

British Guild Of Beer Writers

Newsletter June 2013



I HOPE you are all aware that our AGM is called for Tuesday 11 June at the Hand & Flower (1 Hammersmith Road, London W14 8XJ), it begins upstairs at 6.30pm, with a buffet to be served at 8/8.30pm (please let the Secretary know if you are planning to come). It is therefore an appropriate time to review our activity for the last 12 months

Membership has never been higher and is continuing to grow. It now stands at more than 200, thanks in part to all the editorial staff of the Publican's Morning Advertiser joining. Our corporate membership remains resilient.

Finance... Our finances remain strong, and while we should not want to fritter away money unnecessarily, we are in a position to give serious consideration to funding more activities which support our core objectives.

Dinner... Last year's annual dinner at the Jumeriah Carlton was an outstanding success. It was the best-attended event and I think we should be pleased that it is now regarded as a must attend event by beer writers, publishers and the brewing and pub industry. Thanks to Guild member Mitch Adams who helped Pete Brown and myself make the beer and food matches for the dinner.

Awards... Ben McFarland did a fantastic job chairing our awards panel and undertaking the

presentation on the night of our dinner. The number of people entering the awards continues to grow (see Martyn Cornell's excellent analysis of the awards at the end of the newsletter) and it is very pleasing to see that our valuable sponsors are making use of the opportunities the awards give them. So full marks for Brains, not just for inviting members to produce beers on its new pilot brewery, but to have a competition to judge the best one and then have all the beers at our annual dinner. The PR and organisation of the awards was excellently organised by Ros Shiel.

Trips... During the course of the year a number of successful trips were arranged for members including ones to the Caledonian and St Austell breweries.

Seminar... We were fortunate to get Professor Charlie Bamforth to talk about links between beer and health at the White Horse in Parsons Green. And though the event, which was organised by Paul Hegarty, was well attended it was disappointing to note that many members, who had said they would come, did not turn up on the night.

Summer event... In collaboration with the US Brewers' Association we held a very successful reception at the Porter House in Convent Garden, which involved craft produced canned beer.

Web site... The web site continues to develop and we are now able to showcase members' videos on it. The daily news alerts service is well received by many.

Guild Year Book... The Beer Writers Yearbook continues to develop, and has been described by one industry PR manager as being a 'must have publication'. Produced by Advantage Publishing for the Guild it is widely distributed to the consumer media.

CHAIRMAN: Tim Hampson Tel: 01865 245711; 07768 614283 tim@gmail.com

TREASURER: Paul Nunny paul@nunny.fsbusiness.co.uk

SECRETARY: Adrian Tierney-Jones Woodcote, 2 Jury Road, Dulverton, Somerset TA22 9DU
Tel: 01398 324314 tierneyjones@btinternet.com; atierneyjones@gmail.com

www.beerguild.co.uk

BRITISH GUILD OF BEER WRITERS NEWSLETTER JUNE 2013

Your committee... Special thanks have to go to all the members of the committee who make all of this activity happen — Adrian Tierney-Jones, Paul Nunny, Pete Brown, Dave Bailey, Frances Brace, Larry Nelson, Robert Humphreys, Ros Shiel and Paul Hegarty. Without their hard work and commitment the Guild would not be the strong organisation it is today.

Also I would like to thank the team at Cask Marque who provided invaluable support to the Guild, especially for events like our annual dinner, seminar and summer reception.

National Brewery Heritage Trust...It is good to see that the National Brewery Heritage Trust has its website up — www.nationalbreweryheritagetrust.co.uk — the Trust is officially launched with an event at the National Brewery Centre, Burton upon Trent on October 8.

Simon Johnson...It is with great sadness that I note the death of Simon Johnson, at the age of 44 following a heart attack on May 21. Though he wasn't a member of the Guild, he was well known by many for his erudite and witty beer writing, which could be found on his Reluctant Scooper blog. His last post describes a 'bimble' — a leisurely walk with friends through the street of his beloved Derby, visiting some favourite pubs, which was made just days before he died. There was a water pistol fight, a broken finger, a bizarre game of golf with a rainbow piñata, people were dressed in fancy dress, ate many bags of salty crisps and of course drank some beer. Simon described it as 'just an average Saturday afternoon out with some never-average people'. He will be much missed.

