

# British Guild Of Beer Writers

## Newsletter June 2012



***THE BEER giant that is London has stirred and it's good news. Two centuries ago London was a byword for brewing — its fame and beers were spread about the four corners of the world.***

Then the behemoth fell from grace, breweries closed and only a few kept the ideal of brewing beer alive in the capital. Most Londoners drank beers brewed elsewhere.

Upstarts rose to proclaim they were the country's capital city of beer — Derby, Sheffield and Norwich have all staked their claim and each of these cities now has a thriving beer culture. Now London's burning to tell the world that local beer is back — and that people are once again able to choose from beers from more than 30 breweries located within 15 miles of Hyde Park Corner.

Londoners have embraced being able to drink local beer and with the help of CAMRA's London branches the whole world is going to be told. Throughout July, London's CAMRA branches are coordinating a campaign to showcase what the capital has on offer, not only some of the country's best and most historic pubs, but great beer too.

The objective is to raise the profile of British beer and pubs during the summer starting the first week in July, featuring the Ealing Beer Festival and including the Great British Beer Festival in August at Olympia. As London swings into summer, and London fills with visitors from overseas, most might think that the only beer people drink is produced by a certain Olympic sponsor.

However, CAMRA's London branches say we should be proud of our British heritage and show visitors to this country, 60% of whom say they

want to visit a pub while they are here, what great beer and pubs there are the capital.

A website — [www.londoncityofbeer.org.uk](http://www.londoncityofbeer.org.uk) — is up and running which lists all the activities involving beer across London, whether a brewery open day (Sambrook, Redemption, Moncada and Windsor & Eton are amongst those on board for this), an event in a pub or a guided tour around some of London's historical pubs. Capital pubs and breweries are being encouraged to get involved to create one great celebration.

CAMRA London branches are producing a special edition of its *London Drinker Magazine*, 'A Visitors' Guide to London', featuring pubs that appeal to a wide variety of visitors including heritage pubs, pubs with entertainment, pubs near markets and pubs with good food to name just a few of the categories.

The axis of consumers and producers working to promote, sell and raise the profile of all beer is powerful and should also provide many story opportunities for writers. Go to the website for more on London City of Beer. **Tim Hampson**

### ***Guild AGM details***

THE GUILD'S AGM will be on Thursday June 21 at the **Clachan** (34 Kingly Street, London W1B 5QH); it will kick-off upstairs at 6.30pm with a buffet to be served at 8/8.30pm. I would like to thank Nicholson's for their kind hospitality. Tim Hampson has indicated he is happy to continue as Chairman, but any members wishing to stand should let the Secretary know; while the Treasurer is also happy to continue. As Secretary I indicated last year that I would be standing down but I have had an Alex Ferguson change of heart and would like to do one more year — however, if you wish to stand for Secretary please let me know and it will be put to the vote.

At the time of writing, it looks as if there will be at least eight members (with a ninth mulling over

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it) standing for six committee places. We will be having a ballot vote. There is no stipulation in the Constitution to do so before the meeting, but if there is anyone else interested in standing, please let the Secretary know at least a week before the AGM. However, according to the Constitution any motions that members want on the agenda must be sent to the Secretary at least seven days before the AGM. Finally, if you are coming please try and let the Secretary know so that he can tell the pub how many people they can expect for the buffet. If you have never been to an AGM before please make an effort, it's a chance to meet other Guild members and make your voice heard.

### **Britain's golden age of brewing**

BRITAIN IS enjoying a golden age for brewing, with over 850 breweries now operational across the country producing over 5,500 different beers. To celebrate this remarkable industry, CAMRA, has released a new book, *101 Beer Days Out*, to showcase how Britain has beer and brewing experiences to rival any in the world. CAMRA's *101 Beer Days Out*, by Tim Hampson, brings together the most exciting ways to take in the nation's rich beer and brewing culture, whether through conventional city pub trails and tourist brewery tours, or via more unusual — and eccentrically British — events such as bog snorkelling or the World Marble Championships! Listing attractions, events, and venues that are must-visit examples of Britain's brewing heritage and modern beer scene, the book is bursting with entries from the Orkney Isles to the south coast of Cornwall. CAMRA's *101 Beer Days Out* is out now, available from the CAMRA shop and all good book retailers, ([www.camra.org.uk/shop](http://www.camra.org.uk/shop)) priced £12.99 (£10.99 for CAMRA members).

