

British Guild Of Beer Writers

Newsletter November 2012



HAVE YOU got your ticket yet? Time is running out for those who want to come to this year's annual awards dinners on December 6 at the Jumeriah Carlton on Cadogan Place off Sloane Street, SW1X 9PY.

Already more than 170 tickets have been sold, so if you want to come to the year's best beer dinner you will have to get your order in quickly. To book a ticket go to www.beerwriters.co.uk and click on the link 'Now is the time to buy tickets'. The price of the tickets are £56.40 for Guild members and £96 for non-members and corporate members (all prices are inclusive of VAT) and do remember that you will need to send a cheque with your order.

The Awards Dinner chef Simon Martin says he wants to produce a banquet that primarily uses seasonal British ingredients. The former Hotel Chef of the Year says his ambition is to create a meal that will be as good as the one which won him the accolade of Banqueting Chef of the Year.

A major part of the awards evening is the pre-dinner drinks. Our sponsors Shepherd Neame, Molson-Coors, Brains, Adnams, Thwaites, Greene King and Fuller's are all promising to bring something interesting along, to get the conversations flowing at the start of the evening.

And it just won't be the best in beer writing and communication that will be celebrated at the dinner — we will also announcing our Brewer of the Year. This year the membership nominated nine people for the award, so it was no easy task for the Guild's committee to make its choice.

Twenty-five years of the Guild Next year is the 25th anniversary of the Guild and ideas are welcomed for how we should mark this event. One of the reasons for establishing the Guild was to increase members' knowledge about beer by holding seminars. Already two are planned for next year and hopefully there will be others. The irrepressible Charlie Bamforth, who is Professor in Brewing Science at the University of California, will talk on beer and health at a date yet to be confirmed in March. Later in the year together with English Hops we are planning an event that explores the aromas and flavours of hops. And following requests from members we are looking into holding an event to help people improve their writing and learn how to make better proposals to editors. We are also looking at other idea — we enter our 25th year still fizzing and buzzing with ideas.

Tim Hampson

News

DEA LATIS, the networking group for women in the beer and pubs industry, is holding its next event on Friday December 7, 10am-1pm, central London (venue TBC). As this is the night after the Guild's annual dinner, we will be matching beers to full English breakfasts and we are also delighted to welcome as

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guest speaker Emma Jones, founder of home business website Enterprise Nation and a director of StartUp Britain, the national campaign to encourage more people to start a business. More details to follow soon on our website: www.dealatis.org.

BEERS OF THE WORLD has been re-launched and will be on news stands in November both here in the UK and the USA. The magazine includes a competition for new beer writers wanting to break into the publishing world. **FAVOURITE BEERS**, Gloucestershire's only specialist beer and cider shop, based on Hewlett Road in Cheltenham, has reached the incredible milestone of having stocked 1000 different UK bottled beers in just over two years. The 1000th beer which went on the shelves on Thursday October 18 was Bristol Beer Factory's new bottling — Acer — a 3.8% deliciously fruity, hoppy & refreshing ale. Guild member Leigh Norwood is the shop's owner and said, 'since we opened in October 2010 we have stocked beers from just under 200 breweries from all around the UK and the fact that we have reached this incredible milestone in just over two years reflects our rigorous policy of regularly rotating new beers onto the shelves. Of course amongst the 400 or so beers that we have in stock, we do have a core range that have been in the shop since we opened — primarily these tend to be from Gloucestershire and other more local breweries, but there are so many excellent beers being crafted around the country that we will always strive to provide our regular customers with an ever changing selection.'

Combe over

WHAT'S THE buzz? Well, in what has become a regular engagement, Tim Hampson, Steve Williams and myself rolled up to the first day of The National Honey Show, held in Surrey, at the end of October. While this year marks the 81st time the show has been held, the Guild was first invited to send a team along in 2009, the year the show introduced a Honey Beer category into its extensive list of awards.

As always, we received a warm welcome from the show's organisers, and despite saying every year that 'we really must get some official Beer Guild judging gear', we once again had to rely on the largesse of the committee in locating three spare white coats to ensure that we looked the part.

The show is organised by a dedicated committee of enthusiasts from beekeeping associations around the UK, and plays an

important role in recognising and preserving many traditional crafts, with awards for everything from beeswax candles to honey cakes.

There was plenty of interest from the stewards appointed to ensure the beer team committed no faux pas and complied with best Honey Show judging practice. Mary, a delightful Irish lady who insisted she 'was not a beer drinker at all', took to the task enthusiastically and was soon identifying flavours and aromas like a veteran. The winning beer was Tatton Brewery Lazy Haze. At 3.7%, the summer ale had to work hard to compete with stronger competitors, but the light, refreshing flavour, and clever use of honey both as an ingredient and in the labelling, convinced the judges.