Tim Hampson

NEWS

• *300 More Beers to Try Before You Die* by Roger Protz will be published early September but copies will be available at the Great British Beer Festival in August. The original *300 Beers* has sold close to 100,000 copies, making it one of the best-selling books on the subject.

• Guild member Adam Driver has left Fuller's, but will be staying in the industry, joining drinks and hospitality PR agency Fleet Street Communications, based near London Bridge. FSC was founded by former *Sunday Times* journalist, and former editor of *The Publican* and *M&C Report*, Mark Stretton. Adam can be contacted via adam@fsc.uk.com, 07870 408102 or @adamdriver85 on Twitter.

• One of the Guild's newest members is Greece based Nicola Radisis. For a primer to his work visit beerbartender.gr/en/smells-like-beer-history — this is about the beginning of modern Greek brewing history. The Guild also welcomes its second Norwegian member, Bjoern-Frode Loevlund, who writes a regular newspaper column.

• Cask Ale Week runs from September 27 to October 6 — and is a chance to get people celebrating Britain's national drink at their pub. This year's theme, the

Great Big Taste Challenge, gives plenty of scope to highlight pubs' cask offers, run promotions and put on events. 'It doesn't matter what you do,' says Annabel Smith of Cask Marque, 'so long as it stimulates interest in cask ale — and drives some sales.' The celebration kicks off on Thursday 26 with 'ale tasting master classes' in pubs and breweries up and down the country. Annabel Smith, one of the country's first three women to qualify as a Beer Academy Sommelier, will be hosting a Ladies' Cask Ale and Chocolate tasting event in conjunction with Hydes brewery at the Coach and Four in Wilmslow. 'It'll be educational and informative,' she says, 'but also huge fun and a treat for the taste buds! Every licensee who's interested in cask ale should be able to think of something for The Great Big Taste Challenge — and there are lots of brewers and Beer Experts out there to help them in putting on an exciting activity.'

• Enjoy a weekend of outdoor activities from night hikes to mountain biking, in the beautiful Yorkshire Dales at the Yorkshire Dales Outdoors Festival taking place at Hawes, Wensleydale September 13-15. Organised by Guild member Mark Reid, author of *The Inn Way* guidebooks and *Mountain Leader*, all activities start and finish at a great Dales pub. Evening entertainment includes a quiz and supper night. Sponsored by Black Sheep Brewery and Wensleydale Creamery.

Visit www.yorkshiredalesoutdoorsfestival.com or call 01423 871750 for more details.

Beer Academy news

8 June, *Beer & food matching*

11 June, *Love London Beers*

22 June, *How to judge beer*

6 August, *Hallelujah to Hops*,

8 October, *Old World vs New World Beers*

For more details of venue and also of other events visit www.beeracademy.co.uk

Gottle of gear part the 1st

TO LAUNCH the 8th edition of the CAMRA *Good Bottled Beer Guide*, Guild member Jeff Evans was invited along to specialist beer and cider shop Favourite Beers in Cheltenham (owned by Guild member Leigh Norwood) to host a beer tasting and book-signing event. This was followed by a 'Meet the Gold Star Brewers' evening at the shop where five of

CALENDAR 2013

- BGBW AGM, Hand & Flower, London, June 11
- European Beer Bloggers Conference, Edinburgh July 12-13
- BGBW 25th anniversary event, Parcel Yard, London
- Great British Beer Festival, Olympia, August 13-17

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

the local breweries that featured in the book had been invited along to talk about their bottled beers and what it meant to them to feature in the book.

After a brief introduction from Leigh to a fairly packed shop, Jeff started the evening with an apology — unfortunately, due to an editorial glitch, Favourite Beers (which won Independent Beer Retailer of the Year in 2012 and was a finalist for the same award this year) does not feature in the 'Beer Shops' section of the book!

