

British Guild Of Beer Writers

Newsletter March 2013



THERE IS a lot going on. Thanks to several members going on New Year diets, we are now able to squeeze a few more people into Charlie Bamforth's lecture on beer and health at the White Horse in Parsons Green on 21 March. If you are interested in attending please contact angie@cask-marque.co.uk. The event is free and exclusive to Guild members, but you'll have to pay for your own beer.

Thornbridge's Alex Buchanan reminds me that SIBA is organising a BeerX — themed 'The best of British beer. The best of British brewing. Under one roof.' at Ponds Forge in Sheffield from 14-16 March. Go to www.BeerX.org for more information.

The excellent Norwich City of Ale is back again this year — 23 May to 2 June. Last year 45 pubs and 35 breweries took part in the festival and organisers are hoping to improve on that for this year's event. Full

marks also to the organisers who have secured a grant of £5,000 from Norwich Business Improvement District (BID) to promote the festival.

As part of the campaign the organisers have launched a fortnightly email newsletter and this will feature a Beer Writer's Slot. So if you care to blog or write about City of Ale 2013 please send the link and a photo of yourself to the organisers and they'll feature it in the newsletter. For further information please email info@cityofale.org.uk or see www.cityofale.org.uk.

And finally, Guild member Simon Martin (aka Real ale guide) has just posted to Youtube a piece on Sharp's Panzerfaust Black Gose beer, which was brewed with our secretary Adrian Tierney Jones. Go to www.youtube.com/watch?v=WUd3jUmDbLU
Tim Hampson

NEWS

IAIN LOE writes in to let members know of the availability of a paperback edition of the book *Intervention in the Modern UK Brewing Industry* by John Spicer et al; this is an exhaustive and in-depth study of the 1989 MMC report on the UK Beer Industry.

'It is probably the best summation of the whole MMC story,' says Iain, 'and it is good that it is now available at a reasonable price.'

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'GUILD MEMBER Su-Lin Ong and fellow organisers of Craft Beer Rising 22-23 February would like to thank all members of the Guild for the tremendous support given to this first year event. All the tweets and advance comments really helped create awareness and sell tickets. The event sold out days before the show, and the Press Experts and Trade day was very full, attracting writers from the US and Germany. It was a very busy and lively festival weekend, with some 3500 visitors, over 50 breweries participating, from small to large, and with nearly 300 beers. Many visitors and breweries are already asking for a return in 2014.'

BEER AND chocolate tasting moves to Leeds. Beer and women group Dea Latis is hosting its annual beer and chocolate tasting event in Leeds for the first time. The event takes place at the Leeds Brewery Tap on Tuesday 19 March from 6pm. For a £17 ticket, guests will be guided through six beer and chocolate pairings by award-winning beer sommelier Annabel Smith, along with a buffet and the opportunity to meet other beer-loving ladies. Yorkshire breweries will be well represented with beers from Leeds Brewery, Ossett Brewery and Ilkley Brewery, as well as brews from SA Brain, Jacobsen (Carlsberg) and Molson Coors. For more information visit www.eventbrite.co.uk/event/4018708064# or go to www.dealatis.org.

CHRIS MARCHBANKS writes 'Just to let members know that the IBD beer book auction list 14 for 2013 was put on the IBD website last week and the closing date for bids this year is 31 March 2013. The website address for the list is below and the Institute welcome bids from all BGBW members'. www.ibd.org.uk/publications/brewer-and-distiller-international/2175/ibd-book-sale-no-14/

Manual labour (of love)

THE 2013 edition of *The Brewery Manual* is now available. With a complete rundown of the country's brewers, from the nationals and regionals through to the newest micros, each edition of the *Manual* has hundreds of new and thousands of amended entries concerning the UK's brewing and pub trade

(this year researchers have identified a record number of companies, 180, that began operations in 2012). The *Manual* includes listings of beer importers and the beers that they bring into the UK, contract brewers and bottlers, and details on interest groups relevant to the industry.

