, bohemian Metteko and the dark and forbidding L'Image Nostre Dame, once a favourite haunt of that nice Monsieur Magritte.

Restaurants too. Belga Queen offered some really innovative beer and food combinations, though our visit here was more memorable for Tim's family-sized seafood platter, and Marverine's wide-eyed astonishment at the high-tech toilets.

At Cantillon, Brussels' only lambic brewer, we climbed wooden ladders and ducked past low beams, where the old bare wood of floorboards and gnarled rafters, ancient barrels and abandoned dray carts support a microclimate where the air is thick with the wild yeast needed for natural fermentation.

Across town at La Senne, the city's newest brewery, brewer Yvan de Baets explained the company's absence from the Grand Place: 'The festival is about bigger and more commercial breweries,

CALENDAR 2011

• Czech Beer Festival @ the Porterhouse, Covent Garden November 17-27

• BGBW Awards and Dinner, London December 1
Please send details of any relevant events to Adrian Tierney-Jones

and we're just not part of that life. We have values to fight for, but money isn't one of them.'

He talks a good game, and brews some amazing beers too, and while some well-oiled locals sang drunken folk songs inside, we lounged in the brewery yard with pale Taras Boulba, herby Zinnebir, fruity Very Speciale and — best of all — the full-on, full bodied, full-flavoured Jambe de Bois.

It means 'wooden leg'. And though we were soon back on the Eurostar for home, it was a couple of days before I felt like I was walking properly again. **Simon Jenkins**

Own brew

GUILD MEMBER Jane Peyton, who is Principal of the School of Booze, along with Sara Barton, founder and head brewer of Brewster's in Grantham, are keen to inspire more women to brew and drink beer. To this end they have devised a competition for women who fancy having a go at brewing beer. Entrants will be asked to devise a beer recipe inspired by one of the brands of Britain's leading Fairtrade chocolate maker — Divine. So if Divine's Dark Chocolate with Orange and Ginger is the inspiration, then the beer recipe might be an IPA with citrus and spicy hops. The person who devises the winning recipe will be invited to brew the beer alongside Sara Barton at Brewster's. And it may even go on sale in Brewster's range of bottled beers. Entries are welcome from October 28-December 31. Sara Barton will choose a winner in January 2012. For more information please contact Jane Peyton by email — ninkasi@school-of-booze.com or phone 07729 601 590.

Landmark pub under threat

AN ICONIC North London pub and a three-time winner of the local CAMRA branch's Pub of the Year Award faces the threat of closure and subsequent

demolition. The Wenlock Arms in Hoxton has been under a cloud for a while as owners Steve Barnes and Will Williams have pondered its (and their) future. Local scrutiny of Hackney Council's website has discovered an application by someone called Wenlock LLP to demolish the building and replace it with five flats and non-pub commercial space on the ground floor.

When Steve and Will took over this run-down street-corner boozery many years ago, they turned it into a destination free house. It was admired for its constantly changing range of real ales and ciders and was one of the first pubs in London to stock unusual imported bottled beers; it also had its trademark door-step sandwiches and last, but not least, its commitment to live jazz music. It showed what could be done when licensees had the freedom to stock beers of their own choosing and in some ways can be seen as a torch-bearer for more recent cask ale and cider specialist pubs, such as The Bree Louise, Southampton Arms, Euston Tap and Craft Beer Co.

In doing what it did, it attracted not only customers from far and wide but those from its own doorstep. It did not eschew local custom to bring in the cask drinkers — it supported darts and cricket teams, it was a part of its local community. Ironically, many of the newer residents, in the flats that have been created from former commercial premises, might have considered the Wenlock Arms one of the attractions of moving into the area. And now the housing juggernaut has the pub in its sights threatening another local amenity which adds to the well-being of citizens. So, if you read this and feel aggrieved, then object to the application by going to

**DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE IS
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<http://easteight.com/plappshow.php?param=158243> — go down the left-hand side and 'Click here to comment' opens up a screen easily completed. If you don't have access to the internet, then write to The Planning Inspectorate, London Borough of Hackney, Town Hall, Mare Street, London E8 1EA quoting reference 2011/1996 and the site address 26 Wenlock Road, London N1 7TA.

Comments must be submitted by October 18. **John Cryne**

Get on the Ale Train (oh yeah)

DOWNLOAD THE CaskFinder app to a smartphone either through iTunes (for iPhones) or through the Android Market. Register your details on the app ale trail and when visiting Cask Marque pubs scan the QR Code (Quick Response code) on the Cask Marque annual certificate. Visits mean prizes: 25 pubs: Cask Marque bottle opener fridge magnet; 50 pubs: Cask Marque designer T-Shirt; 100 pubs: Cask Marque ambassador. The trail is launched on October 1 to coincide with Cask Ale Week. Ale trails are a proven method of encouraging extra visitors to pubs. Let's have some fun! **Paul Nunny**

Beer Academy news

THERE HAS been a wealth of interest for the Academy's Accredited Beer Sommelier Scheme — there are only two assessment slots left for the November Assessment Dates. To be amongst the first Beer Academy Accredited Beer Sommeliers please visit the website for further details — www.beeracademy.co.uk. The next round of assessments is on the November 11, 2011. These assessments are held at the Beer Academy HQ, Green Park, London.

SELECTED BEER ACADEMY DATES

October 11

90 Minute Tasting, Oktoberfest, The White Horse, London

November 8

90 Minute Tasting, Dark Ales, The White Horse, London

November 15

How to Judge Beer, The George Bristol

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

News

Several beerwriters have books out just in time for the Christmas market. First up is Roger Protz with *Beer Town*, which is subtitled *The Story of Brewing in Burton Upon Trent*, which sounds pretty self explanatory. It is published by the History Press and retails at £12.99. Then there is Melissa Cole's *Let Me Tell You About Beer*. This is Melissa's first book and is published by Pavilion Books on October 24; it retails for £14.99. Finally (and if there is any member out there who has a book coming out and has been overlooked then do contact the Secretary), there is Adrian Tierney-Jones' *Great British Pubs*, which will be available on November 1. This retails at £14.99 and is published by CAMRA.

The British Guild of Beer Writers ANNUAL AWARDS DINNER
Thursday 1st December 2011
Park Plaza Riverbank, Albert Embankment London

Join industry friends for the beer and food event of the year

This year, we will be enjoying the Pan-Asian cuisine of Park Plaza executive chef Werner Seebach, paired with a selection of British and imported beers

Dinner is followed by the Guild's annual awards, which recognise those writers and other communicators who are doing most to broaden the public's knowledge of beer and pubs

Tickets £75 per person, or £56 for individual Guild members
Tables and part-tables available

To order tickets or for more information contact Angie Armitage: angie@cask-marque.co.uk / 01206 752212

Molson Coors Awards
Fuller's ESB Award for Best Writing for the Beer and Pub Trade
ADNAMS Awards
Brains SA Gold Award for the Best Use of Online Media
Guild of Beer Writers Award for Corporate Communications
Shepherd Neame 1698 Award for Beer and Food Writing
Budweiser Budvar John White Travel Banery