Awkward moment over, Jeff then gave a brief potted history of bottle-conditioned beer in the UK brewing scene, highlighting the fact that when CAMRA first formed in 1971, there were just five bottle-conditioned beers in production. Jeff detailed the massive growth of bottle conditioned beers in the intervening years and recounted how he had documented this growth over the eight editions of the GBBG since the first edition in 1998. The current guide features over 1,800 beers from 342 breweries and was almost certainly out of date on the day of publication thanks to the massive growth in the premium bottled beer market — one of the few areas of the drink industry to be experiencing any growth at the moment.

After a brief description of what makes a bottle-conditioned beer, Jeff then guided the audience through a tutored tasting of five of the local 'Gold Star' beers featured in the book, explaining that only a limited number (164) of the beers were of the required quality and character to be awarded this prestigious accolade. The five beers featured during the session were: Wye Valley HPA; Gloucester Gold; Cotswold Spring Brewery OSM (Old Sodbury Mild); Hook Norton Flagship and Bristol Beer Factory Milk Stout.

Jeff provided a very entertaining and knowledgeable guide through the tasting of each of the beers and was under a fair bit of pressure to ensure that he had all of the relative facts correct, bearing in mind that the brewers responsible for four of the beers were actually in the room. His professionalism shone through though as did the quality of each of the selected beers, showing just how far bottle-conditioned beer has come in the past few years. At the end of the session Jeff received a very warm round of applause from the audience and after signing copies of the book and chatting with a few people, was whisked back to the station to catch his train home.

The evening did not end there — the four remaining brewers (Vernon Amor from Wye Valley, Jared Brown from Gloucester Brewery, Nik Milo from Cotswold Spring and Simon Bartlett from Bristol Beer Factory) were joined by Mattias Sjöberg from Compass Brewery to provide a very informal but equally entertaining 'Meet The Brewer' event where a further nine excellent beers (all of which feature in the book) were sampled, to the delight of a very happy (and somewhat merry) audience. **Lee Norwood**

Gottle of gear part the 2nd

I REMEMBER the cautious reaction when I first suggested a book on bottle-conditioned beers to the CAMRA Books committee back in the late 1990s. Bearing in mind the fact that there had only been five such beers in regular production in the UK when CAMRA was founded in 1971, this was perhaps understandable.

'How many of these beers are there now?' questioned John Cryne, then National Chairman. 'I reckon there must be about a hundred,' I replied, which drew soft gasps of surprise from around the table.

Well the book went ahead. The first edition of the *Good Bottled Beer Guide* came out in 1998 and, by that time, I had managed to unearth around 180 British bottle-conditioned beers.

No one in the CAMRA meeting room that day could have predicted what was to follow. The renaissance in beers that enjoy a secondary fermentation in the bottle has been remarkable. Fifteen years on, we've just published the eighth edition of the book. It features more than 1,800 bottle-conditioned beers — a ten-fold increase over the first edition.

As exciting as the numbers are, I am even more pleased by the source of the beers. It's not just small breweries that are in on the act. The decision by many of our major companies to add at least one 'real ale in a bottle' (as CAMRA now describes it) to their portfolio shows that many agree with me that, when the process is handled correctly, there is no better way to present fine beer in a bottle. Breweries such as Fuller's, Hook Norton, Thwaites, St Austell, Shepherd Neame, Wadworth, Samuel Smith, Marston's, Greene King, Wells & Young's and Harvey's are all now producers of bottle-conditioned beers.

All good news, then? Not quite. There is one dark cloud on the horizon in the form of the Government's duty changes, affecting beers below 2.8% and above 7.5%. There is little evidence of any benefit in terms of many more low-strength beers being produced but there has been significant damage to the higher-strength sector, among barley wines, imperial stouts and other potent styles. Some beers have disappeared altogether (Otley's twice Champion Beer of Wales, O8, for instance) and numerous others have been reduced in strength to slip under the upper duty limit.

Such sledgehammer approaches to complicated social problems inevitably have unintended consequences. On this occasion it is lovers of strong beer who are losing out. Let's hope there's a change of plan at the Treasury before the next edition is published but, like most observers, I doubt that will be the case. **Jeff Evans**

Awards runners and riders

IF YOU'VE already started looking at pieces of work you might enter for the Guild's Beer Writer of the Year awards, but you're worried about the strength of the

BRITISH GUILD OF BEER WRITERS JUNE 2013

opposition, take heart from this statistic: in the past 10 years there have been 45 different winners in the awards, of whom 36 had not won before when they picked up their first gong.

