

What's Yours Then?

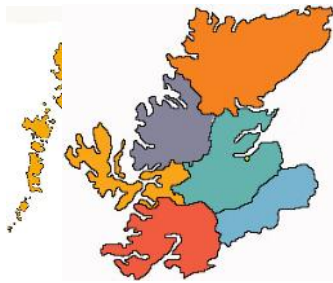
Inverness & Highland Branch
Free Newsletter



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**Inverness & Highland
Pubs-of-the-Year
Winners**



Spring 2005



**CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE**

Welcome to the Spring edition of our branch newsletter.

In this edition -

- Pubs-of-the-Year Winners
- We launch our website
- Focus on Bill Tring
- Your letters and pub reports
- 2005 Branch Diary
- Pub & Brewery News
- Festival News
- Updated real ale pubs list

Letters, views & opinions, articles, etc., are all welcome. Let us know what is happening at your local, or tell us about pubs you have visited.

The Summer Newsletter **deadline** will be 1st June 2005, with publication in time for the Summer visitor.

If you would like to advertise in this newsletter, please contact one of the branch officers (see page 6).

Full Page Advert.....£55.00
Half Page Advert.....£32.00
Quarter Page Advert.....£17.00

We prefer to receive artwork as a PDF or JPEG file, or Word document. We can help in preparing your advert if you wish.

2000+ copies are distributed to Branch members, to Highland & Island brewers, to Good Beer Guide listed and Real Ale pubs; plus extra copies to advertisers.

Hotelier Peter Steinle

We were saddened to hear of the death of Peter Steinle, owner of the Cairngorm Hotel in Aviemore. Peter enhanced the hotel as a popular hostelry for locals and visitors alike. Peter was proud of the reputation gained for his real ale, usually from the local Cairngorm Brewery, and he was delighted to be included in the CAMRA's 2005 Good Beer Guide. His management team is still in place, and we are sure will continue to run the hotel in Peter's friendly and efficient manner.

Publican Peter Todd

It is with sadness that the Branch noted the death of Peter Todd, who passed away last year in Edinburgh. Older Branch members will remember him as the manager of Edinburgh's Beehive Inn in the early eighties. This Grassmarket hostelry was a popular destination for the real ale enthusiast from the north. In those days of little real ale of quality available north of Edinburgh, his pub was truly an oasis, and run by a true real ale enthusiast. Peter was never happier than when he was showing off his cellar to anyone showing an interest in real ale. He went on to build up the reputation of the Starbank Inn before branching out to manage the 2Bs, and lastly Todd's Tap in Leith. Peter will certainly be remembered with great affection by his friends in Edinburgh and the Highlands.

What's Yours Then is a quarterly newsletter produced by the Inverness & Highland Branch of the Campaign for Real Ale. The views and opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the editor, CAMRA, nor its Branches.

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Seasonal Cask Beers

Highland IPA	3.6%
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<i>(Award winning Bavarian style Wheat Beer)</i>	
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www.cairngormbrewery.com

The A82 in Bleak Midwinter

We found few people out and about on the A82, and not many drinking on an early Thursday evening in February. We had planned to visit only a few of the many outlets along this route (see newsletter or website for full list), but how much real ale would be available?

Starting in Kinlochleven, at the southernmost boundary of our branch area, we made a first stop at the Atlas Brewery (yes I know, not strictly speaking on the A82, but not to be missed). Luke Kendall, the new brewer, showed us around and gave samples of Latitude, Nimbus, and Three Sisters - all in excellent condition. The brewery is getting a lot of visitors, especially now that the new Ice Factor has opened next door. Brewery tours are regularly available, please phone ahead to book. Over the river to the Tailrace Inn, where we enjoyed an excellent pint of Latitude. You are assured of a friendly welcome at the Tailrace and the good food can always be washed down with an Atlas beer (choice of two in summer).

On to the A82 now, and along to Onich where the Nether Lochaber Hotel, by the Corran ferry, has a small bar tucked away at the rear. Bass has been served here for many years, and the recently added Isle of Skye Brewery Black Cuillin was in very good form. The Four Seasons at the Inchree Centre was our next stop, where they sell an Atlas and an Isle of Skye beer, usually Latitude and Red Cuillin. Due to not having many customers during the weekdays in winter months, they only have real ale on and serve food on Friday and Saturday nights, or when expecting

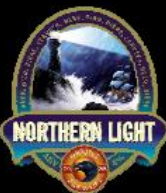
large numbers. Well worth a visit, and lots of accommodation on the doorstep. Fort William next and to the Grog & Gruel where Atlas Latitude was excellent and Cairngorm Wildcat was very good; they also had Adnams Broadside. The music was a little loud for our taste, but very good on the real ale front and they have a restaurant upstairs.

The Factors Inn at Torlundy was closed and so we carried on to Fort Augustus. We had heard good reports from the Bothy Bar, for both the beers and food. They normally serve two Isle of Skye Brewery beers, but unfortunately they had run out of real ale and the next cask was not ready yet. Just up from the Bothy is the Loch Inn, which usually has one real ale in summer - being winter, no real ale available today. Same story at the Glenmoriston Arms, but from Easter they will have Isle of Skye beers, both on handpump in the Tavern bar and one from the wood in either Tavern or hotel bar.

We ended our journey in Drumnadrochit, safe in the knowledge that real ale would be guaranteed at the Benleiva Hotel. We had a very good Brewhouse Special from the An Teallach Brewery, followed by an excellent Highlander from the Fyne Ales Brewery. Isle of Skye Red Cuillin was also on tap, but not tried on this occasion.

So even in Winter there is still a good selection of real ales to be had, but most outlets understand that if you have fewer customers there is little point in trying to sell the same amount of real ale in winter as in summer. Best to ensure good quality by only keeping on as much real ale as there are customers to drink it. E.M.

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2005 Branch Diary (Meetings start at 7.30 pm)

5 th Apr	Committee Meeting	Invernairne Hotel, Nairn
12 th Apr	Branch Meeting	The Anderson, Fortrose
17 th April	Lochcarron/Plockton Social/Outing	
3 rd May	Committee Meeting	Bothy, Fort Augustus
7 th June	Committee Meeting	Heatherbrae, Nethybridge
11 th June	Far North  Social/Outing	
5 th July	Committee Meeting	Inchbae Hotel, near Garve
12 th July	Branch Meeting	Chieftain Hotel, Inverness
2 nd August	Committee Meeting	Royal Hotel, Cromarty
13 th August	Marymas Real Ale Bar	Eden Court, Inverness
4 th Sept		Isle of Skye Social/Outing - Branch Meeting at Isle of Skye Brewery
6 th Sept	Committee Meeting	Cairngorm Hotel, Aviemore
16 th - 24 th Sept	4 th Loch Ness Beer Festival	Benleva Hotel
18 th Sept from 13:00	Beer Festival Social	Benleva Hotel
* End of Sept	2 nd Clachnaharry Beer Festival	Clachnaharry Inn
* 30 th Sept from 15:00	Beer Festival Social	Clachnaharry Inn
4 th Oct	Committee Meeting	Snowgoose
3 rd - 5 th Nov	Aberdeen Beer Festival	
8 th Nov	Annual General Meeting	Clachnaharry Inn
11 th - 13 th Nov	1 st Aviemore Feis	Old Bridge Inn
6 th Dec	Committee Meeting	Phoenix
20 th Dec	Inverness Walkabout & Social	(Meet at Blackfriars at 19:00)

Contact Details

See on-line diary at www.highlandcamra.org.uk



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chair@highlandcamra.org.uk

Mike Whittall - 01463 831259
news@highlandcamra.org.uk

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Autumn Visit

I was in your area in the autumn, and thanks to your prompt I realise to my horror that I didn't feed back what I found. I apologise for the omission. So for what it's worth, here is a quick summary:

Inverness - Clachnaharry: Cairngorm Trade Winds 4.

