

What's Yours Then?

Highlands & Western Isles Branch
Free Newsletter



Pubs-of-the-Year
Time to vote !!

We change our Branch name from
Inverness & Highland
to
Highlands & Western Isles



Good Beer Guide
sales threatened
by GBG listings in
What's Yours Then?



www.highlandcamra.org.uk

Winter 2005

**CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE**

Welcome to the Winter edition of our quarterly newsletter. In this edition:

- > Change of Name for the Branch
- > Pubs of the Year - Time to Vote
- > Focus on Sean Tomlinson
- > Updated Branch Diary
- > Your letters and pub reports
- > Real Cider News
- > Pub & Brewery 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.

Spring Newsletter **deadline** will be 1st March 2006, with publication in time for the Easter visitor.

Thanks to all who have taken trouble to send in pub and beer reports, or articles, but especially to regular writers Chairman Bill & Secretary Eric.

If you would like to advertise in this newsletter, please contact one of the branch officers (see page 8).

- Full Page Advert.....£55.00
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- 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.

2500+ copies are distributed to Branch members, to Highlands & Islands brewers, to Good Beer Guide listed and Real Ale pubs; plus extra copies to advertisers.

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

The 13th Inverness & Highland **AGM** was held in November at the Clachnaharry Inn, and attracted a very good turnout of Branch members. Branch Chairman Bill Tring was able to report on another successful year for the Branch. Outings to Wester Ross, the Far North, and the Isle of Skye, with visits to real ale pubs along the way, were well-supported and helped in our assessment of suitable GBG entries. Meetings have again been held in pubs around the Branch area, and this has been appreciated by the publicans.

The small committee has maintained the key Branch functions - pub surveys and GBG recommendations, brewery liaison, focus for new members, and so on - and hope that as the Branch continues to grow more members may become active.

Our popular newsletter has attracted much feedback about the Highlands & Islands real ale scene, from both locals and visitors, and is now our main source of income. We launched our website in February, and this is also generating much feedback and helping to raise the profile of breweries, pubs, and real ale events in and around the Branch area.

Our revised Pubs-of-the-Year awards (see page 23) helped to promote our top real ale pubs, and proved very popular with winning publicans. Benleva Hotel, the overall Branch winner, lost only very narrowly to Edinburgh's Halfway House in the Scottish Pub-of-the-Year.

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Seasonal Cask Beers

Highland IPA	3.6%
White Lady	4.7%
<i>(Award winning Bavarian style Wheat Beer)</i>	
Black Gold	4.4%
60 Shilling	3.7%
Red Mountain Porter	4.5 %
Witches Cauldron	4.9%
Santa's Sledgehammer	6.3%



Black Gold **ABV 4.4 %**

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CAMRA membership continues to rise, and the drive to reach 100,000 members is well on track. Branch membership is now well into three figures, and at the CAMRA Member's Weekend we won the Small Branch Membership Award for most new members. This is a vibrant time for the campaign, and it is very satisfying to find that there are now many more outlets dispensing real ale, reflecting both the increased popularity of, and the demand for the product.

The Chairman closed by thanking the outgoing committee for their hard work, and wished the new committee every success in maintaining the momentum.

In his report Secretary Eric Mills echoed the Chairman's comments and noted that interest in the Branch area had never been higher. He had received a record number of requests for information about local real ale outlets, breweries, and events in our area, including one from a visitor returning after 30 years!

In addition to GBG, we have helped to provide information for a number of CAMRA publications, including Beer, Bed and Breakfast; Good Food Guide; Real Ale in a Bottle; the Scottish Real Ale Guide.

There have been concerns about Punch Taverns taking over local pubs and not allowing purchase of local ales. Punch have relented in a couple of Ullapool pubs following complaints from many quarters.

Local ales are not currently stocked in former Safeways stores following the takeover by Morrisons. Fortunately Tesco is offering a much expanded range.

The number of real ale outlets in the Branch area has risen to in excess of 150.