This year also saw the first time that home brewers had entered beers. Although the two entries received were good efforts, it's clear that the beekeeping fraternity would benefit from some expert advice when it comes to brewing. The Guild judges agreed to source an article on brewing with honey for the show's magazine.

While the commercial beers entered were excellent, the brewing industry once again looked seriously under-represented in comparison to the many racks of mead on display for judging. There are some great honey beers on the market, and we've renewed our determination to persuade more brewers to enter in 2013.

Sad to report, though, we were informed, rather pointedly, that last year's winner Sharp's had failed to return the Trophy in time for the engraver to do his work at this year's show. Hopefully, this has now been rectified and the cup is proudly on display at Tatton Brewery in Knutsford. If not — well let's just say if you hear an angry buzzing noise in the vicinity of Rock, Cornwall, you might want to keep your distance... **John Porter**

Good Beer Guide 2013

THE NEW edition of CAMRA's *Good Beer Guide* received massive media coverage thanks to the main story that there are now more than 1,000 breweries in Britain. Another strong story centred on the seven pubs that have been in all 40 editions of the guide. A press launch was held in one of those pubs, Young's Buckingham Arms,

CALENDAR 2012

• BGBW annual dinner and awards, Jumeriah Carlton Tower, London, December 6

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

in Petty France, in London's St James's. Among those attending were the first editors of the guide, Guild member Michael Hardman and John Hanscomb. Landlords and landladies from the seven pubs were also in attendance.

Most national daily papers featured the guide, there was widespread coverage in the regional press and on local radio and I appeared on the flagship Adam Boulton programme on Sky News with Duncan Sambrook from Sambrook's Brewery in Battersea. There was also superb online coverage of the launch.

The only disappointment was a 'no show' by BBC London. I made the long haul from the Buckingham to the Bull in Highgate, where Dan Fox, late of the White Horse, Parson's Green, brews on the premises.

The BBC failed to turn up and, being the Beeb, didn't have the courtesy to phone and say they weren't coming. When I asked for an explanation the next day I was told they were worried they couldn't get live pictures from Highgate. Is this BBC television news that was founded at Alexandra Palace a stone's throw from Highgate?

Do not despair, Auntie's not here... **Roger Protz**

You're Bard

GUILD MEMBER Pete Brown's new book, *Shakespeare's Local*, hits the shelves on November 8 — and hits the big time a month later. The book — subtitled *Six Centuries of History Seen Through One Extraordinary Pub* — is the story of the George Inn, Southwark, South London, known to many Guild members as the last surviving galleried coaching inn in London. It reveals how the pub, as well as playing a key role in the development of Elizabethan theatre, was also close to the birth of English literature (Geoffrey Chaucer's Tabard stood just next door) and also has its own dubious poetic claim, having been immortalised by the leading (possibly only) exponent of Stuart-era fart poetry. The George also counts Charles Dickens among its firm fans.

'At a time when pubs are getting shafted from all sides, I wanted to write a book about one pub that provides a perfect case study of how important pubs have been throughout our history,' says Brown. 'This was helped by that fundamental truth that a good pub always has a few interesting characters propping up the bar. Take a look at five or six hundred years in the history of one pub, and the characters you discover do the job for you.'

Shakespeare's Local is already attracting a buzz

— so much so that from December 17 it will be BBC Radio 4's Book of the Week, with an abridged extract being read on air every day for five days.

This makes it one book that has a happy ending after an uncertain beginning. In October 2011, Brown had his laptop stolen (from a pub, obviously) with nine month's work on the book not backed up. 'I had to start again from scratch with four months left before my deadline,' says Brown. 'People ask me if having to rewrite every bastard word to that point has made it a better book. The Radio 4 thing suggests it has, but I still wouldn't recommend leaving your laptop unattended in a busy pub for four hours as a technique for any aspiring writers.'

Remembrance of lost tuns

We all know there has been loads of publicity from CAMRA recently about the UK hitting the threshold of having 1,000 breweries now in production. This is a monumental achievement bearing in mind the turbulence the industry has endured over the past few decades.

There have certainly been some big casualties along the way and many of them have been brought together in a new book *Britain's Lost Breweries and Beers* (November 2012, £25). It's published by a friend of mine Graham Coster at Aurum. I haven't yet had time to do any more than scan through my copy but Graham and author Chris Arnot assure me it is not a dewy-eyed plea for the return to the 'good old days' of 35 or 40 years ago.

