

British Guild Of Beer Writers

*Newsletter
April 2014*



WHITE HORSE SEMINAR It was great to see so many members at our packed seminar that posed the question, are reports of the death of beer and pubs exaggerated?

The speakers, Graeme Loudon, account director at CGA Strategy and Chris Holden, director at Ashdale Business Consulting, and a former chair of the BBPA's statistics panel, are both masters of their facts and figures. Holden romped elegantly through 60 years or so of pub history. To have survived so long, the pub clearly not only has resilience but has shown the ability to adapt to challenging trading conditions, be they market driven or politicians' whims.

According to Loudon, for every one community wet-led pub that opens, nine others close. However, he did make it clear that the figures didn't mean the end of the wet led pub but probably sounded the death knell for the poor operator. And like it or not thousands more pubs will close in the next few years.

But it is not doom and gloom — Loudon ended optimistically saying there's always going to be a future for good pubs, and good beer, because people still need a place to come together in a community environment and drink good beer.

Copies of slides from the presentations have been sent to all member and they will also be put up on the Guild's website.

Many thanks to Paul Hegarty for organising the event (you can read his report further on in the newsletter).

A further seminar, to be run in conjunction with the Brewery History Society is planned for the autumn. Full details will follow later.

Guild AGM Our AGM will be held on 17 June, at the Parcel Yard in King's Cross, 6 for 6.30pm.

Date for the diary The Guild's annual dinner and awards will be held on 4 December in central London. The location is to be confirmed.

Futures In the next week or so I hope to send to all members a strategy paper which has been prepared by the Guild's committee on how we can raise the profile and grow the reputation of the Guild and its members. It will also include proposals, which will have to be approved at the AGM, on restructuring membership categories for new members. **Tim Hampson**

News

• **CHOCOS AWAY** with Dea Latis. As part of its continuing quest to encourage more women to enjoy the national drink, industry group Dea Latis recently hosted its fifth annual beer and chocolate tasting. Twenty guests gathered in the Clarence pub on Whitehall to taste six beers, each paired with a chocolate. Expert guidance to the beer and chocolate matches was provided by beer sommelier and Dea Latis

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founder Annabel Smith. 'We regularly pair beer with a variety of foods,' she said, 'but the chocolate tasting is probably our most popular event. The fact that we're staging this event for the fifth time reflects not only the strong appeal of sampling beer and chocolate together, but also the growing awareness of Dea Latis within the beer and pubs industry.'

The beers and chocolates tasted by guests at the Clarence were:

- Molson Coors Blue Moon (5.4%) with Terry's Milk Chocolate Orange
- Everards Tiger (4.2%) with Green & Black's Butterscotch Milk Chocolate
- Thwaites Tavern Porter (4.7%) with chocolate cup cakes
- Shepherd Neame Generation Ale (9%) with Green & Black's Dark Chocolate with Hazelnut & Raisins
- Adnams Sole Bay (10%) with Montezuma's Peeling Amorous White Chocolate
- Liefman's Kriek lambic cherry beer (4.2%) with Thorntons Dark Chilli Chocolate

• **BREWERS ACROSS** Britain are being urged to be part of the nationwide launch of Cask Ale Week on Thursday 25 September. 'We're calling on all cask ale brewers to become involved,' says Paul Nunny from Cask Marque. 'It doesn't matter whether they're from national, regional, local or microbreweries — they're all welcome to join in. The aim is to kick start the week with tutored cask ale tastings all over the country. So we're asking brewers to offer their services to pubs for 25 September.'

Brewers on board for hosting an event should get in touch with their favourite pub. Once the details are all sorted, send the information to Natalie@cask-marque.co.uk for inclusion on the Cask Ale Week website and Facebook page. There are reminders to include @caskaleweek in any Twitter postings too! Cask Ale Week runs Thursday 25 September to Sunday 5 October. The theme is Celebrating Britain's National Drink.

• **GUILD MEMBER** Chris Pollard of Podge's Belgian Tours gets in touch to say that there are still places available on his Beer & Battlefields tour, which goes from Thursday 22 May to Monday 26 May. The full itinerary

(and prices) for this 100-year anniversary Beer & Battlefields tour is now on their website and can be viewed at www.podgebeer.co.uk.

