

British Guild Of Beer Writers

Newsletter December 2011

THE VERY best of beer writing was honored with Ben McFarland crowned Beer Writer of the Year at our annual awards dinner on December 1, which was attended by more than 230 journalists, brewers and pub operators at the London Riverside Park Plaza.

The Beer Writer of the Year is chosen from one of seven category winners, who represent some of the finest beer writing and journalism in the UK. As well as picking up the overall title, Ben also won the Fuller's ESB Award for Best Writing for the Beer and Pub Trade. Last year's winner and chairman of the judges Simon Jenkins said: 'Ben is really setting the standard for writing about beer. His work is always interesting and informative — and his passion for the subject really shines through everything he writes.' Other winners named at the event at the London Riverside Park Plaza included Mark Dredge for Beer and Food writing, Martyn Cornell in the Online category for his blog Zythophile and Marverine Cole for her regional television work. Pete Brown scooped the new award for Corporate Communications, Des de Moor won the Beer and Travel writing prize, and Adrian Tierney-Jones was named National Journalist of the year. The Guild's Brewer of the Year was Kernel's Evin O'Riordain.



RESULTS IN FULL

Brewer of the Year 2011 — Evin O'Riordain, Kernel Brewery

Budweiser Budvar John White Travel Bursary — prize £1,000 plus trip to Czech Republic. Winner: Des de Moor

Shepherd Neame 1698 Award for Beer and Food Writing — prize £1,000. Winner: Mark Dredge

Thwaites Award for Best Corporate Communications — prize £1,000. Winner: Pete Brown

Brains SA Gold Award for Best Use of Online Media — £1,000 & £500.

Winner: Martyn Cornell; silver award: Mark Charlwood

Adnams Award for Best Writing in Regional Media — prize £1,000 & £500.

Winner: Marverine Cole; silver award: Gavin Aitchison

Fuller's ESB Award for Best Writing for the Beer and Pub Trade — prize £1,000 & £500.

Winner: Ben McFarland; silver award: Glynn Davis

Molson Coors Award for Best Writing in National Media — prize £1,000 & £500.

Winner: Adrian Tierney-Jones; silver award: Will Hawkes

The Michael Jackson Gold Award — Beer Writer of the Year 2011:

Ben McFarland

THIS YEAR we have experienced a fundamental change in Britain's brewing industry, which has seen huge numbers of micro-brewers and craft brewers bring

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hundreds of new beers to the market, and open up to customers a vast new array of tastes, styles and experiences. This diversity was reflected in the Guild's choice of Evin O'Riordain as Brewer of the Year.

The creative flair of Evin with his passion for collaboration and generosity of spirit, which has produced beers such as Black IPA, London Brick, Big Brick to name just three, speaks volumes about what is going on in the London craft beer scene and it's down to people like Evin.

Finally, the awards would not happen without the judges so special thanks should go to Simon Jenkins, winner of the 2010 Beer Writer of the Year; Fiona Matthias, Executive Editor of the *Sunday Telegraph*; Martin Ross, journalist, writer and home brewer; Martin Kellaway, founder of Wharfebank Brewery in Leeds and Joanna Copestick, who has commissioned and published a number of books about beer.

If anyone wants a photo from the dinner go to cath.smugmug.com/Other/Beer-Writers-Guilds-Awards/20376466_sxPzHQ

The password for access is Plaza.

DON'T FORGET that February 28, 2012 is the date fixed for our Brewing Materials Seminar, to be held in the Worthington Suite at the National Brewery Centre, in Burton-on-Trent. We are also going to arrange a trip around Shobnall Maltings the day before the conference and in the evening will have a tour of some of town's finest pubs, just to set the scene. Full details of the speakers have yet to be confirmed but the line-up is likely to include Sharp's head brewer Stuart Howe, Hall & Woodhouse's Toby Heasman and hop guru Paul Corbett. The event will be free to members but for others there will be a charge of which more details will be released soon. In the meantime, if you want to attend this fascinating event, please send names to the Secretary tierneyjones@btinternet.com. **Tim Hampson**

Beer bookworms

PERHAPS OUR prime objective as beer writers is not just the tasting and appreciation of good beer and the pubs and breweries associated with it, but also to describe this effectively and enticingly. Two recent book launches were fine examples of this. They

were both held at the National Brewery Centre in Burton and were quite different in style.

