

What's *yours* then?



CAMRA Highlands & Western Isles FREE Newsletter | Winter 2012/3



- **Further expansion at Cairngorm (see page 9)**
- **Bandstand Autumn Beer Festival** ● **Grumpyolympics**
 - National first for new Orkney Brewery Visitor Centre
- **The 11th Loch Ness Beer Festival** ● **Merger of two island breweries**

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What's yours then?

Welcome to the Winter issue of our quarterly newsletter.

In this Winter edition we have:

- ◆ brewery news
- ◆ festivals, tastings and trip reports
- ◆ Beer of the year voting info
- ◆ Focus on Andrew and Gail Staddon
- ◆ Real Cider news
- ◆ National campaign news
- ◆ Updated real ale pub list
- ◆ Updated branch diary

If you would like to place an advert, please contact one of our branch officers listed on page 39.

Advertising rates

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There is a discount on placement of your fourth consecutive advert. Adverts are accepted on the condition that inclusion does not necessarily imply endorsement or approval of content.

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An average of 3,500+ copies are distributed to CAMRA branch members, to Highlands & Islands brewers, to Good Beer Guide listed and Real Ale pubs; plus extra copies to advertisers.

We welcome your letters, news, views and opinions. Let us know what is happening in your local, or tell us about pubs you have visited.

Thanks to all those branch members and visitors who have taken the trouble to send in pub and beer reports and articles helping us to keep up to date with brews and what is happening in our pubs.

Please note that the editor reserves the right to edit contributions sent for publication. All marks and copyright are acknowledged.

Spring edition **deadline** is Friday 1st March, with publication in early April.

Bah Humbug!

The increasingly desperate, commercial run-up to the “jolly” season seems even longer than ever but as you can read in this issue there are several reasons to be cheerful if you appreciate real ale in our area. Cairngorm re-launch one beer and announce a completely new beer along with news of a major expansion – will this include starting a pub estate? - time will tell. The possible merger of two breweries from two Scottish islands should strengthen both brands and allow them to expand and thrive. Orkney brewery’s visitor centre is reaping great awards and praise. Another of our local breweries is getting in to its stride, brewing 4 times the amount it previously had the capacity for, which will provide much more “(insert word here)ness” ales for us to find and enjoy. Welcome to the Winter issue of “What’s your then?”. Hopefully you are reading it in a good, cosy pub while enjoying great ale with a friend or two. At this time of year it is even more special when it is cold and dark out.

Enjoy! Cheers.

Trading Standards Office

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Bandstand Autumn Beer Festival 2012

This smaller of the two Bandstand Beer Festivals was held from 31st August to 2nd September. No marquee this time, as all the 32 beers were put onto the bar on handpump, with 12 available at one time and then a rolling replacement during the festival. Brews available were from Fyne, Inveralmond, Highland, Orkney, Cairngorm, Houston and Cromarty in Scotland and Adnams, Green Jack, Wells & Young and Timothy Taylor from England. An excellent range of strengths ranging from the 3.5% Fyne Ales Rune to the 7.4% Fyne Ales Superior IPA. Also a range of different styles from Cairngorm's Black Gold, Highland Orkney Pale Ale, Orkney Red MacGregor, Fyne Ales Jarl and Inveralmond Lia Fail. A lot of these beers are award winners in CAMRA and SIBA competitions. There was one of the first outings of Cromarty's new blond beer the 5.7% Rogue Wave (which disappeared very quickly) plus their recent very hoppy 3.8% brew Hit the Lip. Cider fans were not disappointed as there were 5 served from the back shelf of the bar;



Moles Black Rat (4.6%), Westons Wild Wood (7.3%), Westons Raspberry Twist (4%), Westons Celebration (5%) and Thatchers Heritage (4.9%). Branch Chairman Eric Mills, presented owner, Gordon Holding with their Cider Pub of the Year 2012 certificate which was voted by Branch members. Fine weather, especially on the Sunday, entertainment, excellent food in the Dining room with views over the Bandstand and Moray Firth added to another successful Festival. Gordon is hoping to break the 100 beers barrier for the next Easter Beer Festival in April!

The 11th Loch Ness Beer Festival

This event was held from 21st to 29th September with locals and regulars (some from as far south as Cornwall) descending on the Benleva Hotel in Drumnadrochit. During the week, over 60 different beers and ciders were consumed (in rotation, with 10 beers on at any time and as one finished another came on). Friday and Saturday evening entertainment was supplied from the popular groups Topsy Laird, Pinny and the Breakers and Penny Dogs. From Monday to Wednesday there was a pool tournament and on the Thursday an excellent example of "Steve's Quiz night". Every night their accommodation was full and all their tables were booked to sample their popular meals. Black Rat cider made a welcome return and was joined by ciders and perrys from Duloe Cornish Orchards. A selection of old favourite beers and



some new ones from the following breweries; Ayr, Eden, Alchemy, Demonbrew, Beeches, Fallen, Kinneil Brew Hoose and St Andrews (first time ever on sale and the brewer was around to see peoples reaction). Also from south of the border there were a few

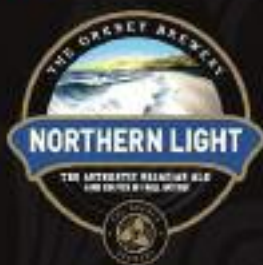
beers from Red Willow, Foxfield, Lincoln Green and Thornbridge. As expected there was a full range of Loch Ness beers, including the 6% Ascot bound 'Nester Piggott' and their newest brew 'Prince of Darkness' at 10%, a very dark and strong winter warmer. The Guess the Beer was Ale of Leven from the Loch Lomond brewery, which no one guessed. Beer of the Festival voted for by the drinkers was Loch Ness Hoppy Ness.

(What?!? All those different beers and the in-house LocAle beer won? Shurely Shome mishtake? - Ed.)

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Local Gem

Richard Bath, Scotland on Sunday restaurant reviewer, noted in the Spectrum magazine in September that in recent years there has been something of an explosion in the number of pubs offering good food. He noted that 'Any number of boozers around the country are now offering really good grub, and it only takes a second's reflection to think of a dozen in all corners of the country that work brilliantly, including such gems as the Bridge Inn at Ratho, the George in Inveraray, the Drovers Inn, Angus, the Cross Keys in Kippen, the Cock & Bull in Balmedie and The Anderson in Fortrose.'



Nice to know that The Anderson is quite rightly considered a gem in such elevated circles!

Dry Dingwall

Seven Ayrshire based CAMRA members were Sup for the Killie match in Dingwall at the weekend and combined it with a two night stay at Braeval Hotel for their beer festival. As ever, they did us proud and we managed to sample most of the 18 ales that were on while we were there. Every one was worth at least a score of 3 with most getting a 4. Was particularly impressed with the beers from Cromarty (Hit the Lip, Rogue Wave and Happy Chappy), Highland's many offerings (of which The Duke was new to me) and those from

Fyne Ales and the always welcome Taylor's Landlord.

On our way to Dingwall we stopped for a beer, and pie, in Blackfriars and felt that Orkney's Raven was a bit too cold to score more than 2.5.

The BIG disappointment of the day was finding that there was no real ale to be found in Dingwall, despite the National Hotel being listed in WYT! Can you believe that a CAMRA outing settled for coffee before heading to Victoria Park?

At full time we headed straight back to Inverness and good value food and beers in The King's Highway. Wood's Wonderful was our favourite and well worth a 4, as was Caledonian's Dutchman.

We were back in Nairn for 8pm and another good night at the Braeval. The really good news is that our next visit to Ross County is on the same weekend as the next Braeval Beerfest. Well done whoever arranges the SPL fixtures. Perhaps someone in Dingwall will be serving a decent pint by then?

Feel free to use this in WYT.

Cheers

Bob

Blackfriars ties

The rumours that Blackfriars is a tie-d pub are untrue!



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Merger of two Highlands & Islands breweries?



The unexpected news was released on 2nd November that Isle of Skye and Isle of Arran breweries are planning to merge. As reported and advertised in the Autumn issue, Isle of Skye brewery was up for sale/investment as owner, Angus MacRuary wanted to retire. With the creation of the new company, at the moment it looks like being called “Arran Brewery plc”, it is reported that Angus will take a seat on the board. Isle of Skye was one of the early wave of new micro-breweries in Scotland, started by Angus and another teacher, Stephen Tinney in 1995. The brewery went from strength to strength and a few years ago expanded to the current point where they are unable to easily

expand further. Isle of Arran brewery is just one aspect of a wide ranging portfolio of businesses that owner, Gerald Michaluk has and he is in the process of a major fundraising and expansion exercise. Taking over Isle of Skye brewery gives great potential for the Isle of Skye brand of beers within the overall expansion. Time and the beers will tell!