Wick - Alexander Bain: Caley Deuchars IPA 3. Not a bad example of a JDW pub, and the best bet in Wick for a real ale (although they have only 3 on mostly).

Wick - Ebenezer's Bar, Mackay's Hotel: No real ale (though they have one handpump often in operation but whether it has something on, and whether it is drinkable, are hit-and-miss). I've had good beer there (from Badger, unbelievably) and lousy too. Always worth a look though, as an alternative outlet in the town.

Thurso - Central Hotel - Caley Deuchars IPA 2. I thought this hadn't been pulled through the line from the night before (it was mid-day). Bit disappointing, not the first time I've had less than perfect ale here.

John O'Groats - Groat Inn: No real ale (are we surprised?)

Stromness - Ferry Inn: Red McGregor 3, Dark Island 4. This was repeated on several occasions. They seem good on Dark Island. Possible GBG candidate here.

Stromness - Stromness Hotel: Northern Light 4 then again 3, Red McGregor 3. I did catch them with no real ale though - they had run out before the next cask was ready. Not bad, but I preferred the Ferry Inn (which was open all day as well).

Kirkwall - Albert Hotel: Red McGregor 3.

Melvich - Melvich Hotel: Far North Fast Reactor 1; floaters in it, no condition to speak of, but I drank it as it wasn't 'off' in the vinegary sense and I was desperate. But then, next day: Split Stone 4. Superb! Not a GBG bar, though!

Incidentally, I got the sparkler taken off because one of the Northern Lights was impossible to pour without spillage, being very lively. In the ensuing discussion with the barman (Aussie) it transpired that they weren't fussed about wastage because all the spilled beer went straight back down the pipe into the cask again! I thought this return system was illegal now, but maybe I'm wrong about that. Needs watching, I would have thought.

Hope this is of use. Cheers, Rod (Chairman, CAMRA Kernow)

Stromness is on Orkney, and the Aberdeen & Northern Isles Branch of CAMRA have followed up this report of beer being returned to the cask. We can confirm that the pipe in question drains into the sink, and not the cask. It seems that the Aussie bar-



**OPEN
ALL
YEAR**

Benleeva Hotel

Drumnadrochit, Loch Ness

www.lochnesshotel.com

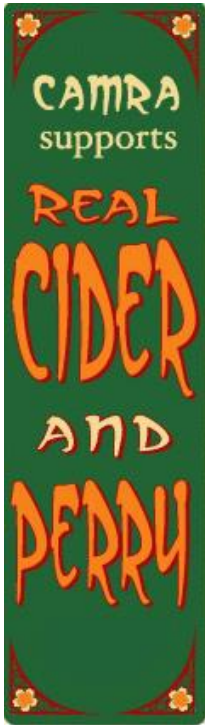
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**CAMRA Highland Pub of the Year
2003 & 2005**

4th Loch Ness Beer Festival

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Dear Ed, I have just received an e-mail from Steve Plumridge (Pints West editor) with an attachment of your *What's Yours Then?* newsletter. I felt I must e-mail you to let you know that I didn't need to open the attachment as I already have in my possession a copy of the self same edition, would you believe?

A friend of mine went home to Scotland for Christmas and, knowing I write for Pints West, picked me up a copy of your newsletter just out of interest. On her way home on the train she was amazed to find the cider article, and so it was a double delight for me to receive!

I'm so glad that your reporters had such a good time in the West Country, and I was especially pleased to see that a trip to Newton Abbot's Ye Olde Cider Bar was included... One of mine and my sisters all time favourite places (no surprises there I guess!)... It would have been a shame to come all that way and miss such a gem.

If ever anyone is thinking of heading this way again and wants some recommendations we'd be more than happy to tell you of our top spots. All the best,

Freya McLuckie (1 half of Pints West Cider Sisters).

Cider Treat for Sutherland

Patrick Price, landlord of the GBG-listed **Scourie Hotel** on the west coast of Sutherland, is hoping to introduce real cider to his portfolio of independent beer brews this summer. At present he sells Scrumpy Jack but says that a number of his many visitors from the south west of England have expressed the wish that he sold 'the real thing'. Cider lovers from Sutherland: you could be in for a treat!

This is very encouraging. The Benleiva Hotel, the Clachnaharry Inn, and the Old Bridge Inn also hope to offer cider at their Autumn festivals. Supply is the problem, but with increasing demand....

Real Ale in the Classroom

I - Norman Sinclair, owner of the popular Cawdor Tavern and the Classroom (the 20s style art deco Bistro Bar in Nairn), is hoping to introduce Real Ale to the Classroom in time for the tourist season at Easter. Norman feels that the real ale drinkers are not adequately provided for in Nairn and that this venture will fill a gap in the market.

II - Not in the classroom exactly, but in the training restaurant! Inverness College have been running a series of theme lunches, and diners were able to sample a selection of Cairngorm Brewery ales with their Scottish theme menu.

www.highlandcamra.org.uk - Let us know what you think

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Investor in People

Focus on Chairman Bill

Bill Tring has been Chairman of the Inverness & Highland Branch of CAMRA since it was formed in 1993. Before 1993 this area was part of the Aberdeen Branch. Bill is retired and lives in Inverness with his wife Barbara.

Q: How long have you been a CAMRA member and why did you join?

A: I joined CAMRA in 1975 while living in Worcester, having read about the Campaign in the Rugby Club newsletter. Real ale was the only choice when I started drinking and I liked it. I was there from the start of the 'keg revolution'. It was obvious just what the plan of the big brewers was: to force us all to drink this 'easy to look after and serve' gassy beer. I didn't like it. It was fizzy and expensive. I could see how persuasive the marketing was for the likes of Watney's Red Barrel and Worthington E, etc: and that the drinker would be paying for it. The point at which I made up my mind to put my money where my mouth is and join CAMRA was after a Rugby tour to Ireland. While there I tasted delicious real Guinness (only ever available in Ireland), which is sadly no longer available. Possibly one of the best real ales to have been killed off.

Q: Where are you from, and what made you move to this area?

A: I was born in Manchester and moved here in 1979 to escape the busy overpopulated South East of England where I was living at the time.

Q: How has real ale availability changed since you have been in this area?

