

# British Guild Of Beer Writers

## Newsletter November 2013



**GUILD ANNUAL DINNER...** Have you got your ticket yet for the Awards and Dinner? Time is running out for those who want to come to this year's annual awards dinners on 5 December at the Jumeriah Carlton on Cadogan Place.

There has been a huge demand for the tickets, so if you want to come to the year's beer dinner you will have to get your order in quickly. The price of the tickets is £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. To check on the availability of tickets please contact Angie Armitage at Cask Marque [angie@cask-marque.co.uk](mailto:angie@cask-marque.co.uk).

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 11 people for the award, so it was no easy task for the Guild's committee to make its choice.

Finally, anyone wanting a hotel for that night should contact Fiona Whitehead at

CTEM who should be able to arrange: [fiona@ctem.co.uk](mailto:fiona@ctem.co.uk).

**Brewing up a storm: history and the politics of beer...** It was a great evening at the White Horse in Parsons Green in the company of Dr James Nicholls author of the thought provoking *The Politics of Alcohol: A History of the Drink Question in England*. James took us through the politics of alcohol in a lucid journey that traversed several centuries. And it clear that tension between supporters of beer who argue for its free availability, against those of the temperance campaigners, who claim it is a gateway to stronger drink are as strong today as they were two centuries ago. Thanks should go to Paul Hegarty for organising the event — you can read his report about the evening later on in the newsletter.

**Beer writing — past, present and future...** A joint workshop with the Brewery History Society on beer writing is planned for spring next year. The venue is to be the historic Hook Norton Brewery in Oxfordshire. A tour of the Victorian tower brewery is included in plans for the day and for those planning to come by rail transport will be arranged from Banbury Station to the brewery. Topics for the day include a look at beer writing from the 19th century through to the present day, with subjects including the birth of modern beer writing; can the printed word

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survive and how do we ensure that beer writing has a glorious future? Full details will be shortly circulated. **Tim Hampson**

## News

• **AFTER A FANTASTIC** run at the Edinburgh Fringe with Laughing Horse this summer, Wish Experience is bringing *A Brief History of Beer* to London. Before leaving the UK to tour microbreweries in Australia and the US, *A Brief History of Beer* will come to London for a limited run. Directed by Jeffrey Mayhew, it is an educational, delicious ramble through the myths and legends surrounding everyone's favourite bevvy! Equal measures theatre, lecture, and surreal drink-a-long game, *A Brief History of Beer* sees Will Glenn and Trish Parry (who have recently joined the Guild) ask audiences to join them in their slap dash Pint Machine, where they travel through time, from ancient Sumeria to present day, learning about the world's favourite drink. *A Brief History of Beer* will take place at The Bell, 50 Middlesex Street, London E1, 18-20 November, at 8pm.

• **STEVE SHARPLES** is moving: as from 20 December his new address will be 11 Chemin De Somsous 64190, Araujuzon, France.

• **GUILD MEMBER Su-Lin Ong** wants to let members know that Craft Beer Rising will be back 21-23 February 2014 and according to her 'it will be bigger, better, braver. We're very excited to bring you this whole weekend of craft beer, music and street food, and are aiming for 50% more breweries and beers. Please save the date for our Press afternoon of Friday, 21 February'.

• **THE DEA LATIS Beer with Breakfast** tasting last year was so good that it is running again on the morning after next month's Guild's awards dinner: Friday, 6 December, 10am-noon. So, if you fancy a bitter with your bacon or a mild with your mushrooms, this is the event for you. This year, it's at the Somers Town Coffee House near Euston Station with Annabel Smith the guide through the beer and food matches. Tickets are available [www.eventbrite.co.uk/event/5563163572/eac2](http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/event/5563163572/eac2) and include the guided beer and breakfast tasting, followed by a buffet breakfast — vegetarian options included — and coffee/tea/juice. Plus

of course there is the opportunity to meet and network with other women in the beer and pubs industry.