To read the news reports of 2nd November look at:

bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-business-20170735 and

heraldscotland.com/business/company-news/island-breweries-planning-merger.19306906

Further expansion at Cairngorm

On 9th November it was announced with the help of Danny Alexander that Cairngorm Brewery were starting a £1.6 million expansion project with £665,000 from a Bank of Scotland finance package, £150,000 from HIE and £100,000 from the European Regional Development Fund. The occasion was also used to announce the launch of a new beer – “Ginger Rodent” – a political insult

that Danny Alexander has cordially embraced.

Since Cairngorm are barely settling in to having their own fully operational bottling line in their big, new building at the Dalfaber brewery, it remains to be seen how they plan to expand further. A comprehensive report on this expansion and the progress of our other breweries in our branch area will be in the Spring issue.

Cheers to new blueberry and oat beer - Brochan

A new beer brewed using Scottish field-grown blueberries and oats has been launched at the 19th Annual Golden Spurtle World Porridge Making Championship at Carrbridge in the Highlands.

The “Brochan” beer has been produced as a result of a partnership between the James Hutton Institute and Aviemore-based Cairngorm Brewery and joins their offering of traditional ales.

Blueberries for the new seasonal beer were grown at the James Hutton Institute site at Dundee where research is taking place to help identify suitable blueberry varieties for UK growers.

The linkup between the Institute and Cairngorm Brewery was brokered by its commercial affiliate, Mylnefield Research Services (MRS). MRS Commercial Director Jonathan Snape said it was

an exciting new venture.

“We are delighted to be working with Cairngorm Brewery to produce this ale made with the very best Scottish blueberries and oats. It is an interesting and innovative use of Scotland’s fine produce,” said Jonathan.

Samantha Faircliff, Managing Director of Cairngorm Brewery added: “We have to thank Interface for facilitating the introduction to James Hutton Institute. Interface puts businesses in touch with Scotland’s Universities and academia. We are working with MRS on a variety of innovative projects. Our Master Brewer, Sean Tomlinson was delighted to have Scottish blueberries to add to our oat beer called “Brochan”. He has always wanted to try a beer with blueberries so it is win-win all round!”



Castle Tavern



Last Christmas, the Castle had a small, festive beer festival but we didn't find out about it till way past deadline time so we couldn't publicise it. Having asked, it is still too early so you'll just have to pop in and find out yourselves.

No.27

Verbal reports of a continuing improvement in the range and more importantly, the quality of the ales on offer in No 27 on Castle Street are reaching out ears. Well worth trying apparently.

Blackfriars

Some free publicity was "enjoyed" by Del and Janette when an article appeared on the front page of the Inverness Courier on 6th November; "Mystery of closed city pub". The paper reported that the popular city bar had failed to open as usual on the Monday morning and they couldn't make contact with anybody to explain why. They managed to speak to someone at Heineken UK who now own the building who, of course, could only apologise. It seems the reporter wasn't able to go and look at the chalk board on Blackfriars' wall that announced the closure from the Sunday to Thursday and also announced the live band for the coming Saturday night! (Del and Janette were having a short holiday.)



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August Tasting evening report

Our Summer tasting evening was held at the Cawdor Tavern which is owned by the same family that has the Orkney brewery, so it was no surprise we would have a range of Atlas & Orkney beers to try.

Brewery owner Norman Sinclair always tries to join us when we meet here and it is good to catch with the news about the brewery. Unfortunately for us he couldn't make it this time as he was away on Orkney concentrating on the business and the new award winning visitor centre.

The first beer of the evening was the 4.0% abv **Northern Light** from Orkney. Not much given away in the aroma, it is a golden/yellow coloured light, refreshing, hoppy bitter which has a hint of caramel. A good bitter finish which extends into the aftertaste for a good while. A good example of this beer which can sometimes be a little underwhelming it scored an average of 6.5 (out of 10).



Next up was the newest beer in the Orkney portfolio, the 4.1% **Corncrake** golden ale. A really good, smooth golden ale with hop and fruit dominance in both taste and aroma. The smooth citrus hop flavour would come from the late addition of hops into the brew giving all the hop flavour but without bitterness. A very sessionable, tasty beer which went down well with all the tasters scoring an average of 8.



Another Orkney was up next, the 4.0% tawny coloured bitter **Red Macgregor**. This is usually a brilliantly balanced beer with loads of flavour for its strength, combining malts, roasts, caramel, hops and fruit in both taste and aroma. Tonight it was as balanced

as usual with all the associated flavours coming through but with an additional "something" which shouldn't have been there. All the tasters agreed there was a sort of nutty metallic taste which came across as slightly foosty. Nothing to do with the condition of the beer being served in the pub, it was a slight quality problem with this normally excellent brew which resulted in it scoring an average of 5. Happily subsequent examples of Red Mac have shown it to be at its best, making this a rare one off.



Onto an Atlas beer with the 4.4% speciality **Wayfarer** which is brewed with a proportion of wheat malt. This is identified in the flavour along with the grapefruit fruit flavour from the hops, which also give a good long lasting bitter bite. Enjoyed by the tasters it scored an average of 7.



Last beer to be tasted was another speciality one from Atlas, the 4.5% **Golden Amber**. Similar to Wayfarer it was full of citrus hops and fruit but with only the faintest hint of malt. A strong bitter hit in the taste faded into the aftertaste. It too scored an average of 7 making **Orkney Corncrake** our beer of the evening.



Even though Norman was away we were very well looked after by Mandy who ensured we were able to taste all the beers as two were waiting to go on and provided us with sandwiches and crisps. Many thanks to the Cawdor Tavern for an enjoyable tasting evening.

GNH

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6th Ascot Racecourse Beer Festival

5th & 6th October 2012

It all started when horse racing mad Steve Crossland went to Ascot last year during their beer festival and volunteered to organise their 'guest bar' this year.



Steve, Eric and Gareth flying the flag.

There are 14 bars with over 200 real ales spread out along the covered main stand area during the two days of racing. 10 of these bars have beers from the local area, two had 30 ciders/perrys and two have beers from a guest area, last year it was Yorkshire. So, after liaising with their beer orderer Nick Boley and tweaking it a bit, we had a list of brews that they wanted and sent out an e-mail to the brewers asking if they wanted to take part. One came back and said no, a second did not answer, the rest said yes and a few beers were not available. So a revised list meant that our Highlands and Islands Bar had a total of 38 beers from



Cairngorm, Colonsay, Cromarty, Fyne, Highland, Inveralmond, Isle of Skye, Loch Ness, Orkney, Plockton, Speyside Craft Brewery (the renamed "Moray Brewery") and Valhalla. Quite a few of these beers were new to the Ascot area, so we were instantly busy when the festival opened. Loch Ness also did a festival special, a 6% strong bitter called 'Nesster Piggott'. Special thanks should go to all the breweries for taking part and especially Cairngorm and Inveralmond who were the drop off points for the beers which they palletted up for transportation south.

Unlike most CAMRA beer festivals, it is Ascot that does all the advertising (large adverts in What's

Brewing etc), beer payment, entrance tickets, vouchers (£1.50 per half pint), security, glass selling etc. The local CAMRA members organise the beers, do set up/take down and work on the bars – still a lot of work. Our first beer to finish by a short head was Jarl from Fyne, quickly followed by Happy Chappy from Cromarty.

There were two days of horse racing and as each race ran everyone went out onto the terraces to watch and then back to have more beer until the next race. All types of people attended, some dressed up in their best, some in fancy dress and getting the CAMRA word out to them was a good campaigning tool. Everyone seemed to be having a good time, especially when the sun came out on the Saturday. There were a selection of food and drinks kiosks plus entertainment from a bingo pub quiz, darts legend Eric Bristow leading a darts tournament, a DJ, a military brass band and a folk group.