The Treasurer reported a small profit for the year, thanks to income from the Newsletter, Marymas and GBG Sales meeting operating costs. Newsletter advertising revenue has mainly been used to increase both size and circulation.

Branch Membership now totals 142, a 30% increase in the past 12 months.

Wearing his Social Secretary cap, Eric reported on the success of outings and events throughout the year, and noted that our bus trips to breweries and pubs have attracted increasing numbers.

Social gatherings have included visits to the growing number of Highland beer festivals, with new events at Morefield Motel, Blackfriars, and Kings Highway added to our diary.

Tasting report cards received have again contributed to continuing success of Scottish beers, but the Chair noted that more trained tasters were needed. Three of the members present expressed an interest, and the Secretary will try to arrange for a tasting course in our area.

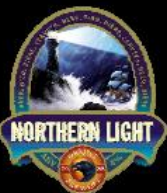
Please contact Bill or Eric if you are interested in joining our tasting panel.

BLO and Pub Reports followed, and the meeting then enjoyed the very generous Clachnaharry Inn hospitality, before Election of the new Committee:

Chairman -	Bill Tring
Secretary -	Eric Mills
Treasurer -	Mike Whittall
Membership -	David Stobbart
Committee -	Stephen Crossland, Gareth Hardman, John Holloway, Allan Pearks, Caroline Wright

(Continued on page 8)

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2006 Branch Diary (Meetings start at 7.30 pm)

10 th January	Committee Meeting	Blackfriars, Inverness
February (TBA)	* 1 st Aviemore Feis	Old Bridge Inn, Aviemore
7 th February	Branch/Committee Meeting	Clachnaharry Inn, Inverness
10 th - 25 th Feb	* FebruaryFest 2006 Mid-Winter Beer Festival	Clachaig Inn, Glencoe and Grog & Gruel, Fort William
Feb/Mar (TBA)	* Beer Festival	Blackfriars, Inverness
7 th March	Committee Meeting	Glen Mhor Hotel, Inverness
4 th April	Branch/Committee Meeting	Benleva Hotel, Drumnadrochit
Sat 8 th April		Social/Outing to Cairngorm Brewery & Speyside Pubs
22 nd April	Beer Tasting Course	Benleva Hotel (see page 10)
2 nd May	Committee Meeting	Stronlossit Hotel, Roy Bridge
9 th May	Branch Meeting	The Duck, Conon Bridge
12 th - 14 th May	* Street Festival	Gairloch (Real ales, local food, music, local arts & crafts)
6 th June	Committee Meeting	Glen Hotel, Newtonmore
June - TBC		Social/Outing to Hebridean Brewery and Stornoway Pubs
4 th July	Branch Meeting	The Anderson, Fortrose
11 th July	Committee Meeting	Cairn Hotel, Carrbridge
12 th Aug - TBC	Real Ale Bar	Marymas Fair, Inverness
Sept - TBA		Annual Social/Outing to the Isle of Skye
22 nd - 30 th Sept	* 5 th Loch Ness Beer Festival	Benleva Hotel
End of Sept	* 3 rd Clachnaharry Beer Festival	Clachnaharry Inn TBC
October	* 2 nd Ullapool Beer Festival	Morefield Motel TBC
2 nd - 4 th Nov	20 th Aberdeen Beer Festival	McClymont Halls

* Not all events listed are necessarily organised by CAMRA.

This diary is as much about the local Real Ale scene as about Branch activities.

Branch Contact Details on Page 8

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

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Bill heads up the local tasting panel, as well as carrying out local Brewery Liaison Officer (BLO) duties. David, Eric, and John also have BLO commitments and Eric, as the branch Social Secretary, organises trips and outings. Mike edits the newsletter and updates the website.