• **CONGRATULATIONS TO** Guild members Evan Rail, Joe Stange, Tim Webb and Stephen Beaumont who recently scooped up awards in the debut writing competition of the North American Guild of Beer Writers.

## Top of the hops

**THE ONGOING** effort to gain British hops the respect they deserve moved up a notch with the hosting of the first annual UK Hop Symposium 2013 in the home of UK hops, Kent, with support from Shepherd Neame.

A number of Guild members were among various hop proponents and aficionados celebrating the cone-shaped miracle. Sheps' Annual Hop Blessing kicked off proceedings followed by a tour around the National Hop Collection conducted by the UK's very own hop maestro Dr Peter Darby. He lives, breathes, sniffs and of course drinks hops. And he can tell many stories about the origin of the various species. The very British Fuggles for instance was the starting point for many of the world's key hop growing programmes.

A less proud British tale was the pulling of funding by the government for the National Hop Collection, which combined with the storms of 1987 heralded a particularly rough period for the UK hop. Dr Darby's enormous efforts and Sheps' support have thankfully brought the collection back to life.

Key hop grower Tony Redsell OBE, delivered the Goldings Lecture delving into history to show an industry that has certainly in recent years been through its troughs and er... troughs. Flicking through the archives you find that the UK and Germany both had 20000 hectares of hops in the ground at one point but in 2012 the UK had around 1000 versus 14000 for Germany.

Ali Capper of the British Hop Association

## CALENDAR 2013

• BGBW Awards and Dinner, Jumeriah Carlton, London, December 5

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

reckons the fight back should start with the brewing industry highlighting the serious amount of varieties now being grown in the UK — alongside the delicate and interesting Fuggles and Goldings of course — with the hop breeding programme at its heart (run by that man again Darby).

Among those helping the cause is Eddie Gadd of Ramsgate Brewery who delivered a passionate speech on his creating Gadd's Green Hop Ale from freshly picked Kent hops each September and how he would love to see his Kent Green Hop Ale Fortnight rival Oktoberfest.

He's no fool though, who thinks it will happen overnight — his vision extends out to 2024 when Kent will be celebrating 500 years of hop cultivation. But the UK Hop Ale Symposium is certainly something to celebrate now and for 2014 there will be a crowning of the first UK Hop Champion. Suggestions to John Humphreys ([jhumphreys@shepherd-neame.co.uk](mailto:jhumphreys@shepherd-neame.co.uk)) at Shepherd Neame, who did a great job of hosting this maiden event. **Glynn Davis**

## Historical intoxication

DR JAMES NICHOLLS, author of the highly respected *The Politics of Alcohol: A History of the Drink Question in England*, presented a lecture to 25 Guild members at the White Horse, Parson's Green, on Thursday 17 October. His lecture, 'Brewing up a storm: history and the politics of beer', examined the role of beer and pubs in UK culture since Tudor times.

In the middle ages, the recent arrival of hops from Europe led to the replacement of unhopped ale with hopped beer. Beer was seen as urban and modern in comparison to ale which was old fashioned and rural. The *Daily Mail's* current obsession with binge Britain and immigration is nothing new — in the 17th century, the Puritans launched a broadside against drunkenness, presenting it as a new phenomenon that had been imported from Europe. The reality was that Britons had always enjoyed a drink but this was an early example of people trying to find someone to blame. During the Civil War, the Royalists portrayed wine as being 'inspired

and brave' in contrast to beer drinkers who they painted as 'dull and boring'.

William Hogarth became a cheer master for beer in the 18th century with his famous prints *Gin Lane* and *Beer Street*. He presented beer as offering Utopian modernity based on hard work and moderation which he contrasted with the squalor of gin drinkers. Over two hundred years on, *Gin Lane* is still a mandatory element of any media discussion of the UK's drinking culture, normally in association with a photograph of an inebriated young woman rolling out of a pub. Wine also had problems of its own with aggressive taxes being imposed on French wines as result of the ongoing wars with France.