The festival was on from 1100 to 1800 daily, so there was time in the evenings to have a look around the Ascot area. No pubs were in the Good



Beer Guide, so local knowledge was sought – well, all pubs seemed to have the same range of beers all from the Greene King stables, which was a disappointment, but we did find a very friendly pub near our accommodation, The Royal Oak and enjoyed their excellent lamb shank. All in all, a different kind of beer festival.

Grumpolympics

Like many of the grumpy fraternity I was bored with the Olympics before they started and spent some time considering how to avoid the media hype and traffic chaos. The remoter parts of Scotland seemed a good bet and I devised an itinerary covering places I have never been or not for many years. Here is how I got on:

Saturday 28th July I am decanted at Buchanan bus station at 0530. Glasgow is not awake this early and I have to wait until 0700 for breakfast in Wetherspoons. Afterwards I need to make some travel arrangements. English concessionary passes are not valid in Scotland but Railcard discounts apply and a 'Freedom of Scotland' ticket covers Calmac ferries and gives a discount on Northlink. A 3 day Citylink Explorer will fill some of the gaps. Train to Balloch for cruise on loch Lomond. On my return I enter the Tullie Inn for a Loch Fyne Maverick. The barman apologises for the plastic glass: "It's the Folk Festival" (are they expecting violence or can't they be bothered to wash glasses?) but not the £3.75. When a youth starts repeating "1-2" into a microphone I drink up and head for the station.

Glasgow has woken up by now and is its usual bustling self - so bustling that there is no chance of a pint and I settle for a coffee in the bus station before boarding my coach to Fort William where I am booked in to the Alexandra Hotel. This is a route I could never tire of: alongside Loch Lomond, through Glen Coe then along the shores of Loch Linnhe. I check in and go in search of refreshment. The Crofters offers a welcome to West Highland Way walkers (not this year but hopefully before arthritis and inertia set in) and Caledonian Golden Son. In the West End Hotel I find Cairngorm Nessie's Monster Mash but I can't help feeling that it is there as a token real ale. The best pint of the night is Orkney Dark Island in the Ben Nevis Bar but when severe ear damage becomes imminent I head for bed.

Sunday 29th July

Early service in St Andrew's then cruise on Loch

Linnhe before bus to Fort Augustus for cruise on Loch Ness. Only the Bothy seems to sell real Ale so I fit in a quick half of Dark Island before boarding the boat. On returning there is time for an Isle of Skye Blaven in the same pub. Back in Fort William the first call is the legendary Grog & Gruel for some average Glenfinnan Standard and excellent Fraoch Heather Ale. Cobb's Lounge in



the basement of the Nevisport mountaineering shop offers Orkney Red McGregor and the day ends with a Dark Island in the Alexandra. Although: I know it's a dark beer but does it have to come in a Guinness glass?

Monday 30th July

Day trip to Skye. This is another route where the scenery defies description and all I can say is: go see for yourself! For no obvious reason we leave 7 minutes late, further delay is caused when Laggan Bridge is opened then at Kyle of Localsh while the driver smokes a cigarette. Arriving in Portree my first stop is the Isles Inn where Black Sheep is on offer along with a house beer brewed by 'Tetleys'. I wonder why a house beer is brought from Northampton to sell for £3.50 when there are two breweries on the Island. The question is answered in MacNabs where Cuillin Black Face costs £3.55! The Bosville Hotel charges the same for Pinnacle but I have to wait for the barmaid to finish drying glasses before serving me. Coach back to Fort William for Atlas Range Latitude in the Grog & Gruel and 3 Sisters in Cobb's. One thought: on a journey of this length would coaches with toilets



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Grumpolympics

or a couple of comfort stops be a good idea?

Tuesday 31st July

63 today! It is not possible to climb Ben Nevis as originally planned (although conditions would be ideal) so I celebrate with a trip on the West Highland Line to Mallaig. Like Michael Portillo I am impressed by the ingenuity and tenacity of the



builders of the line - remember we only have one comparable journey in England. In Mallaig I seek out the MV Western Isles for a cruise on Loch Nevis. First stop is Inverie, home of the Old Forge, the remotest pub in Britain. The first beer is Harviestoun Bitter & Twisted (I suppose we can forgive £3.70 here) followed by Orkney Raven. Love the slogan, "Up a Mountain - Down a beer". The afternoon boat operates via Tarbet and the head of the loch before returning to Mallaig where there is time to sample the Skye Young Pretender in the Steam Inn and Red Cuillin in the Chlachain Inn. Back in Fort William Deuchars has appeared in the Ben Nevis Bar.

Wednesday 1st August

Farewell to dear (in both senses of the word!) Fort William. An excellent base for exploration, I only paid less than £3 in two pubs. I wonder what will happen when the new development incorporating a Wetherspoons opens. Coach to Oban which is again delayed while the driver smokes. When I drove National Express coaches crews were specifically forbidden to smoke on duty and I am surprised it is still allowed in Scotland. I approach Oban with some unease as when I was here a few years ago it was very difficult to find a decent pint.

That was March; this is August so things should be better shouldn't they? A poster outside the station advertises real ale in the Lorne Bar but the pump clip is turned round and after several more blanks I head for the ferry terminal. Those who believe that the battle is won and that there is no more need for CAMRA should come to Oban! The bar on the MV Clansman offers bottles of Oban Bay beers and a couple of these sustain me along the Sound of Mull, past Ardnamurchan Point (the western extremity of mainland Britain) and across The Minch to Castlebay. Neither hotel here sells real ale.

Thursday 2nd August

An anonymous minibus arrives at Castlebay PostOffice at 0850 and the driver confirms that it is indeed the first stage on today's journey. Half an hour later I am on the ferry across the Sound of Barra. The minibus waiting at Eriskay displays Berneray. This embarks on a long journey through South Uist, Benbecula and North Uist to connect with the ferry to Harris. A Hebridean Transport minibus waits at Leverburgh and, with a change at Tarbert, takes me through steadily more spectacular scenery to Stornoway. This town has been reported as something of a beer desert - I find the usual empty glass on the handpump in the Arts Centre - and I eventually end up in the Carlton where, although in no more than average condition, the Isle of Skye Blaven is most welcome.

Friday 3rd August

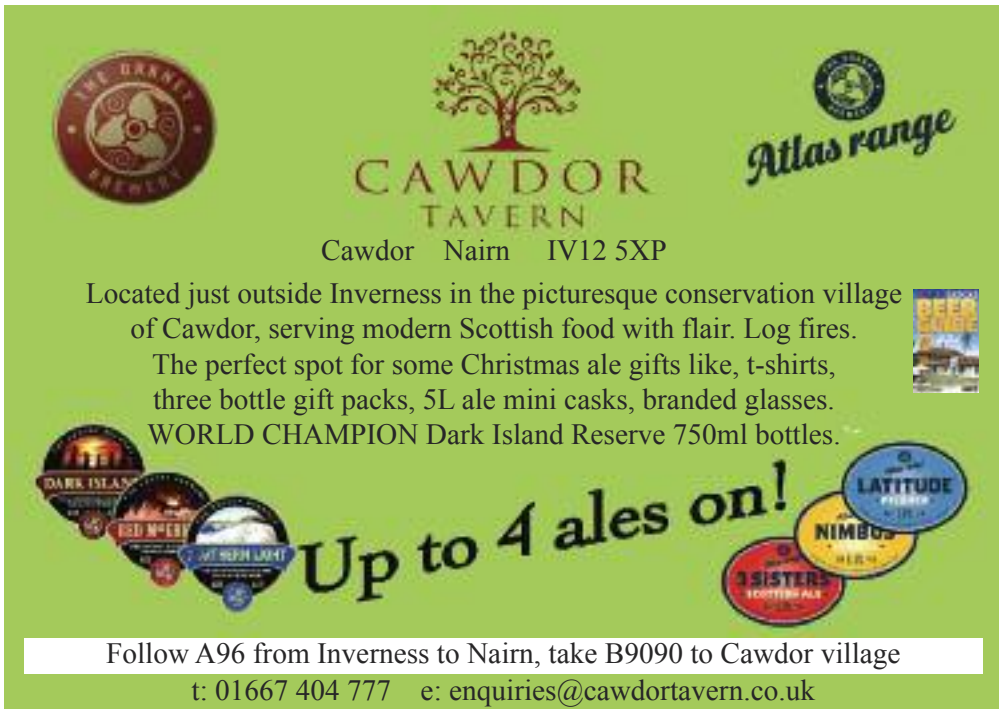
I know that ferries have to operate according to tides but 0600 is taking the Carlsberg! However I make it and so do many others as there are five coaches for Inverness waiting outside the Ullapool terminal. The bus to the North, towing a cycle trailer, arrives on time and we set off through more breathtaking scenery to Lochinver, Kylesku and Kinlochbervie to Keoldale where I alight and walk to the slipway for the ferry. I am the only passenger on the Cape Wrath minibus and Alan, the driver, points out items of interest on the way. Arrived at the Cape I walk around, take photos, send postcards and have a cup of tea before returning on the other minibus driven by Stuart whose

commentary is more concerned with stories of the route. When we get back to the Kyle of Durness the tide is out and there is a short delay before the ferry can cross to pick us up. Among the passengers are the drivers with fuel jerricans. Alan then gives me a lift into Durness. Lovely fellow! Dinner is taken in the Sango Sands Oasis, a modern bar with no real ale but Kozel Czech lager and bottled Orkney beers.