A: Beyond all recognition. In 1979 the only places selling real ale in Inverness (and possibly the north of Scotland) were the Innes Bar and the Phoenix; both using the tall Scottish Font which, sadly, I did not recognise. I broke my vow and started drinking fizz, while desperately looking forward to trips to Edinburgh where there were still a number of enlightened establishments selling real ale: the most memorable of which was the Beehive in the Grass Market. I used to say for a long time after moving here that the main, and possibly the only thing I missed about England was the beer.

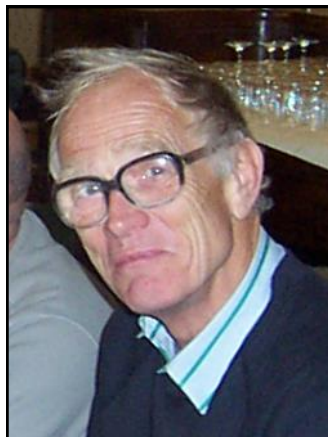
Q: What are you favourite beers/beer styles?

A: I do not have any. They all have there distinctive tastes and have their own time and place to enjoy them: a crisp light bitter on a hot summer day, (two or more pints after a good session on the hill or the bike) a good stout with a meat pie and mash supper, a couple of halves of barley wine on a cold winter evening as a relaxant. I love them all. Some of the more memorable beers I have drunk are, Tetleys Bitter (the original, and the first beer I ever tasted), Brakspears Bitter, Symonds Bitter, Robinsons Old Tom and of course real Guinness. And I think I should also add Cairngorms latest success, Trade Winds to this list.

Q: What do you look for in a good pub?

A: Real ale of course: but then way above everything else: a friendly, chatty, knowl-

edgeable landlord and/or landlady with character; the one who greets you when you come in and leave, gives eye contact, talks to you, especially if you are the only one in the pub, (I can't believe the number of pubs that miss out on this one), and spends some time with his or her customers on the other side of the bar..



Q: Being retired, what are your hobbies/interests?

A: I have always partaken in an active sport: football then rugby, which I also refereed, and not long ago I finally completed all the Munros. At the moment I am very keen on single-track mountain biking; although I still enjoy the occasional hill walk and of course skiing, downhill and cross country.

Q: Are you For or Against no smoking in pubs, and why?

A: For; and I think that the trade has dragged its feet on this one, leaving little room for sympathy at the impending legislation. They must have recognised the groundswell of opinion against smoking and that legislation could be on the way; yet most have done little to alleviate the threat by providing a smoke free environment for their customers. For instance how many pubs have a reasonable ventilation system in them? Not many. I rate highly a busy pub that I can enter on a cold winter day and not have my spectacles mist up. Also why have more not taken the simple expedient of having a 'no smoking' policy at the bar?

Q: You run the annual Marymas bar; why?

A: It is very satisfying and good fun. The grand plan when the Branch first started was to have a good sized Beer Festival somewhere in Inverness. Sadly we have never had the manpower available to achieve this. So the 2 kil mini festival, run in conjunction with Crossroads Care, satisfies my desire to introduce the people of Inverness to the delights of Real Ale served in the best possible condition.

Q: Have you ever wanted to run a brewery or pub?

A: No. Far too difficult and time consuming; and I admire people who do; the ones who make a success of it, that is.

Q: How do you see the Branch moving on in the future?

A: It's hard to envisage much more expansion in our activities. Having now developed a successful quarterly newsletter and a website I consider little more should be asked of our active members. I do not see the number of active Branch members increasing above the present level. It was ever thus. We lose a keen active member but it is not long before someone else comes along just as keen and active. We have managed to cope like this since the birth of the Branch. Our main aims must be to keep the Good Beer Guide as accurate and up to date as possible and maintain a focus in the Highlands for the keen Real Ale devotee.

A Christmas Wander by the "Badenoch Two"

We decided to do a walk around Inverness on the last Saturday before Christmas; these are the results -

The Kings Highway - Caledonian 80/- very cold as usual for this JDW outlet, just managed to get some flavour through the coldness, rated 2. Also on tap but not sampled were Cairngorm Wildcat, Deuchers IPA and Courage Directors.

Hootananny - Black Isle Red Kite was on as usual, not bad but not good, rated 3.

27 Bar - Red Kite was also found in here but in a lot better condition, plenty of flavour and correct temperature. rated 4. Black Sheep Special was also on, again in excellent condition and rated 4.

Blackfriars - Cairngorm Santa's Sledgehammer, a wonderful pint of this classic winter warmer (definitely not a session ale at 6.3% ABV) rated 4. Also available but not tried Isle of Skye Cuillin Beast and Blaven, Morland Old Speckled Hen, Cairngorm Wildcat and Deuchers IPA.

Clachnaharry Inn - Kelburn Red Smiddy, as usual kept in top condition, as expected from what we feel is the best pub in the Inverness area, rated 4+. Adnams Broadside was also in very good condition and rated 4. Also on were Isle of Skye Village Ale, Greene King Abbot Ale, Castle Eden, Deuchers IPA, and McEwans 80/-; the offering from the wood was Blaven.

This concluded our wander and we merrily made our way back to the train station (staggering slightly).

Cheers, Craig & Louise Whitwell.

Thanks for another detailed report. Ed.

Inns & Things

We published a pub report in our Winter newsletter which noted that in the Royal Hotel, Portree, Isle of Skye Hebridean Gold Ale "was resembling gravy". The Royal Hotel claim never to have stocked Hebridean Gold and, after checking his sales records, brewery owner Angus MacRuary was able to confirm this.

We were asked to clarify to which pub the "Nevis Bar" report referred; we can confirm that the bar in question was the Nevisport Bar.

We also reported that the Taigh Ailean Hotel at Portnalong no longer sold real ale. We understand that new handpumps have been installed, and that real ale is again being sold, although at the time of going to press the information on their website was misleading,

All letters and pub reports are published in good faith. We apologise unreservedly for any reports or articles which might be considered misleading. Ed.

The Inchmore Hotel/Bogroy Bar has recently re-opened following a massive and lengthy refurbishment. The old and rusty roadside signs have been replaced by new ones which read "Old North Inn". Apparently this is a reference to the road upon which the pub stands, the old A9.

Worth a visit is **JA Mackay Licensed Grocers** in Thurso, opposite the Central Hotel. Owner Andy Costello stocks over 200 varieties of ale at any one time, many from the smaller Scottish breweries. Far North Brewery poly-pins can be ordered. Contact Andy on 01847 892811; further info at www.getwhisky.com.