### **Sommelier Enchanted Evening**

THE ALL Party Parliamentary Beer Group presented its inaugural award for 'Beer Sommelier of the Year' to Nigel Sadler at the Annual Beer Awards dinner held in Westminster in May.

Commenting on the award, Andrew Griffiths MP, Chairman of the Group, said: 'Too many people lose sight of the pivotal role that beer plays in the UK economy — and of its contribution to the British way of life. The Beer Academy has done a fantastic service for the appreciation and promotion of beer by establishing this new Beer Sommelier qualification, which will create a pool of ambassadors with the knowledge, communication skills and, most importantly, the passion to inspire people to rediscover our national drink.'

'I am delighted that the Beer Group's first Beer Sommelier of the Year award is going to Nigel Sadler, who has been untiring in using his new found status as a Beer Academy Sommelier to build public awareness of the enormous diversity of beer styles and the opportunities to partner beer and food.'

### **Beer Academy latest**

June 8 How to Judge Beer, Hook Norton Brewery, Oxford £78  
June 9 How to Judge Beer, The White Horse, London £78  
June 21 How to Judge Beer, Leeds £78  
June 21 How to Judge Beer, London £78  
June 25/26 June Two Day Advanced Course, Burton £288  
June 26  
Beer & Baking Festival Time: 11:30 to 13:00, £20  
Beer & Baking Festival Time: 14:00 to 15:30, £20  
Beer & Baking Festival Time: 16:30 to 18:00, £20  
Please go to [www.beeracademy.org](http://www.beeracademy.org) for more details

### **Podge's Belgian Beer Tours**

**Chelmsford summer beer festival 2012 July 10-14**  
At our BelgaFest Beer Bar not only will we have a selection of over 100 Belgian Beers (bottled and draught), but beers from Czech Republic, USA, Norway, Germany, Netherlands and Australia will also feature.  
**Ipswich beer festival on the waterfront August 16-19**  
Our BelgaFest Beer Bar will be at this second festival on the Orwell Quay at Ipswich Docks and we look forward to seeing you all there.

#### **Beer & Heritage Tour, August 24-27**

The itinerary for this Tour is nearing completion with the help of archaeologist Dave Buckley who will act as guide on our popular annual Beer & Heritage Tour. This year we are based in the historic city of Leuven at the luxury Novotel. We are just back from completing the research for the beer cafes of this great student town and are pleased to report that they are more beery and more numerous than ever!

The price of this four-day tour has been held at last year's prices and is £380 per person based on sharing a twin or double room with a single supplement of £94. If you would like to book a place, please send me a deposit of £100 per person now.

#### **Abbey Beer Pilgrimage, Sept 20-24**

This beer tour takes in all the authenticated Abbey Beers of Belgium. In 1999 a Certified Belgian Abbey Beer (Erkend Belgisch Abdijbier) logo was introduced by the Union of Belgian Brewers. This is awarded and can be used on the labels of beers that comply with certain conditions including links with an existing or former abbey and payment of royalties for charitable purposes to the abbey. We will aim to visit various locations associated with these beers to give travellers a unique opportunity to attempt to try most or all of the 'Erkend' Abbey beers of Belgium. We will be visiting some of the

### **CALENDAR 2012**

- 21 June, BGBW AGM, the Clachan, London
- 6 August, Guild pre-GBBF event, details TBC
- 7-11 August GBBF, Olympia, London
- 6 December BGBW annual dinner and awards, London, venue TBC

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

breweries where they are brewed, some of the associated abbeys and other historic settings linked to the beer. Siobhan McGinn will be our guide to the historical and cultural elements of this tour including helping to sort out your Cistercians from your Benedictines, whilst on the beer front Podge will sort out your Dubbels from your Tripels. Details of this tour are still being worked on, but the following have been organised: a visit to Maredsous Abbey; a snack and an Abbaye de Bonne Esperance beer at Tournebride Tavern in the Abbey grounds; a meal and beer at Floreffe Abbey; a tasting of Ename beers at Oude Abdij café in Ename; a visit to and meal at Gasterie Ten Duinen, the estaminet associated with the Ten Duinen Abbey in Koksijde; a tour and tasting at Brasserie de Brunehaut; a visit, tasting and meal at Val de Sambre brewery which nestles in the heart of the Aulne Abbey; a brewery tour and beer tasting at St Feuillien in Le Roeulx.