Saturday 4th August

Being wild and untamed myself (they say!) I feel an affinity with this landscape and, eager to see more of it I board Nick Hird's fortnightly Durness Bus to Inverness (it runs to Thurso alternate weeks). This operates via Laxford Bridge and Lairg through mountain and loch scenery which makes me wonder why 'Lord of the Rings' was shot in New Zealand then via Bonar Bridge and the A9. Rucksack to left luggage then: where's the nearest pint? Hootenanny -Black Isle Red Kite. £3.50 still

seems a bit steep for a LocAle. Train to Aviemore - a 3-car class 170 with two cars completely reserved leading to uncomfortable overcrowding in the third. Is this the way to encourage spontaneous holiday travel? Even more annoying is that many of the seats remain unoccupied. Surely it is not impossible to remove the tickets from unclaimed seats after departure. I sample the Cairngorm Stag and Gold in the Cairngorm Hotel then take a quick trip on the Strathspey Railway. Return to Inverness, check into King's Highway, consume haggis washed down with Strathaven Duchess Anne and set out to explore. I wander about a bit (why call a pub "The Keg"?) and end up in the Castle Tavern for a Highland Scapa Special. I then walk along Academy St to find a rather disturbing situation: the Phoenix exhibits a sign "Pub to Let" and its six handpumps stand naked and forlorn. Across the road the Blackfriars is for sale with "potential for Redevelopment or Refurbishment" (whoever buys it - please don't)



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Grumpolympics

but seems to be thriving with five real ales and three Scottish ciders. I try the Orkney Best but when a band start tuning up I head for bed.

Sunday 5th August

Early service in Cathedral, back to hotel for breakfast then train to Keith. Another 170 instead of the usual 158, confusion is caused over seat reservations due to the different layout. It takes 20 minutes to walk to Keith Town and I hope the Keith & Dufftown Railway are giving priority to the restoration of this link. Not one of the most scenic lines, a definite objective at each end and the use of first generation DMUs with good forward vision ensure a healthy level of patronage. Dufftown station is close to the Glenfiddich Distillery where Sarah the guide displays excellent knowledge of the process as she takes us through fermentation, distillation and maturation before dispensing samples of the 12, 15 and 18 year old products. Train back to Keith where Ross the guard assures me that an extension to the Scotrail station is definitely on the agenda. I fail to find any real ale in Keith so I return to Inverness and consume Caledonian Merman with my Wetherspoon sunday roast. Over an Inveralmond Duncan's IPA in the Blackfriars I am informed that the Phoenix is not selling real ale at present as 'nobody there knows how to look after it'. We look forward to its rebirth.

Monday 6th August

Open-top bus tour of Inverness then train to Aberdeen. The Criterion appears to be closed and the Tilted Wig has no real ale so I take refuge in the Archibald Simpson and plan my next move over a Cairngorm Trade Winds. This proves to be a harbour cruise although I find it difficult to relate the recorded commentary to what is visible. Back on dry land I enter the Moorings Bar and sample the Inveralmond Moorings Ale. The emphasis here seems to be on dim lights and loud music so I move on to Aitchie's Ale house for a Deuchars before boarding the Northlink Ferry. Uninspiring selection in both bars so I don't bother.

Tuesday 7th August

The bus stop for the north is across the road from

the ferry terminal and the bus takes me to Toft where I board the ferry to Ulsta on the island of Yell. There can be no doubt about the next bus as it is registered YE11Bus and travels through the island to connect with the next ferry at Gutcher. Finally another bus takes me through Unst to Haroldswick. After a look round the Heritage Centre aging shoulders start complaining so anything further north is consigned to the 'next time' section and I make for the Baltasound Hotel with a pitstop at 'Final Checkout' en route. Springer's Bar has its Valhalla clip reversed ("the brewery haven't sent any") so another evening on bottled beer.

Wednesday 8th August

Buses are few and far between on this island so the bus shelter is fully equipped with curtains, a sofa, books and Diamond Jubilee items! The morning bus crosses the ferry and the connection runs through to Lerwick. I alight at the ferry terminal to leave my rucksack and buy my ticket



then head into town. Buy street map, have breakfast, explore, send postcards then it is time for a pint. The only outlet is Cap'n Flint's which

has a sign advertising Valhalla Summer Dim and Orkney Dark Island. However the Summer Dim pipes are being cleaned and the other handpump is dispensing - wait for it - Sharp Doombar, about as far from a LocAle as it is possible to get! It has not travelled well and I am relieved to be offered Dark Island. The ferry is the same as its sister ship - come on Northlink, Calmac can do it!

Thursday 9th August

I have to wait until 0800 for the Archibald Simpson to open for breakfast then I decide on a trip on Deeside. There is an unacceptable queue at the left luggage office so I make straight for the bus station and catch a bus to Ballater where I visit the restored railway station and photograph an old bus awaiting restoration in the bus garage. On to



Braemar. Last time I was here it was raining as it only can in Scotland but this time I can wander round and buy a haggis to take home before entering the Fife Hotel. Real ale is no longer sold here so a couple of bottles of Red McGregor help to pass the time.

Back in Aberdeen I alight on Union St as no visit to the city is complete without a pint in the Grill (for the uninitiated it is a serious drinking house which did not admit ladies until 1975 or install female toilets until 1998). This time I

choose Bitter & Twisted then move on to Aitchie's where Dark Island has appeared. The Aberdeen Hero on the station boasts Cask Marque accreditation but only offers Old Speckled Hen. There is no

prospect of getting served so I catch a train to Glasgow for my coach home, well laden with memories, photographs and ideas for next time. It will be nice to get change out of £2 for a pint again though!

Bill Woolley

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stay the night and relax...

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The Glen - an Oasis within the 'Real Ale Desert of Badenoch

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Logos: CAMRA, EAT safe, Cask Marque

Small images: Beer Guide, Cask Marque logo, Beer mug, Desert landscape with pump, Running man cartoon.

REAL ALE PUBS LIST

These inns and Hotels are known to sell (or have recently sold) cask-conditioned ale. Please let us know about the quality of real ales on offer, particularly if you think Good Beer Guide inclusion is merited. We make no claims as to the quality of the beer and you should note that some of the pubs listed may only stock real ale on a seasonal (S) basis. (TP) - served by using top pressure.

We have taken the liberty of listing some pubs which fall within adjoining branch areas - Glasgow & West of Scotland (G&WS), Aberdeen & Northern Isles (A&NI) - but which are not very far from our 'border' and merit a visit.

