

British Guild Of Beer Writers

**Newsletter
April 2013**



AT THE Charlie Bamforth lecture he looked good and sounded good and by golly it did us good to hear such an excellent lecture on beer and health.

It was quite a coup to get Charlie to come and talk to Guild members at the White Horse last month. He is currently the Anheuser-Busch Endowed Professor of Brewing Science, University of California, Davis. Not only is he one of the most knowledgeable people in the world on brewing technology, he is also one of the most articulate. He has the great skill of the ability to make the difficult easily understood by people who do not have a scientific background.

There was an excellent response from Guild members who wanted to attend the event, so many in fact that we had to have a waiting list. It was therefore disappointing that there were so many no-shows from members — 17 in total — and as far as I am aware none had contacted the organiser to say they were not coming. In a busy world, I am sure there have been plenty of occasions when we all need to rearrange our diaries, but by not letting anyone know others were deprived of hearing Charlie and the Guild was left with a cost for organising the event.

Members of the Committee have asked that the matter of event attendance and whether we continue to host events of this nature be placed on the agenda of the next meeting. Perhaps we need to bring in an attendance charge — after all, the Guild had to pay for catering for those who didn't come.

PR for awards and dinner...In the next couple of weeks the Guild will be putting out to tender to members a contract for the PR and organisation of the Awards for our annual dinner. If any member would like to be sent a copy of the tender or know more about the Awards, perhaps they could let me know. **Tim Hampson**

NEWS

Guild member Bob Massey writes: 'My son's just landed a job overseas and is de-cluttering — this includes some bottles of Thomas Hardy Ale. They're 180ml bottles, 1985 vintage, from Eldridge Pope, individually numbered. They've been kept at a stable temperature. They're going for a tenner a bottle, and I'm down to the last five. This is an opportunity to own and taste a vintage classic. I'll be at the Sainsbury's bash on Saturday 27 April or can post, but obviously this will cost a little more. Interested members can contact me at bob@mallorn.net — first come, first served.'

London's Brewing is a brand new festival from the London Brewers Alliance

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(LBA) to celebrate London's thriving and vibrant brewing scene. The festival will bring together over 100 beers from some of the 30+ breweries that make up the LBA. It will be held from May 3-5 at The Brewhouse, London Fields' events space in the heart of Hackney. You can buy tickets online and find out more information at: www.londonsbrewing.co.uk.

On Monday April 1 Guild member Simon Martin visited Masters Brewery near Taunton to brew Europe's first Mint Chocolate Imperial Stout. The beer should be available mid April. Visit www.mastersbrewery.co.uk for further details. Martin is also returning to Brains Brewery in Cardiff to brew a sequel to the huge success that was Barry Island IPA. The beer will be brewed for a June release, which coincides with his 1000th beer review on Youtube. To celebrate this milestone he is letting the viewing public on Youtube decide what style of beer will be brewed and after only one day he had received over 60 suggestions for the beer style, with styles ranging from Imperial stouts to Imperial IPAs proving very popular early on.

Barrie Pepper reaches his 80th birthday later this month and as part of the celebrations he is attempting to raise £800 for charities and good causes. On Saturday May 4 there will be an auction of mainly breweriana in the GBG listed Grove Inn, Back Row, Leeds, which is close to Leeds railway station. Viewing is from 1pm with the auction starting at 2pm. Guild members are most welcome and can be assured of some good beers. A catalogue is available from April 5 by post or email — please contact Barrie (details are in the Yearbook).

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!'

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

Beer Academy Sommeliers' Summer Season Tastings

A SUMMER season of beer tastings kicks off at the White Horse, Parsons Green in April. Each of these monthly 90-minute sessions is hosted by a Beer Academy Sommelier who will explore a different aspect of the fascinating world of beer.