As a special offer to Guild members, copies of *The Brewery Manual* are available at £39.95, a better than 50% discount off the cover price of £85 (limit one per individual Guild member) To order a copy contact Nigel Smith at Advantage Publishing, 01737 224294 or email — nigel@advantagepublishing.co.uk — and mention: **BGBW member's offer.**

Beer writers' Italian job

ITALY IS arguably the most surprising success story of the current beer renaissance. Two decades ago the peninsula was the near-exclusive preserve of multinational-owned industrial lagers but today it boasts some of the most exciting and innovative craft brewers in the world. Artisanal beer in Italy is a premium product, often stylishly packaged to be served alongside the country's world class cuisine as a component of *la dolce vita*, and despite the country's economic and political troubles it's a market that still appears to be growing.

The Birra dell'Anno — beer of the year — competition organised by EBCU member organisation Unionbirrai has become one of the top showcases for the country's craft brewers since launching in 2005. This year it attracted a record number of entries — 556 beers from 104 brewers. An international panel of over 30 judges had the challenging job of awarding the medals — including Guild members Jos Brouwer, Jeff Evans,

CALENDAR 2013

- SIBA BeerX, Sheffield, March 14-16
- BGBW lecture on beer and health, White Horse, London, March 21
- European Beer Bloggers Conference, Edinburgh July 12-13
- Great British Beer Festival, Olympia, August 13-17

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

Evan Rail, Maurizio Maestrelli, Adrian Tierney-Jones and the author alongside experts from Belgium, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands and the USA as well as Italy.

Like their North American counterparts, Italian craft brewers recognise few bounds of style and tradition, and are if anything even more keen to explore the outer reaches of techniques like spicing and wood ageing, ensuring a dazzlingly varied, if not always successful, line-up of taste sensations. No overall prizes are awarded, just three medals in each of the 24 categories — and many went to small breweries obscure to most UK drinkers, like Desmond, Elav, Endorama, Gambolò, Lungo, Rollo, Scubi and Veneziano. Better known internationally is veteran Italian micro Baladin, which once again scooped Brewer of the Year alongside several other medals.

The competition took place in February alongside hotel, catering and pub trade show RHEX in the Adriatic resort of Rimini, uncharacteristically snowbound for the occasion. Among the giant deep fat fryers and acres of catering crockery, the show has much of beer interest, including an extensive cluster of craft brewery bars offering free samples alongside stands promoting brewing equipment and ingredients. **Des de Moor**

Imbibe gets its own App

MEMBERS WILL have heard that Guild member Melissa Cole recently beat off tough competition from both the wine and spirits world to walk away with the Educator of the Year award in *Imbibe's* Personality of the Year 2013 contest. Part of her work that would have caught the judges' eyes includes her pieces in last year's *Beer & Cider Supplement*. With the recent launch of *Imbibe's* own App, available for iPhone/iPad via the Newstand App, Android and Kindle users for free, the Supplement is now available to all, not just drinks-buying professionals. Head to <http://imbibe.com/news/2013-02/the-imbibe-app> for more info. Other Guild members featured include Gavin Aitchison on craft beer bars, Tim Hampson on the global beer scene, John Porter on cool suppliers, Tim Webb on Belgium, yours truly on cider and events,

and Pete Brown's pages delving into the art of matching cider and food. Finally, tasting gladiators Nigel Sadler and Mitch Adams lent their expertise for our marathon tasting.

Susanna Forbes

Is craft beer still rising?

CRAFT BEER Rising, which was held at the Old Truman Brewery in February, billed itself as something new, out of the ordinary and groundbreaking — so I was a little disappointed to find it was nothing other than a beer festival. Not that beer festivals aren't exciting, just that other than being a broad church of cask, bottle and keg I couldn't find anything especially mould-breaking about it. Nonetheless it had an impressive line up of breweries and beers and although the Friday trade session was cold and crowded, things had warmed up by Saturday and festival-goers were, I'm told, more youthful and more female too.