INVERNESS & DISTRICT NORTH

The Anderson , Fortrose
Aultguish Inn
Benleva Hotel , Drumadrochit
Clachnaharry Inn , Inverness
Castle Hotel , Portmahomack
Conon Bridge Hotel
Cromarty Arms
Glen Affric Bar , Cannich
Glenmoriston Arms Hotel , Invermoriston
Inchbae Lodge Hotel , Garve
Loch Ness Inn , Lewiston
Munlochy Hotel (TP)
National Hotel , Dingwall?
Old North Inn , Inchmore
Palace Hotel , Inverness
Plough Inn , Rosemarkie
Poachers , Lewiston
Royal Hotel , Cromarty
Slaters Arms , Cannich
Station Hotel , Avoch
Steading Bar & Restaurant , Kilmartin (TP)
Struy Inn , Strathglass, near Cannich (TP)
Waterfront , Inverness

INVERNESS & DISTRICT SOUTH

Bandstand Bar , Braeval Hotel, Nairn
Blackfriars , Inverness
Bothy , Fort Augustus
The Caledonian , Inverness
Caledonian Hotel , Fort Augustus (S)
Castle Tavern , Inverness
Cawdor Tavern , Cawdor
Dores Inn

The Exchange , Inverness
Golf View Hotel , Nairn (TP)
Heathmount Hotel , Inverness
Hootananny , Inverness
Innes Bar , Inverness
Johnny Foxes , Inverness (TP)
Kings Highway , Inverness (Wetherspoons)
Lock Inn , Fort Augustus
Lovat Arms Hotel , Fort Augustus
Nico's Bar , Glen Mhor Hotel, Inverness
Number 27 , Inverness
Old Mill Inn , Brodie (A&NI)
Phoenix Bar , Inverness
Ramada Jarvis Hotel , Inverness (TP)
Seaforth Club , Nairn (Members only) (TP)
Snowgoose , Inverness
Whitebridge Hotel , Loch Ness South

FORT WILLIAM & LOCHABER

Alexandria Hotel , Fort William
Ben Nevis Bar , Fort William
Ben Nevis Hotel , Fort William
Ben Nevis Inn , Fort William
Clachaig Inn , Glencoe (G&WS)
Chlachain Inn , Mallaig
Cobbs at Nevisport , Fort William
Corran Ferry Hotel , Onich
Crofters Bar & Restaurant , Fort William
The Eagle , Laggan Locks (An inn on a barge on the Caledonian Canal)
Four Seasons , Onich
Glenfinnan House Hotel

Grog & Gruel , Fort William
Glen Nevis Restaurant & Bar
Glenuig Inn , Lochailort
Glenuig Village Hall
Ice Factor , Kinlochleven
Invergarry Hotel
Kings House Hotel , Glencoe (G&WS)
Laroch Bar , Ballachulish (G&WS)
Letterfinlay Lodge Hotel , Loch Lochy
Lochailort Inn (TP)
Loch Oich Restaurant/Bar , South Laggan
Loch Leven Hotel , Ballachulish (G&WS)
Loch Shiel Hotel , Acharacle
MacDonald Hotel , Kinlochleven
Mamore Lodge , Kinlochleven (S)
Moorings Hotel , Banavie
Old Forge , Inverie
Old Station Restaurant , Spean Bridge
Roy Bridge Hotel
Steam Inn , Mallaig
Stronlossit Hotel , Roy Bridge
Tomdoun Sporting Lodge
West End Hotel , Fort William
West Highland Hotel , Mallaig

AVIEMORE & CAIRNGORMS

Ben Mhor Hotel , Grantown-on-Spey
Boat Hotel , Boat of Garten
Craig Bar , Grantown-on-Spey
Cairngorm Hotel , Aviemore
Cairn Hotel , Carrbridge
Croft Inn , Glenlivet (A&NI)
Dalfaber Country Club , Aviemore

REAL ALE PUBS LIST

Duke of Gordon Hotel, Kingussie

Glen Avon Hotel, Tomintoul
(A&NI)

Glen Hotel, Newtonmore

Glenmore Lodge, Nr Aviemore

Highlander Inn, Craigellachie
(A&NI)

Kingussie Golf Club

Loch Insh Boathouse, Nr Aviemore

Lodge Hotel, Newtonmore (TP)

Mash Tun, Charlestown of Aberlour
(A&NI)

Muckrach Lodge Hotel, Dulnain
Bridge

Old Bridge Inn, Aviemore

Seaford Lodge Hotel, Granttown-
on-Spey

Silver Fjord Hotel, Kingussie

Suie Hotel, Kincaig

Typsy Laird, Kingussie

Winking Owl, Aviemore

WESTER ROSS

Applecross Inn

Arch Inn, Ullapool

Argyll Hotel, Ullapool

Aultbea Hotel

Badachro Inn (TP)

Ceilidh Place, Ullapool

Summer Isles Hotel, Achiltibuie (S)

Drumchork Hotel, Aultbea (S)

Dundonnell Hotel

Ferry Boat Inn, Ullapool

Glendale House, South Erradale (S)

Kinlochewe Hotel

Lochcarron Hotel, Lochcarron

Melvaig Inn, Gairloch

Millcroft Hotel, Gairloch

Morefield Motel, Ullapool

Myrtle Bank Hotel, Gairloch (S)

Old Inn, Gairloch

Seaforth Bar & Restaurant,

Ullapool

Steading Cafe & Restaurant,
Gairloch (S)

Strathcarron Hotel

Tigh-an-Eilean Hotel, Shieldaig

Torridon Inn

NORTH SKYE & HEBRIDES

An Lanntair, Stornoway

Bakur Bar, Uig

Bosville Hotel, Portree (S)

Borrodale Hotel, South Uist (S)

Carlton Tavern, Stornoway

Dark Island Hotel, Benbecula (S)

Edinbane Inn

Ferry Inn, Uig

Flodigarry Hotel

Harris Inn, Tarbert (S)

Isles Inn, Portree

Langass Lodge, North Uist (S)

Lochmaddy Hotel, North Uist



Scourie Hotel

Scourie, Sutherland, IV27 4SX

Tel: 01971 502396

FAX: 01971 502423

patrick@scourie-hotel.co.uk

www.scourie-hotel.co.uk

Cask Ales and Real Cider are served

An ideal base for game fishing, hill-walking, bird watching (Handa Island is nearby), or exploring the famed empty quarter of Western Sutherland, a lunar landscape of lochs and mountains.

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To connoisseurs of game fishing there is simply nothing to compare to the 25,000 acres of Loch, River and Hill Loch fishing held for the guests of Scourie Hotel. The Hotel has 36 fishing beats held exclusively for guests, plus 3 beats on Loch Stack and Loch More for sea trout and salmon. Additional salmon fishing is taken on local salmon rivers.

REAL ALE PUBS LIST

The Lodge at Edinbane

Mote Bar, Hotel Hebrides, Tarbert (S)

Old Schoolhouse Restaurant, Dunvegan (S)

Royal Hotel, Portree

Stein Inn, Waterness

Tigh Dearg Hotel, Lochmaddy, North Uist

Uig Hotel, Uig

Westford Inn, North Uist

SOUTH SKYE & LOCHALSH

Ardvasar Hotel

Clachan Bar, Dornie

Claymore, Broadford

Dunollie Hotel, Broadford

Hebridean Hotel, Broadford

Isle Ornsay Hotel

Jac-o-bite Restaurant, Kintail

Kinloch Castle, Rum

Kintail Lodge Hotel

Old Inn, Carbost

Plockton Hotel, Plockton

Plockton Inn, Plockton

Saucy Mary's Lodge, Kyleakin (S)

Sconser Lodge Hotel

Sligachan Hotel (S) *Closed October - March*

Taigh Ailean Hotel, Portnalong

CAITHNESS & SUTHERLAND

Achness Hotel, Rosehall, Lairg

Alexander Bain, Wick (Wetherspoons)

Altnacealgach Inn, nr. Ledmore Junction (S)

Bay Owl Restaurant, Dunbeath

Belgrave Hotel, Helmsdale

Ben Loyal Hotel, Tongue

The Caberfeidh, Lochinver

Castle Hotel, Dornoch

Castletown Hotel, Castletown

Central Hotel, Thurso

Commercial Hotel, Thurso

Crask Inn, by Lairg

Dunroamin Hotel, Bonar Bridge

Eagle Hotel, Dornoch

Golspie Inn (S)

Inchnadamph Hotel (S)

Invershin Hotel

Kylesku Hotel (S)

MacKay's Hotel, Wick

Norseman Hotel, Wick

Scourie Hotel, Scourie

Seaview Hotel, John O'Groats

Sutherland Inn, Brora

Tongue Hotel

Trentham Hotel (S)

Ulster Arms Hotel, Halkirk

The Weigh Inn, Scrabster, Thurso

WESTFORD INN

Claddach Kirkibost, North Uist HS6 5EP
Telephone 01876 580 653

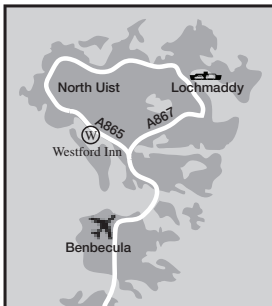
A small, traditional pub (established 1896), part of a historic listed eighteenth century house set in its own grounds on the west coast of North Uist in the Outer Hebrides. Opposite Kirkibost Island on the B865, between the Kirkibost Centre and Balranald bird reserve, 15 minutes drive from Lochmaddy ferry terminal.