23 April, St George's Day Beers, Peter Haydon

21 May, Beer and Cheese, Nigel Sadler with Nigel White from the British Cheese Board.

11 June, Love London Beers, Debbie Parker

6 August, Hallelujah to Hops, Debbie Parker

8 October, Old World vs New World Beers, Steve Livens

Beer Academy Director Simon Jackson said: 'the Beer Academy's role is to enlighten, educate and enthuse people about beer. These short courses are all about the enthusing part. There is no exam; it is just a fun evening discovering more about one aspect of beer with a leading expert and the chance to sample a range of magnificent beers. For most people it will just be a great night out. But for others, it can be the first step to more advanced courses and formal recognition as beer expert.' To find out more visit www.beeracademy.co.uk/

CALENDAR 2013

• London's Brewing, Hackney, London, May 3-5

• 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

Chocoholics unanimous

A GROUP of women in Leeds joined the growing number of female beer drinkers at the end of March when the Leeds Brewery Tap hosted a pre-Easter beer and chocolate tasting. The tasting was organised by Dea Latis — named after the Celtic goddess of beer — a nationwide group aiming to encourage more women to enjoy beer. They have staged beer tastings in London and Brighton before, but this event was the first to be held north of the capital. Guests tasted six different beers, every one paired with a different chocolate designed to bring out the taste in each. Expert guidance was provided by Annabel Smith, Dea Latis' founder and one of the country's few beer sommeliers. Smith said: 'Beer and chocolate are perfect partners. They are both a balance of sweetness and bitterness, so when consumed together, the tastes and textures complement each other. Our guests at this week's tasting included experienced beer lovers, occasional beer drinkers and complete novices, but everyone learned something new and, more importantly, had a great evening tasting beer with chocolate.'

The matches sampled by guests were: Leeds Brewery's Yorkshire Gold (4%) and Ye Old Sun Inn Venezuelan Chocolate; Ossett Brewery's Treacle Stout (5%) with Bon Bon's Dark Chocolate Caramels; Brains Boilermaker IPA (6.5%) with Dar Chocolate and Lemon Parfait; Jacobsen Velvet Ale (5.9%) with Champagne Truffles; Ilkley Brewery's 'The Mayan' Chocolate Chipotle Stout (5.3%) with Turkish Delight; Molson Coors' Blue Moon (5.4%) with Terry's Chocolate Orange.

A vote was taken by the group at the end of the evening to choose their favourite beer and chocolate match, and this was won by Ilkley Brewery's 'The Mayan' matched with Turkish Delight. In a double coup, 'The Mayan' was brewed by Harriet Marks, the only beer of the evening produced by a female. Smith concluded: 'this was one of our most successful events and it's great to move Dea Latis north of London and start involving women in other parts of the country. We chose Leeds because it has

such a wonderful, thriving brewing scene and the Brewery Tap was the perfect venue for us.' For news of upcoming Dea Latis events during 2013, visit www.dealatis.org.

Chat-conditioned ale

'THE GREAT ABV Debate' is the topic of the second episode of a podcast I launched earlier this year with fellow Guild member Sam Hill. Together we are The Beertalkers and with each programme we do our best to thrash out the issue raised in the title of the show. We thought ABVs a worthy subject because they seem to stir up a lot of emotion unless they are safely in the middle ground of a 4.5% session beer. This was brought home to me recently when I was judging at SIBA's BeerX in Sheffield and passed comment on what I thought seemed to be a very low strength beer (as the judging is blind the exact ABV is similarly kept secret). The finger was pointed at me by a fellow judge, albeit jokingly, that I must be some sort of hardcore drinker who'd later be secretly swigging neat vodka in the loo. The implication being that finding a session beer a bit too weak must make me a raging alcoholic.