The thing many people I spoke to found odd about CBR though was some of the breweries that had stands there, Wells & Youngs and Marston's for example, don't exactly invoke thoughts of 'craft beer' and there you have it the next chapter, following on from Cask v Keg, What Do We Mean by Craft Beer? Bothering to try to answer the question could so easily turn into industry navel gazing that it's hardly worth going there, but being seen as a craft brewer is what many bigger breweries are aiming for sometimes regardless of what they brew.

Despite my own lack of enthusiasm to spend time on a definition there is an appetite for an answer. CBR kicked off with a panel discussion to look for one. Reporter on the scene (and fellow Guild member) Jerry Bartlett said panellists, including Stuart Howe and Melissa Cole, were not unhappy with the US definition relating to the size of a brewery's output and whether it is independent. Although the latter still causes raised eyebrows if a

**DEADLINE FOR COPY THE NEXT ISSUE IS
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so-called craft, or microbrewery (remember when we called them that?), is bought by a brewing giant — which brings us back to how those giants are desperate to be associated with the craft label.

Many of us simply use the term because it is there. Along with the popularity of US craft beers comes their terminology. As many UK brewers are creating US-influenced beers it seems almost natural to refer to these the same way our American cousins do. Maybe that's what CBR was all about. Not so much craft beer rising as popularising a modern catch-all term for beers that aren't mass produced and sold at discount rates — but if big breweries manage to highjack the term without brewing something deserving of it, how will that affect the way the wider public views not just craft beer but all beer?

Sophie Atherton

Cask Ale Week

CASK ALE Week 2013 is Friday 27 September to Sunday 6 October, with the launch on Thursday 26 September. 'We're calling for breweries, pubs, industry champions with a passion for Britain's national drink to put their backs into supporting the Week,' says Paul Nunny, executive director of Cask Marque, which is facilitating the whole event.

The theme for this year is Introduce a Friend. 'A huge 47% of British adults have never even tried cask ale,' says Paul, 'including many who are regular pub-goers. Extraordinarily, nearly 30% of them can't even give a reason why they've never tried it. Presumably no one has ever introduced them to the delights of a perfect pint — hence our theme for the Week. Quite simply, Cask Ale Week is a platform for pubs and breweries all over the country to give people the reason to try!'

Cask Marque is encouraging the industry to get behind the Week, run special promotions, introduce beer and food matching menus, organise innovative and exciting events, produce new beers and reap the rewards

through increased sales of cask ale and increased footfall into their pubs!

'It's in the interests of pubs to use cask ale,' says Nunny, 'which is outperforming other beers on the bar, and which is, after all, unique to the pub, to attract people through the doors. They can make the most of the Week by inviting their regular cask ale drinkers to introduce "cask ale virgins" to the flavoursome tastes of our national drink! Could be dads and daughters, mums and sons, (all over 18's of course!), linking with a local football/rugby clubs to bring a partner, or inviting local MPs for taste challenge. There is plenty of scope to really go to town and create a real buzz about cask ale!

'Last year's Cask Ale Week was a great success! Licensees who actively promoted the Week told us they saw new faces through the pub doors; sold more cask ale than usual; and that the interest it created will help business in the long term. It all helps with reinforcing drinkers' commitment to come to the pub, and their decision to drink cask ale when they're there.'

Further information can be had from Guild member Frances Brace (07432 692309; frances@redflamecommunications.co.uk).

Beer Academy events

- How To Judge Beer, 9 March, The Bull, London
 - One-Day Foundation Course, 12 March, Beer Academy, London
 - 90 Minute Tasting, 12 March, White Horse, London
 - How To Judge Beer, 19 March, The George, Bristol
 - How to Judge Beer, London, 21 March, White Horse, London
 - One-Day Foundation Course, 23 March, The Bull, London
- Go to www.beeracademy.co.uk to discover more information.