

British Guild Of Beer Writers

Newsletter September 2013



Guild awards... If you haven't got your entry into this year's annual awards for beer writing then you'd better be quick. Entries to the awards close Friday, 6 September. Don't miss out on your chance to win one of our seven category awards and a share of the £8,500 prize fund.

Full details of how to enter the Awards, including a list of the categories and downloadable entry and nomination forms, can be found at: www2.beerguild.co.uk/?page_id=2162. Entries for this year's Awards must have been published between 1 September 2012 and 31 August 2013.

Alastair Hook goes to sea in a... Guild member and Meantime master brewer Alastair Hook will be all at sea later this month. Alastair and his colleague Nick Miller are rowing the channel to France as part of a Worshipful Company of Brewers crew to raise money for Greenwich-based charity Ahoy, which works with disadvantaged young people by introducing them to sailing and rowing. The route may not seem that long, however it is 22 miles of potentially treacherous water, variable tides and weather — so we wish him well. If you'd like to offer financial support visit www.justgiving.com/Meantime-Brewing.

Guild dinner... Our annual awards dinner will take place on 5 December at the Jumeriah Carlton off Sloane Street in London. The price of tickets has been held at last year's level — £56.40 for Guild members and £96 for non-members and corporate members (all prices are inclusive of VAT). A booking form will shortly be circulated to members. Anyone wanting a hotel for that night should contact Fiona Whitehead at CTEM who should be able to arrange — fiona@ctem.co.uk.

25th anniversary event... Our 25th celebration at Fuller's fabulous Parcel Yard Pub in Kings Cross was a stunning success. We were honored by the presence of Pubs Minister Brandon Lewis who recognised the important contribution members' writing had made to people's understanding of beer. One of the Guild's founders Roger Protz spoke eloquently about the early years of the Guild and reminded us of the importance of continuing to push for increased coverage of beer in the national media, while Marverine Cole highlighted the significance of the new media and the contribution bloggers were making to beer culture. Special thanks should go to all the brewers

CHAIRMAN: Tim Hampson Tel: 01865 245711; 07768 614283 hampson.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

who supplied the beer and Dave Bailey, Frances Brace and Adrian Tierney Jones who organised the event. **Tim Hampson**

NEWS

• ROGER PROTZ's new book, *300 More Beers to Try Before You Die*, was launched at the Great British Beer festival and is available from www.camra.org.uk/shops. It will be on sale in bookshops or from Amazon from 5 September.

• CASK ALE WEEK, 27 Sept-6 October. Don't forget to use Cask Ale Week as an angle to sell in your stories to press and radio. If members need more information on the event, please contact Frances Brace, Red Flame Communications 07432 692309 or Heather Ryland, Red Flame Communications 07527 37584.

• A CASK SEMINAR is being held on Thursday 26 September 2013 from 2-4.30pm at Brew Wharf in Borough Market near London Bridge Station. It will cover the launch of the *Cask Report* and activities planned around Cask Ale Week plus presentations on a number of other key issues affecting the industry. The Seminar is free (limited to 100 people). To register contact Angie@cask-marque.co.uk or ring 0206 751212.

• SPECIALIST CRAFT BEER pub operator, The Craft Beer Co, is changing its name this November and brewing a beer to raise awareness for the 'tache-encouraging prostate cancer charity Movember. The Craft Beer Co, will become The Craft Beer 'Mo' for the whole of November, with new signs hung at each site, while the beer will be brewed at Harbour Brewing Co, with malt donated by Simpsons and hops from Charles Faram. It will be available throughout November, sorry, Movember, free to 'tache-wearing gents at all four Craft Beer Mo sites in London's Islington, Brixton and Clerkenwell, as well as in Brighton.

Craft Beer Co is also launching a new set of awards aimed at home brewers. The awards will recognise beers across a wide range of categories, with the overall winner of 'The Craft Beer Co Home Brewer of the Year', handed a £5,000 cash prize and the opportunity to brew their winning beer commercially with Dark Star. Full details of the awards are at: www.nationalhomebrewingawards.co.uk.

• FOOD AND DRINK blogger (and new Guild member) Benjamin Nunn has announced his London Pub of the Year: The Catford Bridge Tavern (though as he points out the pub will close during September, having been controversially sold by owners Punch Taverns). See benviveur.blogspot.co.uk/2013/08/bv-london-pub-of-year-2012-13-results.html for more details.