Sam and I discuss such attitudes in the podcast and ponder why some people take such issue with stronger beers. I suspect the British devotion to pints doesn't help. Not that there's anything wrong with a pint! Indeed sometimes only a pint will do, but although most sensible drinkers don't order a pint of 10% imperial stout or suchlike the *Daily Mail* journalist on the Clapham Omnibus can't believe we aren't all chucking it down our necks, regardless of ABV, and then vomiting in the gutter. Unlike nice civilised wine and spirits drinkers with their dainty little glasses. What is more worrying though is negativity towards higher ABVs from within the industry, which although mercifully rare is not unheard of. Lower ABVs cause much less of a stir except in the shape of worries about flavour. The challenge for brewers being that they need genuine skill to truly show off what hops can do and not just offer a dairy free alternative to Horlicks. Feedback on the show suggests we should have talked more about lower

ABV brews, so maybe my judging colleague was almost right. I prefer to think of myself as an 'alcophile' though, because I love a good drink but don't have a problem with it. That and the fact I have absolutely no taste for vodka. Find the podcast at www.thebeertalkers.com and on Twitter@thebeertalkers. **Sophie Atherton**

Oil boom

JUST PRIOR to Easter, chefs from Michelin-starred restaurants (Quilon and The Fat Duck), beer sommeliers and the mousse of British beer writers converged on the wonderfully named Doggett's Coat & Badge on Blackfriars Bridge to rub up on their hops. This is the second year of Marston's Single Hop programme, and sees six hops being employed at two month intervals: East Kent Goldings, Pacific Gem (NZ), Amarillo (US), Endeavour (UK), Wakatu (NZ) and El Dorado (US). Casks of single hop East Kent Goldings and Pacific Gem were provided as aperitifs, after which Simon Yates, Banks's assistant head brewer, talked guests through six demo beers, all heavily dry-hopped to show the individuality of each of his chosen hops for 2013.

Alpha acids are a major component of the resins found in hops, and when their chemical structure is chemically altered by heat in the boiling process (isomerisation) they provide the main bitter compounds associated in beer. But Simon's aim at this event was to challenge beer writers to think beyond alpha acids towards the starry future provided by hops' essential oils. These oils are a complex mix of many compounds and can contribute in many ways to the flavour of beer. The oils present in each hop variety vary; but three classes exist within the hop oil fraction: a) sulphur compounds which represent c. 1% but are potent flavour compounds, with low taste thresholds; b) oxygenated compounds, which account for c. 25%; c) hydrocarbons, which form c 75% of the compounds in fresh hops. The four major hydrocarbon components are caryophyllene, farnesene, myrcene and humulene. They account for 80% of the total essential oils; but they are very volatile and

are only found in large quantities in beers that have been dry hopped (ie they are blown away by a raucous boil): caryophyllene (big in Goldings) provides lots of the character we lazily knew as 'hoppy'; it adds a spicy herbal character similar to humulene when boiled; humulene (Saaz has 45% and big in Goldings) is thought to lend the distinctive 'noble' character to Noble hops; its aroma is robust, woody, earthy, spicy, herbal; myrcene (high for El Dorado) has an aggressively hoppy aroma and a harsh grassy character. US hops like Amarillo, Cascade, Citra and Simcoe are high in it; European hops less so. It contributes floral, citrus, piny notes; farnesene (big for Wakatu) often represents less than 1% of the hop oil, though it can peak at 20% in some noble varieties such as Saaz (CZ), Tettnanger and Spalter (Germany) or Lubelski (Poland). Hops with high farnesene are most effective when used late in the boil (they are volatile) or in dry hopping, and their effect on flavour is yet to be fully understood. So, we have a brave new world of hop writing ahead of us; and for those who didn't know their farnesenes from their myrcenes — now you do.

Rupert Ponsonby (*with thanks to Simon Yates for all intellectual content*).

And finally

OVER IN the US it's good to see that the North American Beer Writers Guild has been reconstituted, with the organisation offering three levels of membership: full membership for writers, industry membership for those employed in the brewing or allied trades and associate membership for those interested in supporting the group. Several Guild members on this side of the Atlantic are already members, and if you would like to find out more go to their website, which is www.nagbw.org.

**DEADLINE FOR COPY THE NEXT ISSUE IS
APRIL 27, 2013**