Garrett Oliver was approached by Oxford University Press to edit *The Oxford Companion to Beer* and hesitated at first as he realised the enormity of the task, which meant collating the work of 166 contributors. Some of these were present at the launch, including Chris Marchbanks and Alistair Gilmour, as Garrett conducted a tutored beer tasting of his Brooklyn Brewery beers.

He is opinionated, charming and articulate and best of all bursting with enthusiasm for beer. The task was enormous and gave him some stressful times, but the book is the definitive guide to all aspects of brewing, with, for example, over 100 entries on hops. This is quite an achievement for Garrett and his editorial board, and an invaluable reference source for beer writers.

He took us through the tasting and used the food and beer to illustrate his thoughts and interests. He also warned us of the high strength of his beers ranging from 8-11.2%, which made some of the drivers wish they had come by public transport. We started with a pale Belgian-style beer at 9% — Local No 1 — which was beautifully matched with smoked salmon. We then tasted four other beers, each matched with a carefully chosen dish.

His 8% Blast IPA was the perfect partner to a plate of small samosas while the final two dark beers — the 10.2% Imperial Stout and the memorably named Black Ops (11.2%) — tasted even better with a piece of strong Stilton. A lunchtime and a man to remember, while a reference book to celebrate.

A week after the Garrett launch Roger Protz launched his well illustrated *Story Of Brewing In Burton On Trent*. This was a journalist's take on a historical wonder. Roger was fascinated by this small place that became the most important brewing town in the world. His love of the place and grasp of the essential historical facts added a new

CALENDAR 2012

- National Winter Ales Festival, Manchester, January 18-21

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

perspective to my knowledge of this small town next to Derby.

He explained how brewers from all over the country and also from Germany flocked to Burton to discover how to brew the pale ales. The town had an influence on German lager brewing, as well as sending IPA to India. At one time the St Pancras undercroft would be full of Burton beer regularly sent there. Roger's event had quite a different style from Garrett's; he spoke for a short while about his passion for Burton, standing amongst an audience of brewers, writers and drinkers. Two appropriate beers were offered to us: Red Shield from the new William Worthington brewery and O Roger, a version of IPA brewed with Amber Malt at the Otley Brewery in Wales (this had caused the nearby Marston's to become very protective about their Old Rodger but it was amicably resolved). Roger finished off by wondering about the decline of brewing in Burton — 'Where did it all go wrong?' — and pointed his finger at commercial lager.

Another fascinating book launch and another writer crucial to our understanding and appreciation of the amber stuff. **Les Baynton**

American Cask Force

AS AN expat Brit who has been living in New York City for the past 12 years and is passionate about quality cask beer, I have witnessed the recent dramatic growth of the American craft beer industry. Riding the crest of the wave of this phenomena is cask-conditioned beer, now available in hundreds of bars and restaurants across the nation.

However, it has not been — and probably never will be — plain sailing. There is no Cask Marque or anything similar (at least yet), there is no CAMRA or anything resembling such a vast and influential consumer movement (again, at least yet). But there are over 600 cask outlets now in North America — and it's running in a state of anarchy, for better or for worse.

Some cellar servicing companies know about cask and how to correctly install a system, while others still look at the hand pump and associated cooling equipment with puzzlement as if it just had fallen off a Martian spaceship. Some bar owners research how to do it properly with settling and conditioning

times and venting procedures strictly observed, while sadly others just jump on the bandwagon without 'getting' the concept, and throw casks up instantly when needed — and serve them either too warm by gravity from the bar top (usually not giving settling or conditioning a thought), or too cold via a beer engine from the frigid keg 'walk-in box'. The magic 54°F as an ideal temperature is sometimes observed rigidly, but at other times you might as well be drinking cask under a cactus in a parched Arizona desert or on freezing tundra in Alaska. Yeast soup is sadly too common.

One notable difference between UK and US cask beer is that American brewers generally don't use finings, so the beer can be turbid or hazy — even if treated right.