• WAEN BREWERY opens its first bottle shop and beer bar in September. Set on Barrack Lane, a pleasant and leafy side street in the heart of Cardiff, Waen intends to provide an experience that's practically unique in Britain as the pint-sized venue will invite drinkers into the city centre's best stocked bottle shop, where they can enjoy a range of cask and keg beers, and take away what they like on the bar to enjoy at home. The venue shall open during the daytime and early evening from Monday to Sunday, and host three late night special events each month.

CALENDAR 2013

- Cask Ale Week, nationwide, September 27-October 6
- Great American Beer Festival, Denver, October 10-12
- Indy-Man-Beer-Con, Manchester, October 10-13
- SIBA North-west Beer Competition and Festival, Staveley, Cumbria, October 24-26
- BGBW Awards and Dinner, Jumeriah Carlton, London, December 5

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

Roger Protz gave the main speech at the Guild's 25th celebrations and I thought members (whether they were there or not) might like to read it — ATJ.

The catalyst for the Guild was a man I never met and whose name I didn't even know. He was a features sub-editor on the *Guardian* in the 1980s, a time when the paper ran two articles on beer a year — that's two more than it does today. Michael Jackson and I took it in turns to write the articles and I was told by people who worked at the *Guardian* that the following sequence occurred when a beer article arrived.

If it was Michael's copy, the sub — who wore a cardigan and smoked a pipe — would carefully read it through, make a few stylistic changes and then mark it up for typesetting — these were still the days of hot metal setting. He would then set fire to his pipe, puff away for 10 or 15 minutes until the muse descended and then slowly write the headline for the piece: 'Only here for the beer'.

Six months later it would be my turn. He would read through my copy, make a few changes for style, mark it for typesetting, then light his pipe, puff away contentedly and then slowly write the headline: 'Only here for the beer'.

And that was the extent of newspaper coverage of beer in those days. I spent a long evening with Michael just up the road from here in the Waterside Inn, off York Way, and we bemoaned the lack of support for beer in the British press. Michael was becoming well known in the United States and he grumbled that he was better known in the U. than he was in his own country — and by 'own country' he meant, of course, Yorkshire.

But we needed action, not grumbling. I wrote to anyone I could think of who dabbled in beer writing and called a meeting at the Waterside Inn in 1987. So many people crowded into the room I'd booked that I had to stand on a table to address them and had to be restrained from declaring the socialist republic.

We'd discovered there was a surprisingly large pool of people passionate about beer and keen to write about it. And not just the *Guardian* covered the subject. *The Oxford Mail* and the *Hornsey Journal*, for example, had regular slots on beer and pubs, and to our amazement we found that Allan MacLean in Edinburgh had a fortnightly column in the *Scotsman*.

Things moved swiftly. We held our first annual meeting in 1988 and elected Michael Jackson chairman. Fuelled by copious amounts of Young's Ordinary, the committee met once a month in the Calthorpe Arms in Grey's Inn Road and planned the first awards dinner.

From that launch pad, we can now look back on 25 years of achievement and success. A series of seminars on all aspects of brewing deepened our knowledge of the subject. Media coverage improved. When the *Independent* was launched, Michael Jackson started to write regularly for them while Michael Hardman won a Guild award for his work for the *Daily Mirror*. In Leeds Barrie Pepper was a veritable powerhouse, with both written and broadcast work on beer. And books started to appear on a regular basis.

Now, hardly a day passes without news of yet another book on the subject, most of them written by Guild members. The books are informed by the work we have done in one important area that gets little recognition. We have developed a language for beer that didn't exist back in the 1980s. When Michael and I spent that fateful evening in the Waterside Inn we were drinking Everard's beer from Leicester. I remember Michael sniffing and tasting a pint and saying: 'Bit nutty that.' I agreed: 'Bit nutty that.'" We didn't say any more on the subject, but I thought and I'm sure Michael thought too that 'a bit nutty that' wasn't a good enough way to describe the complexities of beer. Whole books and even encyclopedias were dedicated to the aromas and flavours of wine but there was nothing on beer.

So we went — all of us — on a voyage of discovery, visiting the malt stores and hop stores in breweries to work out why malts had different colours and how different varieties of hops gave different character to beer. But treating beer as seriously as wine wasn't always popular with the 'get it down yer neck' brigade.