Real ale from the award winning Isle of Skye Brewery. Range of bottled beers and malts.

Reduced trading hours during winter 2012-13. Please call for details.

Dog friendly.

Good Beer Guide Listed 2008-2013.



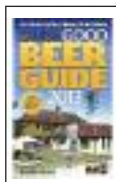
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Focus on...

Andrew and Gail Staddon



Andrew and Gail Staddon own the Kinlochewe Hotel in Wester Ross. Since taking over 6 years ago they have refurbished this old coaching Inn, together with its bunkhouse.

Q. Where are you originally from?

A. Andrew originally hails from Edinburgh and I come from the “deep South” near Brighton. We met when we sailed together as cadets in the Merchant Navy on oil tankers travelling all over the world. We have lived all our married life in Scotland.

Q. What are your backgrounds?

A. After qualifying as 2nd Mates (Navigating Officers) we got married but the company couldn't guarantee that we would sail together on the same ship so I joined a Scottish shipping company as

their Crew Personnel Superintendent until the family came along. At the age of 35 I decided to go to University (a bit of a late developer!) and obtained an Honours Degree in Psychology, going on to teach at Falkirk College and with the Open University.

Andrew continued working at sea transferring into the North Sea on Oil Rig Supply vessels; where he rose to the rank of Captain.

We had already planned to buy a hotel when Andrew was made redundant following the takeover of his Company. We looked around for several years before settling in Kinlochewe

Q. How/when were you introduced to real ale?

A. Andrew has always enjoyed trying out the huge variety of real ales on offer around the UK and it is

Focus on *Andrew and Gail Staddon*

so good to see its popularity increasing year on year. When we took over the hotel in 2006 the bar had a couple of real ale pumps but, as demand has increased, so we have increased the number of Real Ale/Real Cider pumps – we now have six.

Q. What are your favourite real ales/styles?

A. Andrew likes to try a wide variety of ales and is intrigued by the different English and Scottish styles. Although most of our Real Ales are from Scottish brewers, we often have an English guest ale on – we have managed to source ales from Cornwall, Yorkshire, Suffolk... etc.

I tend to prefer lighter, citrusy beers – but also love the real cider!

Q. What is the best part of your work?

A. Meeting guests and customers from such a wide spectrum and from all over the world. We have met some really lovely people and have made many friends since we came here.

Q. What is the worst part of your work?

A. Realising that you cannot please all of the people all of the time – although we do try!

Q. What hobbies/interests do you have?

A. Spare time is somewhat at a premium in the hotel industry! But Andrew enjoys photography and tries to get out with his camera whenever he can. I read a lot and enjoy crafts.

Q. What is your favourite book?

A. My all time favourite book – and one I have read time and again – is “To Kill a Mockingbird” By Harper Lee. It’s wonderful on so many levels. I wish they would release it as an ebook so I could have it on my Kindle.

Andrew’s favourite book is “The Good Beer Guide” – especially as we are in it this year!

Q. What is your favourite song/group?

A. Andrew enjoys music more than me (I prefer peace and quiet to read!) and has very eclectic tastes. He listens to such a wide variety of genres that it would be difficult to pick out a favourite – but Led Zeppelin and Pink Floyd would be amongst the contenders.

Q. What is your favourite film?

A. Andrew still enjoys “Top Gun” (he tells me that

it isn’t only because of Kelly McGillis!)
Guess what? I prefer to read!

Q. What is your favourite part of Scotland?

A. That is a difficult one to answer. We both love the variety of landscapes and culture that Scotland hosts. We both enjoy Edinburgh, although wish they would sort out the disruption of the tramworks! and, of course, we love the Highlands, but we also enjoy Morayshire where we have a holiday caravan to which we escape when we can.

Q. Why should we go to The Kinlochewe Hotel?

A. Wester Ross is a relatively unknown area of the Highlands and when visitors first experience the area and what it has to offer they are hooked. Kinlochewe Hotel is ideally situated to explore the area – whether you are walking, climbing, cycling, photographing or just enjoying the scenery. We aim to make your visit an enjoyable one and offer great local food, home-cooked of course, a wide selection of malt whiskies and wines and – of course – a selection of real ales.



the Old Bridge Inn - Aviemore

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The varied menus, featuring the very best of Highland produce from river, sea and land, are carefully designed to tempt every palate.

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Kinlochewe Hotel
Kinlochewe, by Achnasheen
Wester Ross IV22 2PA



Kinlochewe
HOTEL

tel: 01445 760253
www.kinlochewehotel.co.uk

NATIONAL FIRST FOR NEW ORKNEY VISITOR CENTRE

The Orkney Brewery's brand new visitor centre has been awarded five-star status by national tourism organisation VisitScotland, just weeks after opening to the public.

That makes it the only brewery visitor centre in Scotland to hold VisitScotland's top classification and one of only four five-star attractions in Orkney.

A central element of a major redevelopment programme at the Orkney Brewery's Quoyloo site, the new visitor centre has already proved a massive hit with local people and tourists alike, with thousands streaming through its doors since it opened in July.



Norman Sinclair being presented with a five-star VisitScotland plaque by VisitOrkney's Islands Manager, Barbara Foulkes (left). Also pictured (right) is Joyce Slater, manager of the Orkney Brewery visitor centre. Picture by Ken Amer, Orkney Photographic.

SAVE YOUR PINT IN YOUR PUB

Any CAMRA member should be aware of the national campaign that CAMRA has been running for over 8 months now – getting a parliamentary debate on the beer duty escalator which is making the viable running of pubs even more difficult.

Headline figures of “18 pubs per week closing” across Britain and the associated job losses add up to a continuing decline in the state of the country. A wander down Academy Street, here in Inverness, gives a tiny, depressing glimpse of the problem.

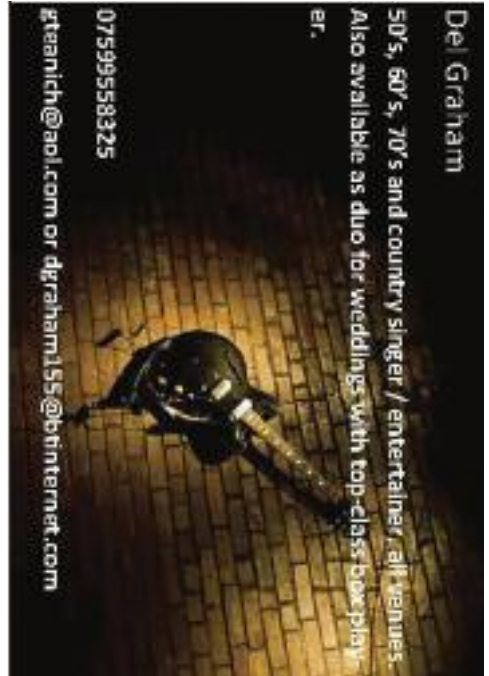
From the reports of the debate, it looks like only 58 MPs actually took part (I don't know yet if “our Danny” took part – probably not since he is so senior) but they unanimously voted for the escalator to be reviewed by the government and to report back to parliament before next years' budget.

Economic Secretary Sajid Javid's reply insisted the Treasury could not afford to ditch the duty. He claimed that if the escalator was axed, another £35 million in taxes would need to be found annually or spending cut.

Another pathetic excuse from this Government especially from "our Danny's" department. Thoughts come to mind, such as, how about getting the £35 million from the serial tax avoiders e.g. Starbucks and Vodaphone who do as much as they can to minimise paying UK tax. Just goes to show it doesn't matter who's in power they are still

out of touch with the real world and "the bloke on the street"

CAMRA though, are keeping up the momentum and are staging a mass lobby of parliament on 12th December. Hope springs eternal!



HIGHLANDS & ISLANDS BREWERS IN 2013

Isle of Skye Brewery Based at Uig by the Western Isles ferry terminal, brewing since December 1995. Ales include Black and Red Cuillin, Young Pretender, Hebridean Gold and Blaven. Seasonal, House and special event ales are also brewed. (See advert).



