

British Guild Of Beer Writers

Newsletter July 2012



WELCOME TO the start of another Guild year and many thanks to all of you who made the time to come to our well-attended and at times lively AGM.

Because of current work commitments Mark Dredge has decided not to stand for the committee and I would like to thank him for his work, especially when it came to advising us on the use of new media. However, we now welcome Frances Brace and Paul Hegarty to the committee's ranks which also includes Dave Bailey, Ros Shiel, Pete Brown, Robert Humphreys and Larry Nelson. Adrian Tierney Jones was re-elected as our Secretary and Paul Nunny continues to be our Treasurer.

Guild events Hopefully the next 12 months will bring some exciting Guild-organised events.

A SEMINAR on sour/lambic beers is in the early stages of planning and we are considering updating/repeating the seminar on the ingredients of beer.

AFTER REQUESTS from members we are also investigating the feasibility of putting on an event for those who feel the need to develop their communication/writing skills. But we would welcome ideas for other events — perhaps smaller ones that could be undertaken regionally.

Website The website has been upgraded and improved. New elements include a blog roll, and the ability to include members' videos. If you want to have your videos highlighted — which first of all need to be posted on YouTube — please do let me know

Great British Beer Festival Together with the US Brewers Association we will be hosting a pre-GBBF event at the Porterhouse in Covent Garden. Invites and further details will be sent out in July.

Beer writer of the year The search is on to find this year's best beer communicators and writers. Entries are now open for the British Guild of Beer Writers' annual competition for beer writing, with a total prize fund of over £8,500 to be awarded to those whose work is judged the best execution of the Guild's mission 'to extend public knowledge and appreciation of beer and pubs'. Submit your entry before the closing date in September. Go to www.beerwriters.co.uk for more information.

Guild directory A new Guild directory will soon be produced, which will be even bigger and better than last year's. Feedback shows that it is widely used by industry PRs and has a wide circulation among commissioning editors.

Benefits of membership We are always looking for ways of giving enhanced benefits to members and we are just

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waiting to hear if the British Beer and Pub Association will confirm that all our members will a copy of its excellent Statistical Handbook. **Tim Hampson**

Nicholson's ambitious brews

MUCH OF my job involves writing about the retail sector and it has to be said that in many ways it is far ahead of the leisure and hospitality sectors — including both the pub and brewing industries. I'm thinking of its use of IT, its loyalty programmes, its Point-of-Sale systems that have been light years ahead of the pub sector, and many of its management techniques.

But one area where pubs and breweries are much more forward-thinking is with collaborations. We all know of brewers working together on producing joint brews but a new one to me was the recent collaboration run by pub chain Nicholson's that came up with the idea of getting store managers to create beers.

It plucked various managers from within its chain of 81 pubs and sent them off to a number of breweries around the country. The objective — to create unique beers that would then be available exclusively in the company's outlets during the summer.

Yes, this sort of thing has been done already with some of our more high profile Guild members working with cutting edge brewers to create interesting beers but to take people off the shop floor is an interesting idea.

Off the chosen ones went, to eight different brewers including the likes of Sambooks in Battersea, London, Roosters in Yorkshire and the Inveralmond Brewery in Perth, Scotland. The managers had extensive input into the brewing process — deciding on the bitterness levels and overall flavour characteristics of each beer as well as the ingredients selection, and, vitally, the name. Based on the tasting I attended (hosted by Melissa Cole), what they have come up with is a great selection of unique beers containing hops from around the globe, unusual ingredients such as lavender honey, and various other elements that have contributed to creating a batch of very individual drinks. The idea being that they reflect both the Nicholson's store

managers' tastes as well as the breweries to where they were seconded.

Not only does this sort of collaboration help create unique products — an increasingly vital element of any consumer goods industry — but it also leads to great employee engagement. It's a win-win situation you could say and we should all drink to that.

It remains to be seen whether Tesco store managers will be farmed out to manufacturers to come up with a new dog food or toothpaste formula. But it could work with things like cheese and breads. Either way, Nicholson's should be applauded for initiating a novel approach to creating beers, and it is something I would like to see copied. **Glynn Davis**

Eat Drink Beer

GUILD MEMBER Marverine Cole was recently asked to persuade celebrity TV chef, Angela Harnett, about beer and food matching for a new BBC2 series, *The Great British Food Revival*, which will be broadcast on BBC2 in Autumn 2012. Marverine won her first ever award at the British Guild of Beer Writers ceremony last year — this was the Gold for Best Writing in Regional Media for producing a TV feature about women and beer for BBC2 *Inside Out* (East Midlands).

The producers of *The Great British Food Revival* series asked Marverine to devise a three-course meal and a beer match for each course, as well as a range of beers to offer as samples to around 30 female guests at The Rocket Bar and Restaurant in Canary Wharf.