The 19th century saw the rise of the temperance movement, which was imported from America. Britain returned the favour by exporting the concept of teetotalism to the USA. The Temperance movement argued that drinkers are slaves to alcohol who don't realize the extent of their 'bondage'. Campaigners presented even moderation as being highly dangerous with total abstinence as the 'harbinger of all good'. Charles Dickens was a voice of reason advocating temperance for those who can be temperate and total abstinence only for those who could not be temperate.

The debate took on a political flavor with the emergence of the Socialist temperance movement, which believed that pubs were capitalist devices to rob the workers of their hard earned wages at the end of the week. There were also concerns that the big brewers used their closeness to the licensing benches to stifle competition and protect their profits. It was suggested that the pubs should be nationalised to remove the profit motive and allow pubs to trade for the benefit of the people.

The 1930s saw big brewers investing heavily to improve pubs arguing that this would support social progress and encourage people to become more civilized. Though the cynics argued that that their real motive was to attract the growing middle class as customers!

This was a fascinating lecture demonstrating that our current hot issues, such as alcohol duty, alcohol harm, the ownership of pubs and the image of beer, are nothing new. What we can't predict is whether the current decline in sales is a sign that beer has had its day, or just another chapter in a rivalry between beer, wine and spirits that can be traced back nearly 500 years. **Paul Hegarty**

## **'The Scottish Brewery' reaches out to writers?**

BREWDOG ARE renowned for many things, not least the tub-thumping, trumpet-blowing 'look at me look at me look at me' attitude normally reserved for six year olds or *X-Factor* contestants. Irrespective of your thoughts on the beers they make (and I've heard every spectrum of opinion on that subject), there's no denying BrewDog are good at getting their name and message across.

So when I, along with two other BGBW members, received an invitation to head to their Fraserburgh headquarters and produce a collaboration beer, it got me thinking. Why would they be reaching out to writers? What would we have to offer them? Well, aside from more exposure for the brand in a share-offering year, I believe it comes down to ideas. As beer writers, that's what we have — that's all we have, come to think of it. We come up with suggestions, spark creative thoughts, begin lots of sentences with 'Well, what about?'

The idea to brew a beer completely around words and writing isn't something that's been done that often, and fair play to BrewDog, they gave us complete carte blanche throughout the entire process. As such, we came up with a Scottish Chocolate Breakfast Stout; a 6.5% heart-starter to get the synapses pinging when deadlines approach, using lactose, Brazilian Sertão coffee, oatmeal and 100% Venezuelan cacao to provide inspiration.

As beer writers, buzzwords and snappy phrases are becoming a far more significant part of what we do; they generate endless 'debates' yet really only revolve around semantics, pigeonholing and personal

opinion. Yet again the 'other c-word' is doing the blogosphere rounds at the moment, for example (ironically this is due, in part, to a blog post written by James Watt, while Dave Bailey of Hardknott Brewery has declared himself non-craft). To reflect this, we called the beer 'Dead Metaphor'.

Already released on keg, Dead Metaphor will be re-brewed shortly for general release in bottle, with artwork designed by Leeds-based illustrator Drew Millward. Does BrewDog reaching out to writers signify a softening of their general attitude? Or is it a case that they are just fishing for column-inches and clickbait? Time will tell, and even if James told me they are looking to move away from the stunts and the nonsense, I'm sure the debates over words will continue. If nothing else, they benefit brewers and writers alike.

**Richard Taylor**

## **Beer Academy news**

**9 November, Beer & Food Matching, Drafthouse, Westbridge, London**

**11 November, 90 Minute Tasting: Best of British, White Horse, Parsons Green, London**

**12 November, How to Judge Beer, The Bull, Highgate, London**

**16 November, One Day Foundation Course, The Bull, Highgate, London**

**10 December, 90-Minute Tasting — Winter Beer, The White Horse, Parsons Green, London**

For details on venue, time, cost and other events visit [www.beeracademy.co.uk](http://www.beeracademy.co.uk)

**DEADLINE FOR COPY THE NEXT ISSUE IS**

**DECEMBER 3, 2013**