

# British Guild Of Beer Writers

## Newsletter October 2015



### THE CHAIRMAN IS IN BERLIN (LUCKY CHAP).

#### NEWS

• **Award winning writer** and broadcaster Pete Brown talks about his forthcoming book *What Are You Drinking?* at The Greystones on Thursday, October 15. This will be an exploration of the ingredients of beer, getting deep into what makes the most popular alcoholic drink in the world. The beery stories include insights from behind the scenes at Britain's maltings, tales from trips to sour beer festivals and where an alcoholic fruit fly's thirst comes from. Plus there will be beer. It'll be a light-hearted evening and you'll learn at least one new thing that will surprise and possibly even amaze you, unless you're a professional brewer with a degree in microbiology! The event is hosted by Hop Hideout — an award winning specialist beer shop located in Sheffield's vibrant Antiques Quarter and run by Guild Jules Gray. *With special thanks to Thornbridge Brewery and The Greystones; more information [www.hophideout.co.uk/events](http://www.hophideout.co.uk/events).*

• **This month** Guild member Matthew Curtis is hosting 'No More Heroes', a charity tasting session of beer's great unloved, to raise money for Mind UK. It takes place at South London craft beer emporium Hop Burns & Black on October 22. Tickets for the event sold out very quickly, however, conscious that not everyone will be able to make it to the

night Matt has set up this Just Giving page for those who care but can't be there. He hopes members will dig deep to help Mind and the amazing work they do to ensure no one has to experience a mental health problem alone. Donations can be made here: [www.justgiving.com/nomoreheroes](http://www.justgiving.com/nomoreheroes).

• **Guild member** Allan McLean reports successful interest in the first Scottish beer heritage exhibition, October 1-29 October, daily except Sundays, at Edinburgh Central Library. The not-for-profit community interest company Brewing Heritage Scotland, of which he is a director, is encouraged to go on with a bigger beer history exhibition for four months from March 2016 at the Museum of Edinburgh on the Canongate, in an area where many breweries once thrived.

• **Save the date** — *Dea Latis Beers with Breakfast*, Friday, December 4, 9.30am–11.30am; Drake & Morgan, King's Cross. Join us for the popular *Dea Latis Beers with Breakfast*, held, as ever, on the morning after the Guild's annual awards and dinner. This year we're at the newly-opened Drake & Morgan near King's Cross station where we'll be enjoying a selection of their tempting breakfast dishes, each served with a different beer. Tickets for *Beers with Breakfast* will be on sale later this month and we'll be publishing details on [www.dealatis.org.uk](http://www.dealatis.org.uk). Or email us at [info@dealatis.org.uk](mailto:info@dealatis.org.uk) if you want to put your name on the list for the event. **Ros Shiel**

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• **Congratulations to Guild members Jessica Boak and Ray Bailey** whose *Brew Britannia* took the top slot in the Best History/Technical Writing category at the 2015 North American Guild of Beer Writers Awards.

• **The Best Beer in the World** by Mark Dredge  
What's the best beer you've ever tasted? What's your favourite beer? Where can I drink the ultimate brew? These are the questions that Guild member Mark Dredge was always being asked. And he didn't have any answers. So he went on a journey around the planet to find The Best Beer in the World. Part travel book, part city guide, and part reference book, *The Best Beer in the World* takes you on a journey through North and South America, Europe, Asia and Australia in search of the essential stories, beers, bars and breweries, immersing you in the history and beer culture of each region and highlighting the key beers to try. The book features quintessential or unusual beer experiences from all four corners of the globe — whether that's living with monks in Belgium, drinking the cheapest beer in the world on Vietnam streets, going to Beijing to search for the world's biggest-selling beer, visiting the second-largest Oktoberfest in the world (in Brazil), or trying to brew the best beer in his mate's kitchen. The book is out now. Mark also says that there is a launch of the book Tuesday, October 13, at Bottle Shop in Bermondsey (128 Druid Street SE1 2HH). From 6.30pm. And it'll feature some of the best beers in the world.

• **The Best of Beer Writing Anthology** set for Spring 16 publication Guild member and book publisher Jo Copestick is delighted to have signed up Evan Rail to edit the first ever anthology of the best writing about beer, provisionally entitled *Beer: The Best Writing on the Greatest Drink*, for publication in May 2016. Evan Rail writes regularly for the *Times Literary Supplement* and the *New York Times*. He is the author of several successful e-titles including *Why Beer Matters* and *In Praise of Hangovers*. He also authored the *Good Beer Guide Prague and Czech Republic* (commissioned by Jo when she was Head of Publications at CAMRA). The book will be co-published by Jo's independent Homewood Press imprint (publisher of *Beer in the Netherlands* by Tim Skelton, edited by Tim Webb) in conjunction with Safe Haven Books, a

new boutique imprint set up by the former publisher of Aurum Press, Graham Coster. Safe Haven ([www.safehavenbooks.co.uk](http://www.safehavenbooks.co.uk)) intends to publish 'idiosyncratic' non-fiction in the fields it 'feels at home in' — from cricket to architecture, natural history to beer.