The price of this five-day tour is £445 per person based on sharing a twin or double room with a single supplement of £128. If you would like to book a place please send me a deposit of £100 per person now.

#### **Christmas in Bruges, December 22-26**

We are pleased to announce that rooms have once again been secured at Hotel Academie in central Bruges and we will be running a Christmas Tour, so get the dates in your diary and get your request for leave in!

The price of this five-day tour is £445 per person based on sharing a twin or double room with a single supplement of £128. If you would like to book a place, please register your interest now to be added to the list. Chris Pollard, [www.podgebeer.co.uk](http://www.podgebeer.co.uk)

### ***Dave Wickett remembered***

**Tim Hampson** Dave Wickett loved to tell the story of how he bought his first pub in 1981, the same year that the pubco J D Wetherspoon was founded. Thirty-one years on Dave still had one pub in the UK, and 'Spoons' has more than 830, but arguably his influence and legacy are the most profound.

When he bought the closed Alma pub much of Sheffield was rusted to the core. Its heavy industry was in decline, the town's once proud brewing heritage was already showing signs of structural failure and many of its pubs were neglected and offered little choice to customers, especially one who was a vegetarian.

As an economics lecturer he was determined to put his business principles into practice. He wanted to see the pub operate as a true free house. It should offer a wide selection of changing real ales and have a simple food menu, diverse enough to satisfy everyone from the ardent carnivore through to a committed vegan.

News of his venture spread far and wide and on the day the pub reopened as the Fat Cat, he was astounded to find a queue of people outside waiting for the door to be unlocked. One of the first beers on sale was Timothy Taylor's Landlord, from its

seemingly faraway homeland in Keighley, West Yorkshire. At first the brewer wouldn't deliver to the pub as it was outside its trading area, so Dave had to go and collect the first 18-gallon barrel. The brewery changed its mind, when a few days later he rang to order three more as the first had already sold out.

Though, Dave did say that not everyone was happy with Landlord being served. On opening day, one customer called him outside the crowded pub and proceeded to pour a pint of Landlord into the gutter saying he only drank beer brewed in Sheffield. In 1990 Dave took another significant step in opening the Kelham Island Brewery in a brick shed behind the pub. The disgruntled first day customer who had poured his beer away might have had a smile on his face that day. For some time there had been no other brewers in Sheffield. Bass, Whitbread and Wards once bastions of the Sheffield brewing industry had shut in the intervening years since the Cat had opened. Dave had restored the tradition of brewing to the steel city.

A long-time member and supporter of the Guild, Dave, when on one of our trips to a brewery, would often buy a firkin or two of beer for sale at the Cat. He also, brewed, at the behest of guild member Sue Novak, a Saffron flavoured beer for drinking at one of our awards' dinners. He regarded it as one of the finest beers his brewery had ever produced. Though he did once concede, because of the cost of the spice, it was probably his most expensive.

The last time I saw Dave was a few weeks ago in Sheffield. He was due to hand over a cheque for £6,000 to the Cornwall Hospice Care. The money had been raised when Sharps' head brewer Stuart Howe decided to brew a beer called honouring Dave.

Stuart was inspired to brew the beer when last year, Dave's son Ed was on work experience at Sharps in Rock Cornwall. After learning that Dave was battling bone cancer he decided to brew a special beer, DW, with the proceeds going to a charity of Dave's choice. In a typical display of his abundant altruism Dave said he wanted any funds raised to go to a charity local to Sharps rather than one in Sheffield. Sadly he felt too poorly to attend the event, but Stuart and I went to see him in his home. Despite his obvious illness, his mind blazed with optimism and ideas for future projects.