The Old Inn

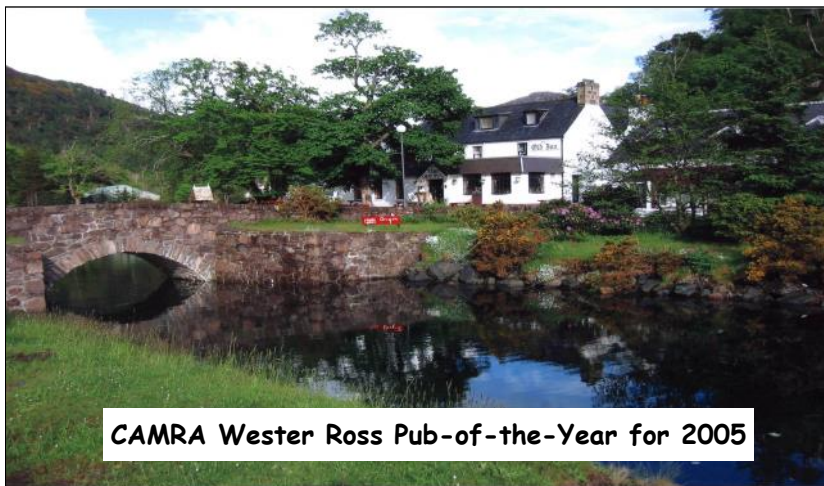
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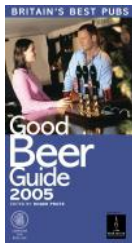
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Inverness & Highland CAMRA Country Pub-of-the-Year for 2004

Inverness & Highland Pubs-of-the-Year for 2005

1. Inverness City - Clachnaharry Inn

Award-winning 17th century coaching inn on the outskirts of Inverness. An ever-changing selection of up to 10 real ales, and good value bar meals, are served all day in the cosy bars, which are warmed by real log fires in Winter. Fine views over the Caledonian Canal and Beaully Firth. First beer festival was held in 2004.

2. Inverness District - The Benleva Hotel, Drumnadrochit

Home to the Loch Ness Beer Festival, this former manse is a thriving mecca for real ale enthusiasts, serving mainly Highland & Islands beers. With a friendly welcome, quiz nights, some traditional music, very good food, accommodation, a resident dog, a former hanging tree and a ghost, what more can you ask?

3. Aviemore & the Cairngorms - Glen Hotel, Newtonmore

A warm welcome is assured at this elegant Edwardian hotel in the heart of the Highlands, and close to the Mondahliath and Cairngorm Mountains. The hotel was refurbished in 2004 and the comfortable bar boasts a real log fire. In Monarch of the Glen Country, and their Glen-Bogle Ale is from the Isle of Skye Brewery.

4. Skye, Lochalsh & Hebrides - Stein Inn, Waternish, Isle of Skye

This eighteenth century inn is located in a delightful setting on the shores of Loch Bay. There are three real ales regularly on tap in this traditional Highland bar, and the seafood on the menu will have been freshly landed at the nearby jetty. Shower facilities are available for the seafarers who tie up in the bay.

5. Fort William & Lochaber - Grog & Gruel, Fort William

Lively high street pub with an ever-changing range and high turnover of real ales, many from Highland & Island brewers. Owned by the same family as Glencoe's Clachaig Inn. Busy with tourist in summer, and popular with locals. Beer festivals are held at Easter, in October, and at Christmas.

6. Wester Ross - Old Inn, Gairloch

Family-run hotel in a beautiful riverside setting. Up to eight real ales are served in summer (3 in winter), mainly from Scottish brewers. Popular with walkers and climbers, the Old Inn is close to Loch Maree and the Beinn Eighe Nature Reserve. The enticing home-cooked menu features freshly landed seafood and local game.

7. Caithness & Sutherland - Scourie Hotel

Popular with hill-walkers, bird watchers and fishermen (25,000 acres of Loch, River and Hill Loch fishing are available to guests), this beautifully situated inn gets through up to 12 casks a week in summer, comprising a mixture of Scottish and English independent brews.

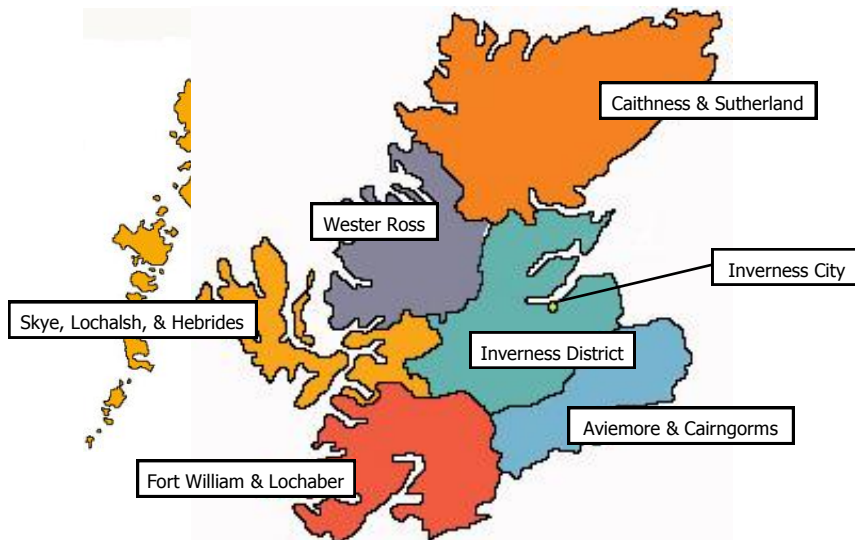
» Elected by Inverness & Highland Branch of CAMRA Members - February 2005 «

Inverness & Highland Pub-of-the-Year for 2005 - Overall Winner

We are very pleased to announce that the **Benleva Hotel** in Drumadrochit has been selected by committee to represent Inverness & Highland Branch of CAMRA in the national Pub-of-the-Year competition. Congratulations to all our area winners!!

Committee members used official CAMRA Pub-of-the-Year guidelines (see website for details) to award points against each criteria. Points were then carefully totalled and checked to find the overall Branch winner. Totals were very, very close.

Join CAMRA Today - Membership Form on Page 28



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There are seven awards -

1. *Inverness City*
2. *Inverness District*
3. *Aviemore & the Cairngorms*
4. *Skye, Lochalsh & Hebrides*
5. *Fort William & Lochaber*
6. *Wester Ross*
7. *Caithness & Sutherland*

Chosen by local CAMRA members.

- All Branch members are allowed to vote in all seven categories.
- All votes to be returned to the secretary by **end of February**.

- All entries must serve real ale.
- In the event of a tie the committee will decide the result by consensus.
- Winning pubs, in each area, will be visited by the committee who will then decide which of the seven winners will represent the Branch in the Scottish Pub of the Year.
- All nominated pubs must be within the branch boundary.
- The result, in full, will be notified to members via the *newsletter.

* Also now at www.highlandcamra.org.uk

Pub Reports - More from the Western Isles



It has taken me a while to get around to writing this letter.

I have just received your Winter 2004 newsletter (Thanks).