Valhalla Brewery Most northerly brewery in the UK, brewing on Unst since December 1997. Ales include White Wife and Auld Rock.

Black Isle Brewery Started brewing in December 1998 in converted farm buildings. Ales include Red Kite and Yellowhammer. Organic ales are a speciality. Much enlarged, new brewery opened 2011.

Isle of Arran Brewery Located close to Brodick Castle. Opened in late March 2000. Ales include Blonde, Dark and Sunset.

Fyne Ales Brewery Based in Argyll, at the head of Loch Fyne, brewing started on St Andrews Day 2001. Ales include Piper's Gold and Maverick. Revamping this year. (See advert).



Cairngorm Brewery Company Set up in late 2001 to market the beers of the Tomintoul and Aviemore breweries, which they own. Ales include Trade Winds, Wildcat, Stag, Highland IPA and Black Gold. Seasonal ales are regularly brewed. (See advert).

Hebridean Brewing Company Based at Stornoway on the Outer Hebrides. Brewing since January 2002. Beers include Islander Strong Ale, Berserker Export Pale Ale and Clansman Ale (first ale ever brewed in Stornoway).



River Leven Brewing Brewing in one of the old Alcan smelter buildings in Kinlochleven since 2011.

An Teallach Brewery Moved to family's croft, near Dundonnell, in March 2003. Ales include An Teallach Ale, Beinn Dearg Ale and Crofters Pale Ale.



Islay Ales Co Ltd Established in old tractor shed in Bridgend in March 2004. Ales include Finlaggan, Black Rock and Dun Hogs Head plus seasonal brews.

Cuillin Brewery The brewery was born on the 10th September 2004 in the old public bar of the Sligachan Hotel. Skye, Eagle and Pinnacle ales are brewed.



Highland Brewing Company Located in the old Swannay cheese factory at Birsay on Orkney mainland. Ales include Scapa Special, Orkney Blast and Dark Munro among others.

Isle of Mull Brewery From May 2005 in Tobermory. Sold plant to Oban Bay in 2009

Sinclair Breweries Ltd Formed in 2006 by local hotelier and restaurateur Norman Sinclair, who purchased the **Orkney** - which originally commenced brewing in 1988 at the old schoolhouse in Sandwick on Orkney mainland - and **Atlas Breweries**. Ales regularly brewed at enlarged Orkney Brewery include Three Sisters, Latitude and Nimbus from Atlas; plus Raven Ale, Dark Island, Red Macgregor and Skull Splitter from Orkney. (See advert).



Glenfinnan Brewery Brewing on a 4bbl plant since October 2006. Regular brews are Glenfinnan Gold, The Standard Ale and Glenfinnan Dark (for the Winter).

Colonsay Brewery First brews in March 2007. IPA, 80/- and Lager (no real ales).

Plockton Brewery The first brew was produced on 1st April 2007. Craggs Ale and Starboard IPA may usually be found in Plockton and at other local outlets.



Oban Bay Brewery Brewing since mid 2009. Five barrel brewery attached to Cuan Mor.

Old Inn (Gairloch) Brewery 150 litre micro-brewery. First brews in February 2010. (See advert).



Loch Ness Brewery First brews in September 2011. RedNess, HoppyNess, Dark... etc. (See advert).

Cromarty Brewery First brews in December 2011. Happy Chappy, Brewed Awakening, Red Rocker.

Not all of the breweries listed are in our branch area: the Highland Brewing Co. Valhalla and Orkney are in the Aberdeen, Grampian & Northern Isles area; the Arran Brewery falls in the Ayrshire and Galloway area; while Fyne, Islay, Mull, Colonsay, River Leven and Oban Bay Breweries are covered by Glasgow and West Scotland. Similarly for Highlands & Islands pubs listed in the GBG, pubs in Orkney and Shetland are submitted by the Aberdeen, Grampian & Northern Isles Branch, and the Clachaig Inn somehow falls within the Glasgow & West Scotland Branch area!



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Scapa Flowed

An Orkney Report from Del, Neil, Janet and Ray

On 12th October the four of us set out for a long weekend in Orkney. After a stop for hot beverages in Helmsdale, we took the opportunity to sample the ales in Thurso. The Commercial Hotel had none on offer that day but The Central Hotel had Dizzy Blonde and Speckled Hen: both very good.

We boarded the Hamnavoe ferry at Scrabster and were somewhat taken aback to find Dark Island being served from keg in the very comfortable Brinkies Bar. This tasted really good and made the crossing pass in no time. There were fantastic views of the Old Man of Hoy before we arrived



into Stromness.

Our hotel, the Ferry Inn, is situated on the harbour front with bus services close by. It is difficult not to overstate what an excellent base this proved



to be: all of the amenities are first rate and are highly recommended. We were warmly welcomed by Gareth Creighton (owner) and Alan Brown (manager). The bar, which opens shortly after breakfast at 9.30, is a real gem and has five hand pumps, with plans for two more. On offer were Orkney Best, Orkney IPA, St Magnus, Dark Island and Wayfarer: all were top notch. The selection

from the counter was augmented by a temporary bar serving another eleven ales from "PINS". These were: Island Hopping *, Red Macgregor*, Light Munro*, Dark Munro, Dragonhead, Scapa Special*, Pale Ale*, Skull Splitter, Nimbus, Orkney Blast*, Raven*, (ales marked * were especially good). These were sold at special prices and created a festive atmosphere.

All of the ales sampled in Orkney were, naturally enough, from the Highland and Orkney Breweries and there seemed little point in scoring them individually as they were clearly all kept in first class condition.



We did find time to venture further afield in Stromness. The Stromness Hotel had Scapa Special, Orkney IPA and The Duke (not tried). Close by, at The Royal Hotel, Del's enquiry regarding "real ales" received the response that, whilst they did serve sea food, "eels" real or otherwise, were not on the menu. Back at the Ferry Inn, we sampled the fare served during the curry night, but failed to last the course for the comedian who was to appear later on.

After a hearty breakfast on day two any cobwebs were well and truly blown away by an invigorating hike down the main street. The experience can only be likened to walking head on into a water cannon.

Planned visits to The Orkney Brewery at Quoy-loo and then Kirkwall had to be accomplished by a round trip in a taxi. It was a long haul, but the driver was not short on chatter. Neil (where's me jammies), a mechanic of some note, confided to

Scapa Flowed

the rest of us that the rear wheel bearing in the taxi had gone. We had a quick view of Skarra Brae before arriving at the Brewery where we were met by Norman Sinclair (owner). The building was originally a school and this theme is imaginatively used at the Visitor Centre, which well deserves its five star rating. It is a "must" for any CAMRA member if you are in Orkney. Unfortunately, with the meter running on our taxi, we had to cut short our visit.

In Kirkwall, The Bothy Bar at The Albert Hotel was serving Island Hopping and Dark Island in the pleasant old style bar. The Shore had a modern interior and served a good Scapa Special. We were somewhat taken aback, however, when a Skittles milkshake was prepared behind the bar. Declining the offer of a taste of this delicacy, we moved to the nearby Helgi's Bar, which had Scapa Special, St Magnus and later The Duke on tap. This bar, which boasted a real coal fire, was again modern in style, and we had an enjoyable session.

It was now time for some shopping, and our first taste of some culture with a visit to St Magnus Cathedral. A New Zealand choir provided a moving variety of songs which utilised the amazing acoustics of the place. After coffee and free sandwiches at the Town House Café, we returned to Helgi's Bar. Then it was a taxi back to the Ferry Inn for dinner, more ale and music from a blues band.

More culture on day three with a visit to the site of the Stones of Stenness, the Ring of Brodgar and the amazing Maeshowe chambered tomb. Inside this 5,000 year old structure there are runic inscriptions left by later rampaging invaders from across the North Sea. This was proved to us beyond any doubt as one of the inscriptions reads "Helga loves Arnie". Making the bus back with only seconds to spare (there was a two hour wait if we had missed it), the rest of the day was spent in The Ferry Inn (where else ?) and incorporated a marathon pool competition.

It was the opinion of all of us that Orkney has a special magic all of its own and provided an unforgettable experience. A big Thank You to all the staff at our hotel and to Rob Hill and Norman Sinclair of Highland and Orkney Breweries. *RB*

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Karen Olan of Dr Who Forum talking to Grazia magazine



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BRANCH DIARY (MEETINGS START AT 7.30PM)

All these events are open to members and any non-member, including committee meetings. Not all events listed are necessarily organised by CAMRA. This diary is as much about the local real ale scene as about CAMRA branch activities.