Dave's enthusiasm for beer and brewing had also seen him help set up a bar in New York State, the Thornbridge and Welbeck breweries, a course on brewing at Sheffield University and numerous other ventures. Today, the Fat Cat is still busy, still selling a wide range of real ales, more than 7,000 since it opened, and it still has a food menu that should satisfy all. Meanwhile, Kelham Island Brewery provided the inspiration and training for a generation

***DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE IS JUNE 28***

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of brewers who have gone on to found their own breweries not just in Sheffield but around the world. That's quite a legacy.

I have a bottle of the DW beer that was brewed by Stuart Howe. The unfiltered and bottle conditioned 9.5% beer is late hopped with Hallertauer Northern Brewer, Perle, Willamette and Cascade; it is then dry hopped with Amarillio. Perhaps it is the time to open it and say cheers to a great man.

**Roger Protz** Dave Wickett, who played a key role in the British micro-brewing movement and was instrumental in restoring brewing to Sheffield, has died from cancer at the age of 64. He ran the Fat Cat pub in the city and added the Kelham Island Brewery, both of which achieved legendary status at home and abroad.

Wickett was born in Potters Bar, Hertfordshire, but spent most of his life in Sheffield. He graduated from Sheffield University in 1976 and became a lecturer in economics at the local polytechnic. An early member of the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA), he served on its Industry and Economics Committee, which produced detailed reports on the anti-competitive activities of national brewers.

In 1981, while still a lecturer, he bought a closed pub in Sheffield, the Alma, which he re-opened as the Fat Cat. It seemed a foolhardy gesture: the pub was dedicated to cask ale at a time when big brewers dominated the market with processed keg beer. Sheffield was losing its steel industry and, as a result, four major commercial breweries in the city closed. But Wickett had touched a chord. There were sufficient beer lovers left in Sheffield to turn the Fat Cat into such a success that in 1990 Wickett launched the Kelham Island Brewery next door.

The demands of pub and brewery enabled Wickett to give up what he called 'the dismal science of economics'. His first beer was a traditional best bitter but he leapt on to the national stage with one of the first of the new breed of golden ales, Pale Rider, which

won CAMRA's 2004 Champion Beer of Britain award.

The acclaim for his beers forced Wickett in 1999 to build a new brewery with five times the capacity of the original plant, which he turned into a museum and visitor centre. Kelham Island flourished and Wickett was able to turn Pale Rider into a beer available throughout the country.

In 2007 he moved the brewery yet again to a bigger site but still within yards of the Fat Cat. With an American business partner, he launched the Old Toad pub in Rochester, New York, which was dedicated to American craft beers, while back home he was a consultant to the new Thornbridge Brewery.

In January 2010 Wickett was diagnosed with terminal bone cancer. He threw himself into a whirlwind of activity. He opened a new brewery at Welbeck Abbey in Nottinghamshire, which supplies its school of artisan food and cooking. He helped develop a Department of Molecular Biology & Biotechnology at Sheffield University to run post-graduate courses for brewers. In 2011 he was awarded the Professor Robert Boucher Distinguished Alumni Award by the university and in the same year was given a Lifetime Achievement Award by the All-Parliamentary Beer Club.

In his spare time, Dave Wickett was a passionate supporter of Sheffield United FC. He contributed to match programmes and continued to attend home and away games in his wheelchair until he became too ill. He is survived by wife Helen and son Edward.

*David Mark Wickett, born Potters Bar 24 May 1947, died Sheffield 16 May 2012.*

This is an edited version of Roger's obituary in the *Guardian*. Other tributes to Dave can be found at: [petebrown.blogspot.com](http://petebrown.blogspot.com), [girlsguidetobeer.blogspot.co.uk](http://girlsguidetobeer.blogspot.co.uk) and [maltworms.blogspot.com](http://maltworms.blogspot.com)



*Dave Wickett at the launch of Brooklyn Smoked Porter, which he brewed with Garrett Oliver*