Other AGM Business:

It was noted that our Branch does not make any awards to local brewers and it was suggested that local members should be given the opportunity to vote for their Highlands & Islands Beer of the Year. A special award was also muted, not neces-

sarily to be awarded annually, but for someone who has made a significant contribution to real ale in the Branch area. The layout of Highlands & Islands pubs in the Good Beer Guide was raised, and listing of pubs by geographical areas was suggested. These proposals met with general approval and the committee will progress in due course.

A proposal to change the Branch name led to a lengthy dialogue (see page 36).

Thanks again to Clachnaharry Inn for hosting our AGM, and for the generous hospitality during the evening.

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chair@highlandcamra.org.uk

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

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Coals to Newcastle? (Well, Scottish Real Ales to Yorkshire) S.Tomlinson

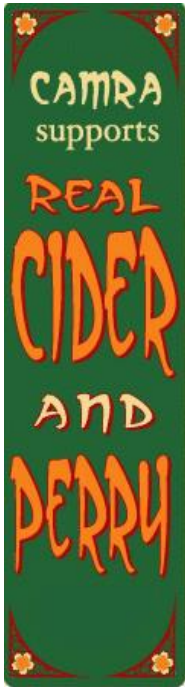
Having been involved with Wakefield Branch of CAMRA since their very first beer festival in 1991, this year for my visit to Yorkshire I was tasked with collating and delivering a selection of beers from 16 Scottish breweries. This added up to a total of 29 firkins from as far afield as Skye and Islay, to Alloa and Fyfe. We set off with a van full of beer, a car full of family, and with just a short detour off the M74 to pick up Sulwath's beers (thanks for the supper Jim). I duly delivered my cargo to Wakefield's 15th festival.

They had a Welsh, Scottish, international and, of course, a Yorkshire bar. I felt it my duty to try as many of the Scottish ones as I could on my first visit and fine they were, as best as I can remember! On my second night I trawled some of the other bars; it was a good festival, well attended and well organized. The Scottish Bar beers definitely held their own in some very good company.

Sunday morning came far too soon and it was time to load up with empties and head back up the road. On getting home I found out just how well our beers had gone down. It was the best selling bar in the festival and two of the top three winners were from it. 1st - Heather Ale, and 2nd - Young Pretender, well done.

My thanks to Cairngorm and Harviestoun, and all the other breweries that helped.

Well done indeed, another good "away result" for Scottish independent brewers.



Encouraging News for Highland Cider Lovers:

Stephen Crossland, Loch Ness Beer festival organiser, had promised us cider this year, but we were not expecting the range and quantity -

- Thatchers Cheddar Valley Cider - 7.0% ABV - 9 Gal Cask
- Thatchers Traditional Somerset Cider - 4.8% ABV - 9 Gal Cask
- Sheppey's Medium Sweet Cider - 6.4% ABV - 5 Gal Polypin
- Rich's Traditional Medium Cider - 5.8% ABV - 5 Gal Polypin

At Clachnaharry Inn, during the Highland Feast, George MacLean also entered into the spirit of CAMRA's national real cider month -

- Westons Old Rosie Cider - 7.3% ABV - 5 Gal Cider-in-a-Box
- Westons Organic Vintage Cider - 7.3% ABV - 5 Gal Cider-in-a-Box

Blackfriars' Bev Alexander, who announced her arrival on the Highland beer festival scene in some style, followed suit -

- Westons Old Rosie Cider - 7.3% ABV - 5 Gal Polypin
- Westons 1st Quality Cider - 6.0% ABV - 5 Gal Polypin

For their cider-in-a-box range Westons advertise a 12 month shelf life from filling, and a minimum 3 months shelf life after opening. So no excuse for your local not to stock real cider. For publicans who are worried about the strength of these ciders, the Westons range includes ciders with a less frightening ABV. For the home drinker, we have regularly seen Westons 3 litre cider-in-a-box in Asda and Sainsburys stores, in Glasgow and Edinburgh, but nowhere in Inverness (so far).