My September trip to the Outer Hebrides was certainly interesting. I spent a day cycling around Barra (no real ale) before catching the ferry to South Uist. Four days to reach the ferry to Harris, then north to Stornoway, before returning to South Uist for the mainland ferry from Lochboisdale. I have listed the real ale I sampled -

Fri 10th - Borrodale Hotel, Daliburgh - 5½ pints of Celtic Black - 4 - Very Good

Sat 11th - Isle of Benbecula House Hotel, Creagorry - 1 pint of Clansman - 2 - Hazy

Sat 11th - Dark Island Hotel, Creagorry - 4 pints of Clansman - 4 - Very Good

Sun 12th - Langass Lodge, Langass - 5 pints of Clansman - 4 - Very Good

Tue 14th - Isle of Harris Inn, Tarbert - Just finished real ale for the season

Thurs 16th - Whalers Rest, Stornoway - 1 pint of Clansman - 3 - Good

Thurs 16th - Whalers Rest, Stornoway - 2 pints of Islander - 4 - Very Good

Thurs 16th - Royal British Legion, Stornoway - 2 pints of Celtic Black - 4 - Very Good

Fri 17th - Whalers Rest, Stornoway - 1 pint of Clansman - 3 - Good

Fri 17th - Whalers Rest, Stornoway - 2 pints of Islander - 4 - Very Good

Fri 17th - Royal British Legion, Stornoway - 2 pints of Celtic Black - 4 - Very Good

Wed 22nd Sept - Borrodale Hotel, Daliburgh - 5 pints of Celtic Black - 4 - Very Good

Celtic Black Ale, Clansman Ale (both 3.9% ABV), and Islander Strong Premium Ale (4.8% ABV) are all brewed locally by the Hebridean Brewery in Stornoway. Ed.

In the Borrodale Hotel I was in conversation with another (male) customer, and I asked him why he was not drinking the local beer - as he had lived and drunk real ale in England. The lady behind the bar promptly pulled him a sample (10/10 for initiative). "I'll drink this in future", he said, "even though it is 10 pence per pint more than the keg beer!" The moral is - if you drink and like real ale, spread the word!

I obviously followed another of your contributors (Winter newsletter) to Tarbert and Stornoway. Andy at the (Hebridean) brewery was up-beat about getting into other outlets, especially in Stornoway, and as I still have West Lewis to visit..

Your contributor commented on the food and music at the Whalers not being as good as the beer, but the producers of this newsletter, as well as myself, are members of the Campaign for Real Ale, and the beer quality is our first concern - but if the Whalers beer quality is judged to be amongst the contenders for our Good Beer Guide, geography is also a consideration. Stornoway must be the only large centre of population in the West Highlands not represented in our national guide.

Enough from me now, I shall be back as and when I can. Alan Fearnley, Halifax.

Cycling is obviously thirsty work, and we look forward to more of these detailed reports as Alan continues to explore the Highlands & Islands. Ed.



THE HEBRIDEAN BREWING COMPANY

Taste of the Islands

18a Bells Road

Stornoway, Isle of Lewis

HS1 2RA

Tel: 01851 700123

Fax: 01851 700234

www.hebridean-brewery.co.uk



CLANSMAN Ale

3.9% ABV



**Islander
strong premium ale
4.8% abv**



**Berserker
Export Ale 7.9%**

Celtic Black Ale

3.9% ABV



Hebridean Brewing Company Quality Guarantee

At the Hebridean Brewing Company we have a belief that quality is fundamental to our products. We create traditional craft brewed ales full of flavour using only the best ingredients and Hebridean water.

Although brewing on island and the extra transport costs associated with this keep our beers at a premium, you the customer are assured that everything from milling to bottling is carried out in the islands.

We believe that the unique taste of the islands owes much to the Hebridean water and the care we take in making our fine ales. We therefore refuse to brew our beers under licence on the mainland to cut costs and increase supply, whilst keeping the credence given to Island brewed beers.

So next time you try a pint of Hebridean beer, you can be assured it was made with only the best malt, hops, yeast, Hebridean water and a love of making quality ales.

WE WON'T PUT OUR BADGE ON ANYTHING ELSE.

ANDREW MURDO RIBBENS
HEBRIDEAN BREWING COMPANY

Festival News

The **Grog & Gruel** are having an Easter Ale Festival from Thursday 24th March to Saturday 2nd April 2005. Beers from Atlas, Isle of Skye, Hebridean, Williams Brothers, An Teallach, Orkney etc., plus live music, quiz, ale tastings..

Aviemore is to have its own Beer Festival again thanks to Nigel Reid, landlord of the **Old Bridge Inn**. Aviemore has been without a beer festival since the days of Norman Swinton, the original owner of the Aviemore Brewery (now called the Cairngorm Brewery), who held an annual festival in the Aviemore Centre; latterly to coincide with the Harley Davidson Rally. Plans are to hold the festival, to be called the Aviemore Feis, on the weekend of 11th - 13th November, with up to 12

beers from Scottish Independents, and with the possibility of a real cider. The area has also recently lost the well-established and extremely popular Royal Hotel, Kingussie, festival which also took place in November and which seemed to be increasing in popularity each year. It would be nice to think that the Aviemore Feis will grow and also become an annual occasion to satisfy the tastes of local fans of real ale and visitors to the area. I'm sure all in CAMRA would wish Nigel every success with this new venture.

It just gets better - we also hear that Clachnaharry Inn and Benleiva Hotel will be liaising to ensure a massive selection of ales at their September festivals, and do not forget the Marymas Fair. Ed.

So What For 2005?

The last 12 months have yet again been a great period for brewing in Scotland and for the Highlands in particular. I have no intention of talking about beer deserts or the like, but it must be said that the delights for the beer drinker lucky enough to live in the northernmost parts of our isles just increases year on year. Let us do all we can to encourage our pubs to continue this! So what can we hope for in this year?

Personally I followed with great intrigue the debate that unfolded, after GBBF last year, regarding light hoppy beers. I would like to offer these thoughts:

It just shows how in some areas of the UK their prominence is such that a misguided few believe this is all that is available from the craft brewer.

I feel that the guest beer market has

The Old Bridge Inn - Aviemore



Roaring log fire, cheerful atmosphere, excellent food and fine selection of wines, cask ales and malt whiskies.

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

the Aviemore Feis

a festival of Real Ale and Music
11th - 13th November 2005

23 Dalfaber Road, Aviemore, PH 22 1 PU
Tel: (01479) 811137 - www.oldbridgeinn.co.uk

THE AN TEALLACH ALE COMPANY

An Tealla
ABV 4.2 %



ers Pale Ale
ABV 4.2 %

Beinn Dec
ABV 3.8 %

ouse Special
ABV 4.4 %

Dundonnell, Camusnagaul, Little Loch Broom, Nr Ullapool, IV 23 2 QT
Tel/FAX: 01854 633 306 E-Mail: anteallachale@dundonnell.freerve.co.uk

been led down a bit of a blind alley by a growing band of customer that cannot see past the light hoppy into the diverse balanced malty offerings that are out there.

Don't get me wrong, there are wonderful examples of the former (and I'm glad to say some of the best examples come from north of the border) but oh don't forget the refreshing joys of a good mild, the rich malt-hop balanced flavour of a best bitter or 80/-, or the reviving experience of a well brewed stout or porter after too long a day at the office, factory, mash tun, etc... So what for 2005?

All I can say is,

Brewers brew 'em all,
Publicans try 'em all,
Drinkers enjoy 'em all; happy 2005.