In the 1980s and 90s, I wrote five editions of the *Real Ale Almanac* that listed all known cask beers with my own tasting notes. I remember going to a CAMRA meeting in Edinburgh where a leading activist held up a copy of the book, pointed to an entry and said: 'You say this beer's got chocolate notes. Yew havin'a laugh, pal? How can beer taste like chocolate?'

Nobody would turn a hair at such a description today. We know, surprise, surprise, that if a beer is made with chocolate malt there's a fair chance it will have chocolate on the nose and palate. If that CAMRA man is still around he must marvel at

the descriptions in the *Good Beer Guide* where melon, peach, smoke, oak, honey, berry fruits, tobacco and grapefruit are par for the course. The fact that beer drinkers are now better informed about ingredients and the role of malt, hops, water and yeast is perhaps our greatest achievement.

Criticism is part of the territory for a beer writer. In the modern world of the internet, if you annoy people as far apart as Seattle and Sydney you will get a response via Twitter in a nano-second. It was slower in the last century. In the 1990s I spent some time in Ireland researching a book on porter and stout. I ended up in Cork where I spent several delightful days visiting the Beamish and the Murphy's breweries. The high spot of the visit was a Sunday lunch with the two retired head brewers who were now firm friends and met every Sunday. But they told me that when they were working they weren't allowed to meet or socialise because Beamish was a Protestant brewery and Murphy's was Catholic.

When I got home I wrote about my Cork experience in my column in the *Morning Advertiser*. A few days later I got a phone call from a publican in Birmingham who said he was originally from Cork. 'I'd like to thank you for that article,' he said. 'It taught me a lot. I didn't know about stout being served from old and fresh casks before nitro-keg came in and I didn't know that people from the two breweries weren't allowed to socialise for religious reasons, so I thank you for that.'

'Thanks for calling,' I said. 'I really appreciate that. Columnists rarely get any feedback for their articles so I'm grateful for your call.'

'Well, don't get too carried away,' he said, 'usually you write a complete load of shite.'

Twenty years on, I'm still writing and I leave it to others to decide whether my material has any merit or is a load of horse droppings. One thing is certain: we can look back with enormous pride at our achievements over the past quarter century. The world of beer is an immeasurably better and more interesting place today than it was when we started on our journey.

To find on my travels great beers, with a multitude of styles, in the US, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand — countries once dominated by giant beer factories churning out bland fizz — is immensely heartening. We have played a vibrant role in the great beer revival. The enormous interest in beer styles and the ingredients used is due in no small part to our passion and our writing.

However much I may hanker after the great days

of Fleet Street — the thunder of the presses, the smell of hot metal, ink and printers' jockstraps — they will never return. The media world has changed out of all recognition during the Guild's existence. Today I can write a piece for *All About Beer* in the US or *Beer & Brewer* in Australia, press a button and it's there in the blink of an eye.

But one thing hasn't changed: good writing. The Guild has never been an organisation just for journalists — we have always welcomed people who don't come from a journalistic background. But I think there are some traditions from journalism that should inform all our work.

A book publisher said to me a few years ago: 'Your problem is that you write like a journalist.' I said: 'I don't consider that to be a problem. Graham Greene, Ernest Hemingway and Georges Simenon started their writing careers as journalists and it didn't do them any harm.' Writing simply and clearly, having a structure to your work, starting with a strong intro that grabs the reader's attention, keeping the story tight, round up the piece at the end, be objective, not subjective, and above all be fair. All that may sound odd at a time of phone hacking and the Leveson Inquiry, but most journalists are honest and decent people who seek the truth without fear or favour. I recommend that noble tradition to Guild members, young and old.

But while we rightly take beer seriously, beer drinking is also about pleasure and we should never lose sight of that. It was put well by Edgar Allan Poe, the American writer and poet:

'Filled with mingled cream and amber, I will drain that glass again.

Such hilarious visions clamber through the chamber of my brain.

Quaintest thoughts, queerest fancies, come to life and fade away.

What care I how time advances? I am drinking ale today.'

Friends, carry on drinking and carry on writing.

Roger Protz

Beer Academy news

7 September, How to Judge Beer

10 September, One Day Foundation

8 October, Old World vs New World Beers

12/13 November, Two Day Advanced

For details on venue, time and cost plus on other events visit www.beeracademy.co.uk

DEADLINE FOR COPY THE NEXT ISSUE IS

SEPTEMBER 27, 2013