Marverine said, 'thankfully, the producers were kind enough to film the whole event near where I'm currently working on a journalism project. For me it meant a pretty long day, but I felt triumphant in that Angela Harnett left the restaurant a total beer and food convert. She was sceptical before

CALENDAR 2012

- 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

sitting down at the table and the waiters served up the food. She was very excited about the never-ending possibilities that beer and food can deliver. The women who came to the party afterwards were bowled over with the beer and canapés Angela and I served them. All-in-all it went down well. I can't wait to see how it all looks on the show when it's edited'.

Read more about the evening's filming at Marverine's website: www.beerbeauty.co.uk.

Free Drinks, Cheap Laughs and Pilsner Urquell Yeast Beer

ON THE evening of Saturday July 21 the Thatchers Arms, which is run by Guild member Mitch Adams, will be featuring a double header of unfiltered unpasteurised Pilsner Urquell and *The Thinkers Drinking Guide To Alcohol*, which features Guild members Ben McFarland and Tom Sandham. According to Adams, 'this is a must see show and the guys are appearing for one night only in Mount Bures before whizzing off to the Edinburgh Festival. It's a hilarious show that takes a look at the history of alcohol and drinking while you enjoy some free drinks! And after the show we'll be cracking open a couple of wooden casks of unfiltered, unpasturised Pilsner Urquell for everyone to enjoy.'

Tickets start at £10 or £25, including a two-course meal. There are limited spaces so it is advisable to book early! More details can be found on PilsnerPresents.co.uk

Beyond blogging

AS A newcomer my first AGM was an opportunity to hear issues not usually expressed within the newsletter. The impact of bloggers and a view that they can be seen as a cheap source of content was one that struck a chord with myself. It's an issue especially for those of us moving beyond solely blogging.

A complimentary email from an editor asking you to contribute is always flattering. In the beginning there's no thought of payment, just of seeing your words in print and that being published (albeit unpaid) will ultimately lead to paid work.

I did a handful of free pieces and now a number of paid commissions. The confidence from someone agreeing to print my work was invaluable but the challenge now is knowing how to conduct myself in terms of pay, rights, ethics and pitching new work. I understand that I don't come from a journalistic background and that the way I conduct myself reflects upon the Guild and its membership as a whole.

As blogger membership increases I believe that this is an issue that could become a regular talking point or even a divisive issue. The question for you is how do we act now?

Max Brearley

Beer Academy latest

July 3 90 Minute Tasting — Uncle Sam's beers, The White Horse, London £27.50

July 26 How to Judge Beer, The White Horse, London £78

July 26 American craft beers matched with cheese, The Bull, London £35

August 14 90 Minute Tasting — Gold Medal Beers (great Olympic nations), The White Horse, London £27.50

August 18 How to Judge Beer, The Bull, London £78

August 25 One Day Foundation Course, The Bull, London £100

August 28 How to Judge Beer, Caledonian Brewery, Edinburgh £78

Please go to www.beeracademy.org for more details

Podge's Belgian Beer Tours

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.

DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE IS AUGUST 28

Abbey Beer Pilgrimage, Sept 20-24

This beer tour takes in all the authenticated Abbey Beers of Belgium. 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 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 and tasting at Val de Sambre brewery which nestles in the heart of the Aulne Abbey; a tour and 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.

Xmas 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

Cask Ale Week

THE DATE of this year's Cask Ale Week has been announced. It takes place from September 28-October 7 and is following the Try Before You Buy theme. It has a new strapline: *Only in Britain, Only in Pubs!*

'The theme and the strapline are aimed to attract people back into pubs,' says Paul Nunny, director of Cask Marque, which is steering this year's event, 'as well as to get people sampling our national drink. They should help pub operators use their unique selling point to drive footfall and also provide a great platform for brewers to talk about what differentiates cask ale from the other beers on the bar and the supermarket shelves. There is still a huge gap of knowledge in the industry, let alone among the general public, about what makes the beer from a hand-pull special. Cask Ale Week, dedicated to raising the profile of cask-conditioned beer, can help plug that gap in knowledge, and entice drinkers back through the doors of their locals.'

Brewers and pub companies are pledging to make the most of the opportunities and Paul says that there are some great initiatives up the sleeves of the best pub and brewery businesses. 'The main motivating factor for involvement is of course to benefit their own ale brands and pubs, but in the process, companies are also supporting our sector, making sure that pubs remain at the heart of British culture and life.

'CAMRA has pledged its help, so pubs can appeal to local branches for support with activities. The IFBB is also putting their weight behind the campaign. By making Cask Ale Week into a real celebration, an extension of all the 2012 summer activity in the country, between us all we can make a real impact.'

The Caskfinder App, which has 50,000 uses a month, will also be used to drive trade into pubs participating in Cask Ale Week, and prizes for pubgoers using the highly successful World's Biggest Ale Trail will be doubled during the Week. A Cask Ale Week website aimed at consumers will be up and running in August. In the meantime, the whole trade is being asked to get the dates in the diary and to commit to doing one visible thing to support the event.

Try Before You Buy will be operating in Cask Marque accredited outlets and Nunny urges pub operators and brewers to contact Frances Brace (frances@redflamecommunications.co.uk), who is supporting Cask Marque with communications for the Week, with information and images on their proposed activity.