Sean Tomlinson (A Personal View).

A large picture of Jonny Delap and the **Fyne Ales** team took pride of place in Sue Nowak's "whistle-stop tour around micros within shouting distance of Glasgow" in the March edition of CAMRA's What's Brewing. The article featured "local ales on offer", in the lead up to next month's Member's Weekend and AGM in Glasgow (see page 23 for details).

Breweries featured included **Kelburn, Houston, Harviestoun, Bridge-of-Allan, Fyne Ales, and Arran**. A small sample only of more than 30 Scottish breweries who will be supplying 60 beers to the event, and clearly "shouting distance of Glasgow" varies according to direction!

Nevertheless it is always encouraging to see national coverage for the Scottish independent breweries.

Highlands & Islands Brewers in 2005

* **Orkney Brewery** - Brewing commenced in March 1988 at the old schoolhouse in Sandwick. Ales include Dark Island, Red MacGregor, and Skullsplitter.

Isle of Skye Brewery - Based at Uig by the Western Isles ferry terminal, and has been brewing since December 1995. Ales include Red & Black Cuillin and Blaven. Seasonal, House, and special event ales are regularly brewed.

Not all of the breweries listed are in our branch area. Some are in the Grampian Isles, Shetland, Orkney and Aberdeen, & Northern Isles in the Ayrshire & West Lothian area; while others are covered by Scotland, GBG, and Shetland are submitted by the Aberdeen, Grampian & Northern Isles Branch.



Fyne Ales Brewery - Based in Argyll, at the head of Loch Fyne, brewing started on St Andrew's Day 2001. Ales include Piper's Gold and Maverick.

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. Seasonal ales are regularly brewed.

Hebridean Brewing Company - Based in Stornoway on the Isle of Lewis. First beer was produced at end-January 2002. Ales include Islander and Celtic Black.

* **Atlas Brewery** - Brewing in one of the old Aluminium Smelter buildings at Kinlochleven since February 2002. Ales include Latitude, Wayfarer and Numbus.

An Teallach Brewery - Brewing moved to the family croft at Camusnagaul, near Dundonnell, during March 2003. Ales include An Teallach and Beinn Dearg.

Islay Ales Co Ltd - Established in an old Tractor Shed in Bridgend, in March 2004. Ales include Finlaggan and Blackrock.

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

* The **Atlas** and **Orkney** Breweries merged in 2004 to form a new business, called **Highlands and Islands Breweries**, but are dedicated to developing the two brands at the existing breweries.

Valhalla Brewery - The most northerly brewery in the UK started brewing on the island of Unst in 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.

Far North Brewery - Melvich brewpub. Ales include Real Mackay & Fast Reactor.

Isle of Arran Brewery - Located close to Brodick Castle. Opened late March 2000. Ales include Blond and Dark.

Brewery website links can be found at www.highlandcamra.org.uk

Good Beer Guide Listed Pubs - 2005

Inverness City

Blackfriars
Clachnaharry Inn
Glen Mhor Hotel
Snowgoose

Inverness District

Benleva Hotel, Drumnadrochit
The Anderson, Fortrose
Plough Inn, Rosemarkie
Invernairne Hotel, Nairn

Aviemore & Cairngorms

Cairngorm Hotel, Aviemore
Old Bridge Inn, Aviemore
Cairn Hotel, Carrbridge
Heatherbrae Hotel, Nethy Bridge
Glen Hotel, Newtonmore

Fort William & Lochaber

Grog & Gruel, Fort William
Nevisport Bar, Fort William
* Clachaig Inn, Glencoe
Tailrace Inn, Kinlochleven
Four Seasons, Onich
Nether Lochaber Hotel, Onich
Old Forge, Inverie

* Strictly the Clachaig Inn is in Glasgow & West of Scotland branch area, but it is not very far from the "border" and is certainly worth a visit.

Isle of Skye, Lochalsh & Hebrides

Sligachan Hotel
Stein Inn, Waternish
Uig Hotel, Uig
Plockton Hotel, Plockton
Plockton Inn, Plockton

Wester Ross

Applecross Inn, Applecross
Old Inn, Gairloch
Loch Carron Hotel, Lochcarron
Ferry Boat Inn, Ullapool

Caithness & Sutherland

Scourie Hotel, Scourie
Central Hotel, Thurso

Orkney Islands

Bothy Bar, Kirkwall
Ferry Inn, Stromness
Stromness Hotel, Stromness

Shetland Islands

Baltasound Hotel, Island of Unst
Spiggie Hotel, Scousburgh
Inn on the Hill, Whiteness

The Hootananny Bar in Inverness was reluctantly deleted from the 2005 Good Beer Guide, in January 2005, due to poor beer quality.

A full list of amendments & deletions can be found at www.camra.org.uk, on the GBG page.



Members' Weekend 2005

including the National AGM & Conference
Hosted by **Glasgow & West of Scotland Branch**
at the Barony Hall, University of Strathclyde
Friday 22nd April - Sunday 24th April

Real Ale Pubs

In addition to Good Beer Guide entries, the following list of Inns and Hotels are known to sell (or to have recently sold) cask-conditioned beer. Please let us know about the quality of real ales on tap, particularly if you think inclusion in the Good Beer Guide is merited. We make no claims as to the quality of the beer, and would point out that some of the more remote pubs may only stock real ale on a seasonal **(S)** basis:

Inverness City

Caley Marina **(S)**
Chieftain Hotel
Heathmount Hotel
Hootananny
Inshes Gate - **(TP)**
Kings Highway (Wetherspoons)
McNab's Bar, Columba Hotel
Number 27 - GBG 2004
Palace Hotel - GBG 2004
Phoenix Bar - GBG 2004
Thistle Inn

Inverness District

Cawdor Tavern, Cawdor
Caledonian Hotel, Nairn
Tomatin Inn, Tomatin
Bogroy Inn, Inchmore
Culbokie Inn
Royal Hotel, Cromarty
Station Hotel, Avoch
National Hotel, Dingwall
Richmond Hotel, Strathpeffer
Inchbae Hotel, Garve
Clansman Hotel
Cobb's, Drumnadrochit **(S)**
Drumnadrochit Hotel
Urquhart Castle, Drumnadrochit **(S)**
Slaters Arms, Cannich
Lock Inn, Fort Augustus **(S)**
Bothy Bar, Fort Augustus **(S)**
Glenmorrison Arms **(S)**

Skye, Lochalsh, & Hebrides

Isle of Raasay Hotel
Ardvasar Hotel

Broadford Hotel
Claymore, Broadford
Dunollie Hotel, Broadford
Hebridean Hotel, Broadford
Old Inn, Carbost
Coruisk House, Elgol
(Restaurant - Real ale served with food only)
Duntulm Hotel
Dunvegan Hotel
Edinbane Hotel
Lodge Hotel, Edinbane
Flodigarry Hotel
Greshornish Lodge
Isleornsay Hotel
King Haakon Bar, Kyleakin
Bosville Hotel, Portree
Isles Inn, Portree
Royal Hotel, Portree
Sconser Lodge Hotel
Skeabost Hotel
Ferry Inn, Uig
Pub on the Pier, Uig
Cluanie Inn
Kintail Lodge Hotel
Clachan Bar, Dornie
Loch Duich Hotel, Dornie
Balmacara Hotel
Cuchulainn's, Kyle of Lochalsh
Tingle Creek Hotel, Erbusaig
(by Kyle of Lochalsh)
Langass Lodge, North Uist
Dark Island Hotel, Benbecula
Isle of Benbecula House Hotel
Borrodale Hotel, South Uist
Royal British Legion, Stornoway
Whalers Rest, Stornoway
Shawbost Inn, Isle of Lewis
Isle of Harris Inn, Tarbert