Indeed, of the top 10 most successful people over the past 10 years in the guild awards (actually 13 people, since there's a three-way tie for 10th place), only four had won anything before 2003. So the evidence is that the awards are as open to recognising new and previously unrewarded talent as they could be.

It's slightly more difficult to pick up the Beer Writer of the Year gold tankard without previous form: but two of the gold tankard winners over the past ten years, Ben McFarland in 2004 and Zak Avery in 2008, had never won anything in the awards before when they walked up to the podium at the awards dinner to grasp the top prize. So yes, even if you've never won so much as a chipped coffee mug at a Guild dinner, the top prize could be yours this December.

Using the scoring system of five points for winning the Beer Writer of the Year gold tankard, three points for being a category winner, and one for being a runner-up, the top ten table for the past decade looks like this:

1 Ben McFarland	23 points
2 Alastair Gilmour	17 points
3 Pete Brown	15 points
4 Martyn Cornell	14 points
5 Simon Jenkins	11 points
6 Adam Withrington	9 points
7= Zak Avery	8 points
7= Mike Chappell	8 points
7= Adrian Tierney-Jones	8 points
10= Jeff Evans	7 points
10= Mark Dredge	7 points
10= Roger Protz	7 points

Ben McFarland pretty much dominates there, but that is what winning three gold tankards in eight years does for you. Still, over the longer term, Ben's record is put into the shade by Roger Protz, who, with his wins last year, is the only person to have won a Guild award in every decade that the Guild has been going, a remarkable and unbeatable achievement. Here's the top ten table since the awards started in 1989:

1 Roger Protz	31 points
2= Alastair Gilmour	29 points
2= Michael Jackson	29 points
4 Ben McFarland	23 points
5 Brian Glover	18 points
6= Martyn Cornell	16 points
6= Alan McLean	16 points
7 Pete Brown	15 points
8 Jeff Evans	14 points
9= Simon Jenkins	11 points
9= Arthur Taylor	11 points

Not surprisingly, Roger, along with the late Michael Jackson, dominates the 'crowded mantelpiece' table:

here's the list for 'total tankards won':

12 — Michael Jackson, Roger Protz

8 — Alastair Gilmour

6 — Pete Brown, Brian Glover, Barrie Pepper, Arthur Taylor

5 — Martyn Cornell, Jeff Evans, Simon Jenkins, Ben McFarland, Adrian Tierney-Jones

If you'd like your name to appear in these tables, start organising your entry for 2013: you've got to be in it to win it. **Martyn Cornell**

Ploughing a new tasting furrow

A BEER tasting at an agricultural show doesn't necessarily mean talking a bunch of farmers through a selection of beers; rather it provides an opportunity to talk about the relationship between beer and the countryside. It seemed fitting though that there was an arable farmer, happy(ish) to be applauded for growing barley, in the first of six tutored tastings I did for NFU Countryside at the 150th Royal Bath & West Show late last month.

Over two days I talked to roomfuls of people about how beer is made, where its ingredients are grown, the flavours they bring to the drink and how to match it with food. I discovered that outside of urban areas putting beer and food together is a bit of a new thing but was pleased at the reception the idea got and in particular one woman's declaration (in response to my suggestion of matching Brains Dark with Sunday roast beef) that she planned to add some beer when making the gravy and another lady whose cool reaction to a very hoppy beer suddenly changed to glee once she tasted it again with spicy chicken.

I imagine that all of us who write about beer do so because we want to share our passion for the drink and speak to people about it for the same reason. The difference with speaking of course is having your audience right in front of you, being able to see their reactions and hear their response not just to what you're saying but what you suggest they drink. My audiences at the Bath & West made the task all the more worthwhile with barely a person among them who didn't go away having discovered something new about beer or a new beer they wanted to drink again. I'm looking forward to more opportunities to run sessions at agricultural shows as it seems to be quite a good way of reaching a new audience for beer.

I wooed my audiences with Moor Beer Revival (3.8%); Abbey Ales Bellringer (4.2%) — both in cask — and Brains Dark (4.1%) in bottles. **Sophie Atherton**

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