DECEMBER

Tuesday 18th

7pm Inverness Social Walkabout – meet at Blackfriars

JANUARY

Tuesday 8th

Committee - No 27, Castle Street

FEBRUARY

Tuesday 12th

Committee – The Waterfront, Huntly Street

Tuesday 26th

Tasting Evening – Blackfriars, Academy Street

** Not all events listed are necessarily organised by CAMRA.*

MARCH

Tuesday 12th

Committee – Benleva Hotel, Drumnadrochit

29th March to 7th April – Spring Bandstand Beer Festival* Bandstand Bar, Braeval Hotel, Nairn

Saturday 30th

Branch Social, Bandstand Beer Festival

APRIL

Tuesday 9th

Branch members meeting – The Dores Inn, Dores

Saturday 13th

Minibus trip, Strathspey and East of Inverness



CAMRA needs YOU! Protect your pleasure! Become actively involved with your local branch

We need your help! Not a massive time commitment, just an hour or two will help our small committee in supporting the local publicans and brewers who together provide us with such a wonderful range of ales to enjoy.

Please see our regularly updated on-line diary at highlandcamra.org.uk

We now have a new web site!! After about 18 months of construction, our new Highlands & Islands web site is online! It features an elegant, photo-led design: **interactive pub map - archive of awards - link to current CAMRA campaigns - new Twitter feed - new blog. POTY and BOTY voting along with SUBMIT YOUR BEER SCORES will be added soon!**

highlandcamra.org



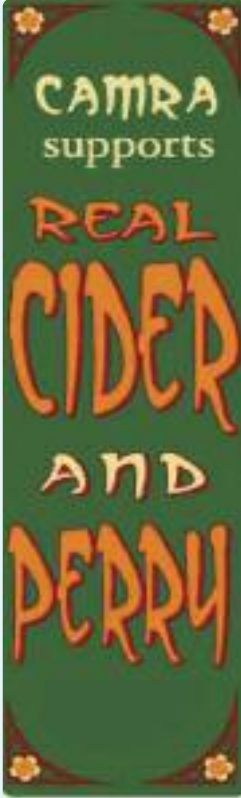
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chair@highlandcamra.org.uk

Gordon Streets Tel: 01463 715637
news@highlandcamra.org.uk

TRADITIONAL CIDER MATTERS



Real Cider and/or **Real Perry** is sold (or has recently been sold) in the following inns and hotels. (Please note that some may be seasonal outlets). Please let us know if you find additional outlets selling real cider or perry.

The Anderson, Fortrose - Thatchers Heritage Cider

Eagle - Inn on the Loch, Laggan Locks - Thatchers Original Cider

Stronlossit Inn, Roy Bridge - Thatchers Cheddar Valley Cider

Strathcarron Hotel - Thatchers Cider (rotated with cask ales)

Glen Hotel, Newtonmore - Westons Old Rosie or 1st Quality Cider

Benleva Hotel, Drumnadrochit - Westons 1st Quality Cider and 1 other all year round, plus good selection of real ciders for September festival

Scourie Hotel - Two Westons Ciders on handpump

King's Highway, Inverness - Westons Old Rosie & Organic Draught Vintage Cider; Thatchers Heritage & Dry Cider

Alexander Bain, Wick - Westons Old Rosie & Organic Draught Vintage Cider; Thatchers Heritage & Dry Cider

Badachro Inn - Westons Cider is served here

Argyll Hotel, Ullapool - Several Westons ciders from the box

Altnacealgach Inn, nr Ledmore Junction - Mike & Kate are giving some thought to serving a real cider. (This outlet is For Sale so best to check. Tel: 01854 666260)

Torridon Inn - Westons Ciders are served in the bar.

Kinlochewe Hotel, at the foot of Beinn Eighe, is serving Westons

1st Quality Draft Cider

Clachaig Inn, Glencoe - An initial trial (at Mayfest 2010) but (with your support) continuing through the Winter, Westons cider on hand pump. Having had difficulties getting hold of the Thatchers we've had over the last few years we've been looking for a change. (From Website)

Bandstand Bar, Nairn - Westons ciders on handpump, plus wider selections at their Festivals.

Grog & Gruel, Fort William - has been selling Thatchers Heritage cask cider since 1st April 2010. On tap for as long as sales make it viable - could be all year round but unfortunately sales usually drop dramatically during winter months.

Glen Affric Bar, Cannich - serving Westons Cider after requests from hill-walking customers.

CAMRA has now recognised ThistlyCross ciders from Dunbar as meeting the criteria to be classed as real ciders. Several bars in our area serve ThistlyCross.



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DRINK IN A REAL ALE PUB? - RATE THE BEER

Highlands & Western Isles CAMRA needs your help in surveying the pubs in our massive Branch area. To tell us which pubs are worth considering for the Good Beer Guide, use CAMRA's 6-point NBSS (National Beer Scoring Scheme) to record Beer Quality. The info you give us helps us judge which outlets could go in to The Good Beer Guide, which outlets merit an award of area POTY and branch POTY and which of our local beers merits the award of BOTY. It's easy!

What do the scores mean?

0 - Undrinkable. No cask ale available or so poor you have to take it back or can't finish it.

1 - Poor. Beer that is anything from barely drinkable to drinkable with considerable resentment.

2 - Average. Competently kept, drinkable pint but doesn't inspire in any way, not worth moving to another pub but you drink the beer without really noticing.

3 - Good. Good beer in good form. You may cancel plans to move to the next pub. You want to stay for another pint and may seek out the beer again.

4 - Very Good. Excellent beer in excellent condition.

5 - Excellent. Probably the best you are ever likely to find. A seasoned drinker will award this score very rarely.

Simply email us which bar, the beer(s) and your scores plus any real ale and real cider news to our Branch Contacts (See Diary page). CAMRA members can, if they wish, use the website: www.beerscoring.org.uk Log in using your normal CAMRA login details and fill in the boxes on the form. You can do this for any pub in the country. Thanks.



What's Your's Then? is a quarterly newsletter produced by the Highlands and Western Isles Branch of the Campaign for Real Ale. The views and opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the editor, CAMRA, or its branches.



*We hope you have enjoyed reading our Autumn newsletter. Unless you intend to keep it for some reason, please **do not** throw it away. Why not pass it on to a friend, or just leave it in a pub somewhere for others to read. Newsletters are often found many miles from their source! The next edition will be out in **April**.*

Thanks to our advertisers for making publication of this newsletter possible and our wonderfully helpful, local breweries that help to distribute it.

Vote for your Branch's Beer of the Year (BOTY)

Now is the time for you to vote for the beer brewed in our Branch area that **you** think has been *the best* and (*importantly*) most consistent during the past year. Last year's winner was Cairngorm Tradewinds. This is open to all our 220 or so Branch members and please only select from the following breweries which are in our branch area:

An Teallach, Black Isle, Cairngorm, Cromarty, Cuillin, Glenfinnan, Hebridean, Isle of Skye, Loch Ness, Old Inn, Gairloch (Brewhouse), Plockton.

Please email/phone/or send a letter including your vote, name and membership number to any of our Branch Contacts on **page 39** by 31st January 2013. Your favourite Scottish-wide beers can be voted for on the website www.cbobvoting.org.uk

Pubs of the Year 2013 (POTY)

This year there is a change as the Committee are going to decide which pubs get the nod in

each of the 8 areas in our branch. This will be based on all the beer/pub reports received during the last year. It was felt that the reports we receive give a good feel on the quality of beers served in our pubs around our area in addition to what we encounter on our trips and meetings. The Committee will then decide which of the area winners will go forward to represent our Branch in the Scottish competition.

The committee have been very disappointed with the lack of votes from members over the last few years with only 15% of members outside of the committee voting, mainly the same ones.

Please continue to submit beer scores from pubs all over our region *or better still become directly involved in the POTY process and join our Committee.*

Our 2012 winner, The Benleiva Hotel in Drumadrochit, went through the first round into the final along with The Fox and Hounds in Houston and the eventual winner The Woolpack Inn in Tillicoultry.



Just a few reasons to visit the Benleiva Hotel by Loch Ness

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