Fort William & Lochaber

Invergarry Hotel - GBG 2004
The Eagle, Laggan Locks
(An Inn on a boat on the water)
Roy Bridge Hotel
Spean Bridge Hotel
Inn at Ardgour
Arisaig Hotel

* Laroch Bar, Ballachulish - GBG 2004
 Tradewinds, Corpach
 Alexandra Hotel, Fort William
 Ben Nevis Inn, Fort William
 Capercaillie, Fort William
 Milton Hotel, Fort William
 Tradewinds Bistro, Fort William
 * Kings House Hotel, Glencoe
 Glenfinnan House Hotel
 Mamore Lodge, Kinlochleven
 Antler Bar, Kinlochleven
 Stronlossit Hotel, Roy Bridge
 Tomdoun Sporting Lodge
 Factor's Inn, Torlundy
 (Closed Sun/Mon, No Smoking)

Caley Inn Bar, Ullapool
 Morefield Hotel, Ullapool
 Seaforth Hotel, Ullapool
 Summer Isles Hotel, Achillitbuie (S)

Caithness & Sutherland

Inchnadampn Hotel
 Castle Hotel, Dornoch
 Invershin Hotel
 Melvich Hotel
 Commercial Hotel, Thurso
 Mackays Hotel, Wick
 Alexander Bain, Wick (Wetherspoons)

TP - Dispensed using top pressure
 (not approved by CAMRA for GBG).

Please check www.highlandcamra.org.uk for latest real ale pubs list

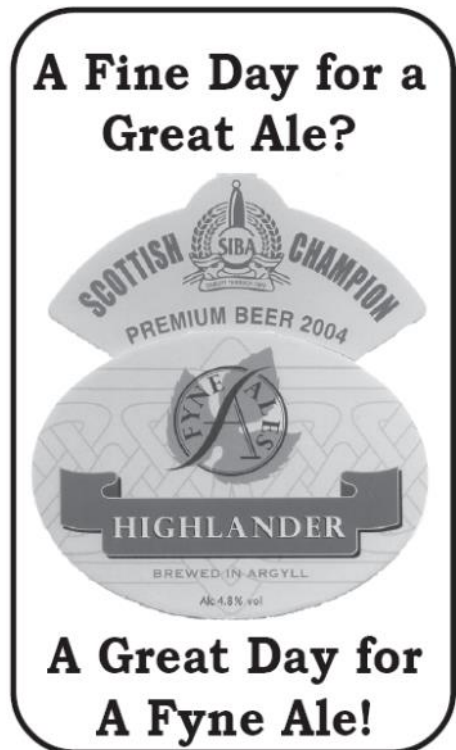
Aviemore & the Cairngorms

Dalfaber Country Club, Aviemore
 Glenmore Lodge, Nr Aviemore
 Winking Owl, Aviemore
 * Mash Tun, Charlestown of Aberlour
 * Highlander Inn, Craigellachie
 Boat Hotel, Boat of Garten
 Ben Mhor Hotel, Grantown-on-Spey
 Strathspey Hotel, Grantown-on Spey
 * Croft Inn, Glenlivet
 Suie Hotel, Kinraig - (TP)
 Silver Fjord Hotel, Kingussie
 Typsy Laird, Kingussie (S)
 Lodge Hotel, Newtonmore
 * Glenavon Hotel, Tomintoul

Wester Ross

Ledgowan Hotel, Achnasheen
 Ben Dampn Lodge, Torridon
 Drumchork Hotel, Aultbea
 Dundonnell Hotel
 Kinlochewe Hotel
 Badachro Inn
 Loch Inn, Gairloch
 Myrtle Bank Hotel, Gairloch
 Rockvilla Hotel, Lochcarron
 Strathcarron Hotel
 Tigh-an-Eilean Hotel, Shieldag
 Argyll Hotel, Ullapool

S - Seasonal or not, it is always a good idea
 to phone ahead to avoid disappointment
 if you plan to make a detour for a pint.
 * Not in Inverness & Highland Branch area



End of the 'Monarch'

The news that the next six episodes of the popular Highland drama, *Monarch of the Glen*, will be the last, does not disturb Chris Goodhill. Chris and his wife Kim run the busy **Glen Hotel** in Newtonmore which has benefited from increased business for a number of years now, both from followers of the drama visiting the area, and from many of the extras using the facilities of the hotel while filming. Chris says that even though the filming will be finishing, the series will continue to be shown world wide, thus popularising this spectacular area to even more people. He envisages followers of the series visiting the area for many years to come.

News of Brews

The January edition of *The Observer Food Monthly*, under the heading "Healthy Drinking", notes that David Gladwin of the **Black Isle Brewery** has deliberately packaged organic beer to dispel the image of "tepee dwellers living off brown rice and lentils".

Far North Brewery - Peter Martin launched a new brew at the Smithfield's January beer festival in Manchester. He called it "John O'Groats Dark", at 4.8%, full-bodied, and with a good dose of roast barley. Peter recently sold a 10L mini-pin to a lager drinker in the bar, and thinks there is hope yet in the far north.

He also had his 5.5% IPA in Manchester for the first time last month, and on the back of that Peter has had an approach from a large brew pub in the Midlands to take his total production (minus the Ho-

tel's requirement) on a permanent basis. Peter notes that there is always the possibility of problems with transport, but cost-wise the brew pub seem confident. Peter is delighted with his beer-in-a-box product. Air doesn't get in and so, unlike the old poly-pins, it keeps for several weeks if stored at cellar temperature.

The 10 litre boxes are being sold through JA Mackay, Grocer, Trail St, Thurso, pre-ordered only at the moment. This should bring the beer to a wider circle.

Hebridean Brewery reported a very busy January, despite telling customers that they "don't do January". The award from Grampian CAMRA is thought to be more than partly responsible for increased sales of Clansman Ale. They also noted that Berserker Ale is generating a fair amount of interest from America.

Their calendars, circulated with February What's Brewing, have been very well received and will no doubt go a long way to increasing awareness of the brewery.

Porter Boom? - Both An Teallach and Cairngorm Breweries are to produce a porter for the spring/early summer trade. Sean Tomlinson of the Cairngorm Brewery says his Red Mountain Porter at 4.5% will be a good old style porter; on the brown side of deep red with malt to the fore, good roast flavours, and with a subtle fruity hop finish. (Sounds great, I can't wait!). David Orr has nothing finalised at An Teallach, but I am sure it will be in keeping with the high standard of regular brews from this popular west coast brewery.