How could it be? Choice was limited and pubs selling well-kept cask ale had to be 'truffled-out' by discerning drinkers. We all know that quality and range is a quantum leap better today but micro-breweries, by definition, are small-scale. In contrast, the 30 breweries featured in the book were very much part of their communities and became more than just suppliers of beer — they employed whole towns for starters.

There was a time when Horndean without Gale's would have been as unthinkable as Leeds without Tetley's or Manchester without Boddington's; when the name of Bass rather than Molson Coors dominated Burton. Chris and Graham promise me the book is packed with reminiscences from those who worked for wealthy, paternalistic brewers as well as those who drank their products, sometimes with relish

DEADLINE FOR COPY THE NEXT ISSUE IS

DECEMBER 5

and sometimes with resignation. Chris travelled the country — one time squeezed into a garden shed in Sunderland crammed with Vaux memorabilia, another on the battlements of a 'Tolly Folly' in Ipswich, and also supping with men who once humped hogsheads down cellar steps and cleaned out mash tuns. Despite developing prodigious thirsts they somehow seemed to have retained strikingly clear memories of the distant past and they tell us all about it in this book. If he were here right now Graham would be saying he'd like you to go out and buy it immediately. **Glynn Davis**

Forever bowling googlies

GUILD MEMBERS are keen to take beer appreciation to pastures new — and what better place than the hallowed turf of Lord's cricket ground. In October I hosted a tutored beer tasting in front of 120 members of the MCC and guests. It was a daunting occasion, made more so by the fact that it was held in the august surroundings of the Long Room, where MMC members watch games in progress, the walls adorned with portraits of great players from the past. I delivered my talk with my back to the playing area and was faced by a large oil painting of a glowering Sir Donald Bradman, which almost put me off my stroke, so to speak.

The event, called the OctoberTest, was the initiative of Neil Robinson, a passionate beer lover and CAMRA member, who works in the MCC Library. We chose beers from breweries as close as possible to major Test grounds and added, for good measure, Marston's EPA and Old Empire to mark the Burton brewery's support for English cricket.

The other beers were: Ringwood Best Bitter (The Rose Bowl, Southampton); Brains Dark (Cardiff); Moorhouse's Pendle Witches Brew (Old Trafford); Timothy Taylor Landlord (Headingley); Purity Ubu (Edgbaston); Sambrook's Powerhouse Porter (The Oval) and Double Maxim (Riverside, Chester-le-Street).

As well as discussing the aromas and flavours of the beers, I stressed the historic link between beer and cricket. The modern game developed in the 18th century at Broadhalfpenny Down at Hambledon in Hampshire alongside the Bat & Ball pub. Landlord Richard Nyren was not only a good player but brewed ale 'that flared like turpentine' but presumably didn't taste like it. It was in the Bat & Ball that the 'laws' of cricket were first drawn up and important changes were

made to the design of both bats and wickets. Bats became straight rather than curved and the wicket changed from two small stumps to three taller ones.

When the centre of the game moved from Hambledon to London, the laws of the game were further codified at meetings in the Star & Garter pub in Pall Mall. An important cricket ground developed alongside the White Conduit inn where the groundsman was Thomas Lord. He was encouraged by rich aristocrats to build a better enclosed ground in St John's Wood.

The OctoberTest was well attended and Neil Robinson and I hope it will become a regular event. In the meantime, good beer can be enjoyed in the Lord's Tavern while the Bat & Ball in Hambledon, packed with fascinating cricket memorabilia, is now safe in the hands of Fuller's. **Roger Protz**

Aussie brews

AT A time when British brewing is in such an exciting place it's a little sad to think that I may be watching from the sidelines for a while. When I say the sidelines, I mean from Western Australia with a stubbie holder and esky in tow, beer drinking essentials in the 40c+ Aussie summers. I'm due to head off for a few years and a change of pace from London life. Initially in Perth but who knows where else.

It's an exciting time for Aussie brewing as they forge their reputation across the vast continent and beyond. You probably know the likes of Little Creatures in Fremantle and my personal WA favourite Feral Brewing from the Swan Valley, but there's a host of other exciting WA brewers from Matso's in Broome to the far north to the craft brewers of the south west, an area more famed for its wine. I'll be more than just cheering on our British brewers from Australia, building more awareness about our great brewers old and new. So for the time being see me as your Man Down Under. **Max Brearley**

Beer Academy latest

November 8 90 Minute Tasting, Dark Ales, London, The White Horse

November 7/8 Two Day Advanced Course, London, The White Horse

Please go to www.beeracademy.org for more details