## BOOK CORNER

**Around Amsterdam/Around Brussels in 80 Beers** Two great European cities complemented by two more than handy guides from those clever people at Cogan & Mater. When I first visited these cities, I was guided to pubs by photocopied A4 sheets from the likes of Richard Larkin and Steve D'Arcy, the latter now sadly passed away. They were cheap to procure but the world has moved on as have the two cities in beer terms and these two new guides help lead us to their beery delights.

The original concept for the 80 Beers series came from Chris Pollard, while Tim Skelton (Amsterdam) and Joe Stange (Brussels) have carried on the flame in the second editions of these publications. As you would expect, both books follow a similar format. Eighty bars receive a full-page entry, complemented by nice use of photographs, and with each bar the author selects a beer that he thinks best goes with the surroundings. Food offerings and transport links are set out as are opening hours; although my experience is that these can quickly change. So do use the phone numbers provided if you are planning a special visit, especially if it is to one of the more remote bars.

There is inevitably a risk in selecting one specific beer, as there is always a chance that when you visit the bar that beer might not be available. Indeed, it may be a case that you do not like/fancy the beer selected, for instance, should I visit Batavia 1920 in Amsterdam then I shall not be going for the recommended beer from Scotland. I can get that beer here in London, should I wish. But as all of the places have more

### CALENDAR 2015

- Brussels Beer Challenge, November 5-8, Antwerp
- British Guild of Beer Writers awards and dinner, London, December 3

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

than just the one beer on offer, some many, many more, then you will never feel hard done by.

Both guides have maps, although that for Amsterdam seems a lot clearer to use. Knowing Brussels, as I do, I would only rely on the maps to give me a rough feel of where the bars are located. I would never visit a city without a detailed street map so you should arm yourselves with such when visiting. Indeed, you will need one for the Brussels guide as it comes with a bonus short listing of nearly 30 more bars that do not feature on the main maps.

The one difference between the two guides, and I stand to be corrected, is that as far as I can see the Brussels bars only feature a selected beer from Belgium while the Amsterdam bars feature listed beers from nine different countries; although it is pleasing to see that beers from Amsterdam and The Netherlands predominate.

So here we have two essential guides to two cities written by authors 'in the know'. They are published by Cogan & Mater with a cover price of £10.99, [www.booksaboutbeer.com](http://www.booksaboutbeer.com).

**John M Cryne**

## **CRYSTAL MALT PALACE**

*One of the North East's most significant leisure and tourism developments is about to begin. Alastair Gilmour reports on a project that will have world brewing looking on in envy*

**A** business that started with an advert in a shop window pleading for help with an unfathomable computer has been handed the keys to one of Newcastle's most iconic buildings. Wylam Brewery, set up 15 years ago by John Boyle and the late Robin Leighton, is about to be recognised as a national, European and world force following permission from Newcastle City Council to develop the former Palace of Arts in Exhibition Park into a brewing centre of excellence.

The implications for the wider North East are enormous. It's estimated that more than 26,000 visitors a year from Holland and Germany visit the region to watch Premier League football at St James' Park and the Stadium of Light, spending a total of £22.6m in the process. Imagine how those beer-loving nations will react to being able to enjoy a city-centre brewery with all the trimmings. The sensible folks might just ditch the football.

The Palace of Arts was built in 1929 for the

North East Coast Exhibition and is the only structure left from that attempt to revitalise the city and its environs during the Great Depression. In latter years it had been leased by former Newcastle United chairman Freddy Shepherd to house his classic car collection, but plans to create a microbrewery, weekend brewery tap, brewing education facility and visitor centre have been recognised as a more attractive proposition for Newcastle's appetite for vibrant, indigenous enterprises.

'It's all come together after three years of hard work to reach the finished article,' says Wylam Brewery director Dave Stone. He and business partner Rob Cameron invested in the company three years ago because they saw its huge potential in a developing beer market. They also genuinely loved the products.

'We were looking for somewhere to expand the business and where we could also have a brewery tap and visitor centre. The farm where Wylam has been based since the beginning was an idyllic location but difficult for people to get to.'