Highlights of the tour include:

- An Ijzer River Cruise with a local Ijzerfront battlefield guide and a bar onboard
- Walking tour of the Ganzepoot Complex, Nieuwpoort
- Guided visit to Fromelles (Pheasant Wood) CWGC Military Cemetery
- Visit to St Bernardus Kazematten Café, Ypres
- Tour of the new Kazematten (Casemates) Brewery, Ypres
- Last Post Ceremony at Menin Gate, Ypres
- Visit inside Talbot House, 'Toc H', Poperinge
- A guided south salient tour of the Battle of Messines (7–14 June 1917)
- Visit to a rare WW1 brewery (Six-Colpaert) in Reningelst
- Three evenings free in each of Ypres, Poperinge and Veurne

As usual the tour will have the services of fellow Guild member Siobhan McGinn, who is nearing the end of her Birmingham University MA British First World War Studies, and will be the guide to the battlefields and in her specialist subject, beer in the First World War.

• **THE LONDON BREWERS' ALLIANCE** (LBA) is delighted to announce that the 2014 London Hop Shoot Festival is set to take place on Friday 2 May and they would love to see Guild members come and help for the day. If you are interested please email festival organiser, London brewer and Guild member Peter Haydon on aheadahat@gmail.com.

CALENDAR 2014

- World Beer Cup, Denver, USA, April 7-8
- Craft Brewers Conference, Denver, USA, April 8/11
- British Guild of Beer Writers AGM, London, June 17
- Great British Beer Festival, London, August 12-16
- British Guild of Beer Writers dinner and awards, London, December 4

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

BRITISH GUILD OF BEER WRITERS' SPRING LECTURE

UPSTAIRS AT the White Horse at Parsons Green was jammed to capacity for the Guild lecture *Are reports of the death of beer and pubs exaggerated?*, which was given by Chris Holden of Ashdale Business Consulting and Graeme Loudon of CGA Strategy on Thursday 20 March.

The speakers traced how beer and pubs have fared since the war. Britain in the 1950s was still in the depths of postwar austerity and beer sales were 'steady' — stagnant might be a more appropriate descriptor — with annual sales flat at about 24 million barrels. Beer's typical strength was 3.5% alcohol and made up about 75% of all UK alcohol consumption. It was perhaps surprising to some that the 1950s had already started to see significant industry consolidation with the number of breweries falling from 524 to 399 between 1952 and 1958.

The end of the 1950s saw a substantial cut in beer duty, which meant that 1960s 'swung' not only for fashion, music and sex — but also beer. A growing population and economic prosperity saw beer sales grow by about 20%, finishing the decade at nearly 33 million barrels. The 1960s also saw early signs of some fundamental changes that would shape the sector for the coming decades. The 'Big Six' brewers were born: Allied, Bass, Courage, S&N, Watney and Whitbread with combined tied estates of about 40,000 pubs. Lager started to raise its head as well, growing its share from 2% to 12% and, ominously for pubs, there was the start of an explosion in the availability of alcohol in the off-trade.

Beer volumes continued to rise throughout the 1970s despite economic upheaval and very high inflation; the average price of a pint of bitter rose from 11p at the start of the decade to 34p at the end. Despite the formation of CAMRA at the start of the decade, lager and the off-trade continued their remorseless growth — and wine started to make an impact. Beer volumes peaked at an all-time high of 42 million barrels annually

in the early 1980s. Lager dominated — and a quarter of this was in the 5% alcohol 'premium' category.

The Beer Orders, published in 1989, probably had the most dramatic impact on brewing since the Second World War and we are still living with their consequences. Brewers with more than 2000 tied pubs had to free-from-tie half of the excess resulting in a mass sale of pubs which were snapped up by the newly formed pub-cos. Government claimed that the Beer Orders helped pubs by increasing consumer choice and reducing prices, but the reality was that by the end of the 1990s, beer made up less than 50% of UK alcohol sales and a third of this was sold in the off trade.

