Western Banquet – 13th September – Mercure Grand Hotel, Bristol

**What went well?**

The casino and the food seemed to have got good feedback on the night.
There were some that were dubious about the casino evening, thinking it wouldn’t be enjoyed. The feedback on the night and seeing the faces of those partaking would indicate that it is well received.

**What didn’t go so well?**

Struggled with the number of attendees to the event; there seemed to be interest when we sent the Save the Date details on the 27th March, with interest being quite high then for the event.
It was praised for being back in Bristol and in the autumn, as their feedback requested.

Closer to the event, once we started chasing those attendees that usually book tickets for this event, it was clear that it wasn’t a priority for them to attend, had booked other events that clashed, did not want to attend or had concerns that the event would be cancelled, similar to last year.
The word got out, but it did take some convincing, that we wouldn’t be cancelling the event and it would still go on despite numbers. This did rally some, but not all, to get the numbers in.

Feedback from brewers that we invited was that they didn’t like Black Tie events and wouldn’t attend for this reason. In the final week we did removed the black tie request as compulsory, but it may have been too late at this stage.

**Learnings**

As great as tradition is and we should always remember it, we need to look to the future, remove black tie and possibly change the name of the event. Bristol still seems the best place to hold the event, with a lot happening and a good beer scene.

The Western Committee need more involvement with the event if it is to succeed. Everyone on the committee should have bought at least one ticket and attended the event. Maybe we need to relinquish some of the control and allocate certain tasks for them to arrange.

We did send Save the Dates out early, but maybe me we need to get booking forms out earlier. Those that were happy with the date when the save the dates were sent forgot about the event and then double booked.

Plan out everything we want for the event early. I.e. projector, cheese boards, larger tables, etc. This will save the many email exchanges and can help us work on the next event, if there is one.

**Report**

This year’s BFBi Western Section Dinner was held on Friday 13th September where we have moved back to Bristol at the Mercure Grand Hotel and a very enjoyable evening was had by all. The Mercure’s team, led by Luke Bartlett, provided everybody with a first class meal and hospitality. A selection of local beers that had generously been donated ensured everybody was refreshed throughout the evening and proved to be excellent accompaniments to the meal. Chairman Mark Banks gave a report and insight into the busy year that the BFBi had enjoyed. This was followed by presenting past Chairman Will Rogers with his medal. After dinner, guests were given vouchers to cash in at the casino tables which were kindly sponsored by Close Brothers Brewery Rentals, and could try their hand at Blackjack and Roulette. The evening came to a close and the nightlife of Bristol was enjoyed by many.