Stone, Cameron and brewery business development manager Matt Boyle set out on a mission to study other brewing operations that shared the Wylam vision. Other staff members needed no further encouragement to contribute their ideas.

'We went to Portland in Oregon, to San Francisco, Santa Rosa, New York — Manhattan, Brooklyn and Williamsburg — and soaked it all up,' says Dave Stone. In the manner of a Method actor he also studied at Brewlab in Sunderland to broaden his background.

'We looked for inspiration and learned a lot about what's happening in global beer movement. We had a few beers too; it was all part of the journey.'

Wylam Brewery directors looked at several sites across Newcastle, ranging from everyday industrial units to an almost-ideal facility at Hoult's Yard in Walker.

'That exercise took us to the Palace of Arts which we fell in love with as soon as we walked in,' says Stone. 'It was an empty space. Shepherd Offshore had refurbished it back to a shell. That secured its future in the short-term and it's the last building still standing from the North East Coast Exhibition in 1929.'

'It was good that such an asset was protected and it's going to be great to be able to bring a building back into the public use that it was originally intended.'

Nothing of this scale and emotive experience could progress without organised opposition and differences of opinion, which Wylam were acutely aware of. They went out of their way to accommodate a tide of strong feelings, particularly from residents' associations.

Dave Stone says: 'we held consultation meetings and an open day, which resulted in a very positive attitude towards the project. We consulted with everybody and amended our plans to alleviate their concerns where possible.'

'The main objection was about traffic and it became apparent that we needed to have the minimum disruption for park users and to keep our distribution and cask washing separate from the brewing at the Palace of Arts. We'll be brewing onsite twice a day before 8am with the rest of the operation continuing from our current site.'

'At the end of it we'll have a 30-barrel brewhouse and a brewery tap that will be open at weekends.'

Wylam Brewery supplied its first customer — the Boathouse at Wylam in Northumberland — with its first brew on August Bank Holiday Monday, 2000. The 18 gallons of Landlord's Choice didn't see Tuesday.

John Boyle and Robin Leighton, both from Wylam, had taken early retirement — John was happy to fix computers for anyone who asked, while former sea captain Robin had tried his hand at a few ventures but always returned to his 30-year passion for home brewing. When Robin couldn't get his new computer to work he answered John's shop window advert offering IT advice. Robin admitted at the time: 'as the hours ticked past, I thought, 'this is going to cost me a fortune'. So, to keep John happy I pulled him a pint of home brew. Four hours later — computer right — I asked him how much I owed. He liked what he had tasted so much we settled on five gallons of the Weiss Bier I was making.'

And so in this rather ordinary way significant businesses are born.

John Boyle says: 'It's now a very exciting time. Wylam Brewery has a great reputation, but it's still a great leap forward for a small business. Dave

Stone, Rob Cameron and Matt (Boyle) are entrepreneurial spirits, so we decided to do something really special together; something to look forward to that would take us into the future.'

Dave Stone is adamant that the Palace of Arts project will proceed with careful planning and respect for the city. It's in Wylam Brewery's best interests to bring a centre of excellence to Newcastle and to deliver a programme that is acceptable to all.

'We'll do it properly as we do everything else,' he says. 'We'll do it carefully and organically because we only want to make proper beer.'

'We will be keeping the residents' groups informed about what we're doing. We want to attract people from all over the world because now we're competing on a world stage. It'll benefit the whole region, as the North East will be recognised as one of the go-to places for great beer.'

'There are a number of exceptional breweries in the North East and we feel that the regional brewing scene will really benefit en masse from this development. It's a brother and sisterhood; we share all the ideals and we are very pleased that the city has understood and engaged with our vision.'

The new facility is expected to take six months or so to complete. It's the North East's gain and the Premier League's loss.

## **BEER ACADEMY NEWS**

**The Netherlands and Portugal** are now both homes to a Beer Academy Sommelier! Liang Lu, based in the Netherlands, and Goncalo Faustino, based in Portugal, recently passed their sommeliers assessments with Chief Beer Academy Examiner Alex Barlow at Beer Academy HQ! The Academy now has 92 accredited Beer Academy Sommelier spanning 16 countries. There could be 100 by the end of the year...

### **Beer Academy News**

**October 12**, Foundation Course  
Brewhouse & Kitchen, Bristol

**October 19**, Advanced Course  
Brewhouse & Kitchen, Bristol

**October 19**, How to Judge Beer  
Beer Academy, London

**October 20**, Foundation Course  
Beer Academy, London