The local brewers are clearly not content

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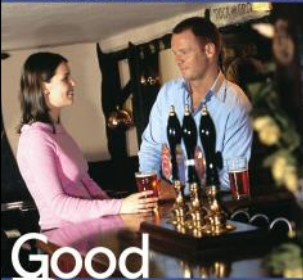


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of Badenoch**



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BRITAIN'S BEST PUBS



Good Beer Guide 2005

EDITED BY ROGER PROTZ



Good Beer Guide 2005

32nd Edition of Britain's long running, best-selling guide to good beer and good pubs offers discriminating drinkers:

- * The best pubs in England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands and Isle of Man that serve cask-conditioned real ale in tip top condition. All beers listed by strength and style.
- * Pen portraits of the pubs: history, architecture and anecdotes. Plus information on food, entertainment, accommodation, and facilities for families. E-mail and website addresses where given.
- * Our unique Breweries section - something only CAMRA can provide - that lists all the producers and their beers, with tasting notes, information of beers suitable for vegetarians, and the growing number of organic and bottle-conditioned beers. There is also an up-to-date information on breweries, mergers and takeovers along with details of the new, powerful pub groups.

CAMRA Members can purchase the GBG 2005 from their branch committee for £10:00. This is a saving of £3.99, and gives the local branch a small profit which is used to promote branch activities in support of local pubs and breweries.



Application to join CAMRA (Full/Joint British Isles/EU Membership)

Title:Surname:

Forename(s):

Date of Birth:

Partner (if joint membership):

Address:

.....

Postcode: Date:

Telephone:

E-mail Address:

Signature:

Remittance (payable to CAMRA) enclosed for:

Single Membership £18.00 per year

Joint Membership £21.00 per year

Under 26 and Over 60s £10.00 per year

Send to: The Membership Secretary, CAMRA,
230 Hatfield Road, St Albans, Herts, AL 1 4 LW



Inverness & Highland Branch



Stronlossit Inn

Roy Bridge
Inverness-shire
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Tel: 01397 712253
Fax: 01397 712641



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food & drinks
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Stronlossit is a real gem of authentic Scottish highland tradition - a warm, welcoming inn-style Inn of class and character. The Nevis Lounge Bar has an impressive range of malt whiskies, an open fire and pulled cask beers, making it a popular rendezvous for Inn guests, outdoor enthusiasts and the local regulars alike. Salmon from the River Roy, fresh trout from Loch Lochy and lamb from Lochaber typify the local produce that regularly features on the menu at the Stronlossit restaurant. All amidst some of the wildest and most captivating scenery in the Scottish Highlands, in "Western Europe's last great wilderness", as Lochaber is known.

www.stronlossit.co.uk

E-mail: stay@stronlossit.co.uk



Isle of Skye Brewery Awards

Pictured at the Isle of Skye Brewery Christmas dinner are owner Angus MacRuary, head brewer Pam Jones, and

Steve & Becki Crossland from Benleva Hotel. Acting on behalf of the local CAMRA branch, Steve presented Angus with awards for Black Cuillin and for Misty Isle bottle conditioned ale.

The event took place at the Uig Hotel and dinner was washed down with Devanha XXX and Red Cuillin (both brewed at the nearby Isle of Skye Brewery).

Brewers and Publicans obviously taking

Just to let you know that I thought the recent newsletter that I received just before Xmas was excellent! I know from experience that it is not easy to produce newsletters on a regular basis.

Please pass on my thanks to anyone who was involved in its production.

Thanks a lot, Andy Rogers.

Behind Bars - The CAMRA Full Pint Campaign

A view from the Inn-side

CAMRA is urging all of us to help campaign for new legislation to be passed governing what is, or is not, a full pint. On the face of it a wholly admirable objective, but what would such legislation actually achieve, and is it even necessary?



So, what is a full pint? The simple answer to that question is - whatever the customer wants it to be. From years of serving cask ale one thing I've learnt is that there's no such thing as the 'perfect pint', because everybody is different. Some want a pint with no head at all, others like just a small amount of head, others a large head. Some insist on a sparkler being used, others insist on it being removed. The simple solution from the customer's perspective is, if you have a strong preference as to how you'd like your pint served, ask when you order. From the bar person's perspective, don't hand over a pint unless you'd be happy to drink it yourself. If in doubt, top it up, or replace with a fresh pint. If your local consistently serves its ale badly, or refuses to top up a 'short pint' then take your custom elsewhere. If that's not possible, contact the brewery direct. I can assure you that most breweries are very keen to see their product served correctly.

Lined glasses are an option but when I've tried them in the past a large number of customers come back to the bar thinking they've been sold a short pint. Also it would be expensive, a cost which would have to be passed on to the customer.

Would any new law make a difference? It is already an offence to sell a pint which is not a pint, as it is with any other measure of drink. If sufficient complaints are made, then trading standards may come to call. Another, more specific, law won't alter this significantly as it'll be very difficult to enforce effectively.

If a landlord is deliberately selling short pints in order to make extra profit, surely the best way to stop this is by taking your custom elsewhere, thereby removing all profit. What perhaps is more common is bar staff pouring pints badly due to lack of training or understanding of the product itself. The best way, in my view, to eradicate this would be through better training, perhaps involving the breweries themselves. Encouraging breweries to take more responsibility for how their product eventually reaches the customer would surely be a good thing and also encourage more co-operation between breweries, licensees and CAMRA itself, leading to a better product for the ale drinker.

Slainte!! Name & Address supplied.

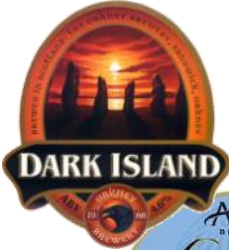
I have to agree. I'm sure most drinkers prefer a full pint, but it is very clear from letters to What's Brewing that CAMRA's Full Pints Campaign does not necessarily meet with universal approval. Views and contributions from inn-side the trade are always very welcome. Ed.



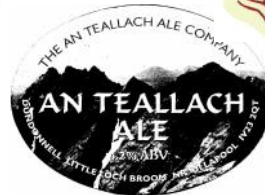
The and restaurant
GLEN Hotel

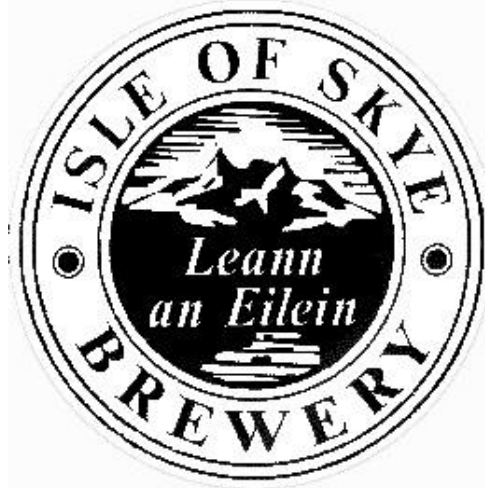


H O E



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