The creation of the European Single Market in 1993 spurred Britons to cross the Channel on 'booze cruises', which peaked in the late 1990s when 1.5 million pints were being imported every day from Calais. UK supermarkets responded by dramatically cutting their alcohol prices slowing the imports but hastened the move to home drinking. This legacy of very cheap off trade alcohol is still with us today.

The majority of the 1990s and the first half of the next decade was a time of economic prosperity, growing alcohol consumption and media hyperbole about binge Britain. When the economy hit the buffers in 2007, it was a golden excuse for the Chancellor to ramp up alcohol duty, nominally to address the problem that 'alcohol had become more affordable' but in reality to fill a vast gap in the Government's coffers. The duty escalator was initially intended to increase alcohol duties by 6% over inflation for five years — but this was extended by a further two years in 2009. This saw beer duty increase by over 40% in five years and further widened the gap in the price of a pint between the on and off-trade. Beer volumes plummeted and 50 pubs a week were closing.

So are beer and pubs doomed?

Surprisingly no. Whilst there is still bad news (high tax, falling beer sales and pub closures), there is much to celebrate. SIBA beer volumes are growing rapidly and there

has been an explosion of microbreweries; well-run pubs and good operators are thriving and beer duty has been cut in the last two budgets. Government seems to have finally woken up to the fact that beer and pubs are worth protecting. But pubs are undoubtedly changing. Closures are predominately wet led. People are going out less often but spending more ('weekend millionaires'). People are drinking less but better: craft beers, world beers, cocktails and premium spirits. Good food and great coffee are vital if a pub is going to succeed.

Graeme predicted that the on-trade would continue to contract with 8000 fewer outlets by 2018. These will be predominantly wet led or from the independent free trade. Managed pubs, food outlets and café/wine bars will grow. Put simply, bad beer and poor pubs are disappearing but the prospect for good beer and great pubs is excellent. This can only be good news for beer lovers. **Paul Hegarty**

POD PEOPLE

THE GLARING SHORTAGE of beer coverage from the national media is a persistent grumble amongst Guild members. We know there is a large potential audience for intelligent coverage of beer. In January blogger (and fellow Guild member) Leigh Linley read my mind when he asked 'Where are the UK beer Podcasts?'

I subscribe to a number of podcasts: a smattering of Radio 4 programmes and a selection of independent UK and US shows. A good beer podcast would fit right in. In a lightbulb-above-head moment it dawned on me that I would be a good candidate for creating a beer podcast: lots of beer experience; writing experience; web experience; recording experience. Late last year I set about researching the creation of podcasts. Realising I was going to struggle with the likes of HTML, PHP, Javascript and the like I recruited my friend Ben Steel who knows about these mysterious things. Ben knows his beer too: by day he works for Stringers Brewery of Ulverston. We set about building a website. There are still jobs to do the website. You can see the work in progress at www.beerlinespodcast.co.uk/wp

Now we're ready for some content. I aim to produce an episode every fortnight. An episode will be about 30 minutes long and consist of news items and three features by contributors. I am hoping that beer bloggers will see contributing to Beerlines as a natural extension to blogging (this is a roundabout way of saying there is no money in it).

Naturally I welcome contributions from Guild members — there will be ample opportunity to promote books and other commercial ventures. There's no need to write new pieces for Beerlines — how about plundering your writing archives?

Des De Moor has set the ball rolling with a splendid piece about monastic brewing in Germany. You can listen to a preview here: <http://goo.gl/xdFKsP>. I look forward to hearing from you on my new podcast email address editor@beerlinespodcast.co.uk.

Jeff Pickthall

Beer Academy news

8 April 90-Minute Tasting: Too Hop to Trot, hosted by Steve Livens, The White Horse, London
11 April Beer Academy Beer and Food Matching, hosted by Nigel Sadler, The Draffhouse, London

25 April The Beer Academy, One-Day Foundation Course, The Cross Keys, Leeds

29 April The Beer Academy One-Day Foundation Course, Accredited by City & Guilds at NVQ Level 1, The White Horse, London

6 May The Beer Academy 90-Minute Tasting — Battle of the Beers (anything EU can do... we can do better!), The White Horse, London

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

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FOR THE NEXT ISSUE
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