I was fortunate enough to spend some time recently with Bruce Williams of Alloa-based Williams Brothers/Heather Ales as he has been on a three-month trip to the US to promote his beers there, including casks that get shipped over. We deeply share the frustration that quality can always be great in some places, while in others the beer would be barely good enough to wash our feet in.

What we discussed and wish to put into action is some sort of quality control scheme to accredit the places that do cask beer correctly, and discourage the rogue cask outlets that don't. We're actively looking for others to join in to collectively kick-start this venture wherever possible. It's an uphill struggle though, just like the first European settlers who came to the USA in the 1600s initially had a hard time brewing beer in the first place from whatever grains were available. We already have a major beer distribution company interested in involvement, that I helped to persuade a while ago to invest in their own firkins to service the growing cask market (in the US, it's more common for cask beer to be in cooperage owned by the distributor rather than the brewery).

Another expat Brit who is a cask stalwart is Pennsylvania-based Paul Pendyck. Paul founded and runs UK Brewing Supplies, importing casks, beer engines, and all associated equipment from

**DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE IS
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full cooling systems right down to taps, shives, keystones and spile pegs. Bearing in mind that none of the above is now manufactured in America, Paul has been the life blood as such of the cask beer revival by providing the infrastructure. American cask beer suffered extinction, accelerated by the failed experiment of Prohibition, so the associated equipment in this new revival has to largely come over from Britain.

Anyone wishing to learn more on the current cask scene here — or even help promote good quality — can contact me at alex@wanderingstarbrewing.com.

Alex Hall

BWOTY 2011: results analysed

IT'S A sign of the health of the beer writing scene in Britain that over the past 10 years, 45 different names have been featured in the Beer Writer of the Year prize winners' listings — and of those 45, 36 had not won an award at a BWOTY dinner previously.

This year, again, the winners' listings were a mixture of familiar names and welcome new faces, including two (out of seven) category winners who had never picked up prizes before — Marverine Cole, in the regional media section, and Des de Moor, who took home the tankard for travel writing — and four more new names among the runners-up. Out of the 11 people awarded prizes this year, therefore, six were entirely fresh.

Mind, Ben McFarland, the 2011 Beer Writer of the Year, looks to now have a Michael Jackson-like grip on the tankards: this was his third BWOTY title in eight years, and meant he has won a tankard of some sort in all but one of the years he has been eligible to enter the competition since 2004. It's a hugely impressive record, which puts him far ahead of anyone else in terms of awards success over the past 10 years, and fourth in the overall table across the full 24-year history of the event.

It has to be admitted that the Beer Writer of the Year title is more likely to go to someone with 'form' in the competition:

there have only been 12 different names on the gold tankard over the 24 years the event has been running, and just six different names in the past 10 years, of whom only two — Zak Avery in 2008 and Ben McF with his first gold in 2004 — had never won any sort of tankard before. Four writers alone — Alistair Gilmour (4) the late Michael Jackson (3) Ben McFarland (3) and Allan McLean (3) — have more than half the gold tankards between them.

But that shouldn't put anyone off: this year's results show that the judges are perhaps even more excited by the work being done by unfamiliar names than they are by the 'old guard', and there is every chance that next year's Beer Writer of the Year will again be someone who has not been in the winners' enclosure before.

Martyn Cornell

TOP 10 2002-2011 BEER WRITER OF THE YEAR POINTS WINNERS

1 Ben McFarland	23 points
2 Alastair Gilmour	14 points
3= Pete Brown	11 points
3 = Martyn Cornell	11 points
5 Simon Jenkins	10 points
6 Adam Withrington	9 points
7= Zak Avery	8 points
7= Mike Chappell	8 points
7= Adrian Tierney-Jones	8 points
10= Jeff Evans	7 points
10= Mark Dredge	7 points

TOP 10 1988-2011 BEER WRITER OF THE YEAR POINTS WINNERS

1 Michael Jackson	29 points
2 Roger Protz	27 points
3 Alastair Gilmour	26 points
4 Ben McFarland	23 points
5 Brian Glover	18 points
6 Allan McLean	16 points
7 Jeff Evans	14 points
8 Martyn Cornell	13 points
9= Arthur Taylor	11 points
9= Pete Brown	11 points

(points given as follows: BWOTY 5, category winner 3, travel writing award 2, runner-up 1)