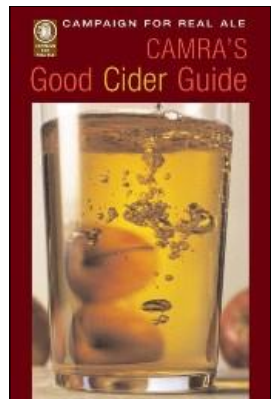
It remains to be seen whether real cider will regularly be on tap at any of these popular Highland hostelries. Please check our on-line "Pubs Just for You" pages for real cider; we'll certainly add any pubs to the list who decide to make real cider a regular option for their clientele.

As we went to press, we heard that cider will shortly be available on handpump at Blackfriars, in Inverness. There is an Old Rosie pump clip beneath a "Coming soon" notice. Ed.

Good Cider Guide

This is the guide for real cider-loving connoisseurs. Fully revised and updated, this long-awaited fifth edition will be available for the first time in two colours throughout.

Set in the same style as the Good Beer Guide. All of the listings are organised into counties, and the guide contains maps, listings of producers, and a selection of approximately 600 real cider outlets.



There will be a **CAMRA Beer Tasting Course** on Saturday 22nd April 2006, at the Benleva Hotel in Drumnadrochit, starting at 14:00. Ian Brocklebank, Chairman of the Scottish CAMRA Tasting Panel, will introduce participants to all the flavours, tastes, and aromas to look out for when drinking real ale.

At the end of the course those who wish can then become CAMRA trained tasters, and will be able to fill in the tasting forms which help in getting beers into competitions. The course is free for Branch members and a maximum of 15 places are available.

Please contact Secretary Eric Mills to book your place.

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Investor in People

Toll Tales from the Isle of Skye

By popular demand our September trip to the Isle of Skye has become a permanent fixture on the Branch calendar. This year the minibus would have been full but for a cancellation caused by a late night emergency call-out. The weather was glorious and one couple, on a first ever trip to Skye, had a day to remember for the views alone. The rest of the party had been "over the sea to Skye" on many occasions but, for all, this was the first by toll-free bridge!



Sligachan Hotel from the Old Bridge

Our first stop was the Sligachan Hotel, set in a spectacular location beneath the impressive Cuillin mountains which, for once, were in full view. Our first pint, and a large plate of bacon rolls, were on the house. (*Thanks Iain*). Of the five ales on handpump, three were brewed on the premises in the new Cuillin Brewery: Skye Ale (4.1% ABV, bitter style), Black Face (4.3% stout), and Pinnacle (4.7% golden ale). Pinnacle was the brew favoured by most of the party. Other brews include Eagle Ale (3.8% golden ale), plus a number of one-off specials; Ecstasy (4.1%, for a Rolls Royce gathering), Abolition (4.1%, for end of bridge tolls), and Wedding Ale (3.9%). Some beers are also bottled.

Eric Jones, head brewer, gave us a very informative tour around the brewery, set in a room which some older members may remember as the original public bar. Trial brews were started in September 2004 after a nine month conversion. Full brewing began in early 2005, despite severe storm damage in the winter. There



is a five barrel brewing plant, from the Physician & Firkin Brewery in Edinburgh, plus four fermenting vessels. They brew twice a week, producing 40 casks. The initial idea was to brew just for the hotel, but requests from local outlets has given them a limited distribution.

Both Hotel and Brewery will be closed this winter for major refurbishment.

We boarded the minibus reluctantly and continued our journey northwards. The GBG-listed Uig Hotel, set on the hill above and with stunning views over Uig Bay, offered two Isle of Skye beers: Black Cuillin, a 4.5% old ale, and Cuillin Beast, a 7% strong ale. Both were in the condition one would expect for beers served within a stone's throw of the brewery, and it was a surprise that we still managed to arrive there on schedule!

Isle of Skye Brewery owner Angus MacRuary and Head Brewer Pam Jones greeted us at the door, and we were given

(Continued on page 14)

the glen hotel

NEWTONMORE

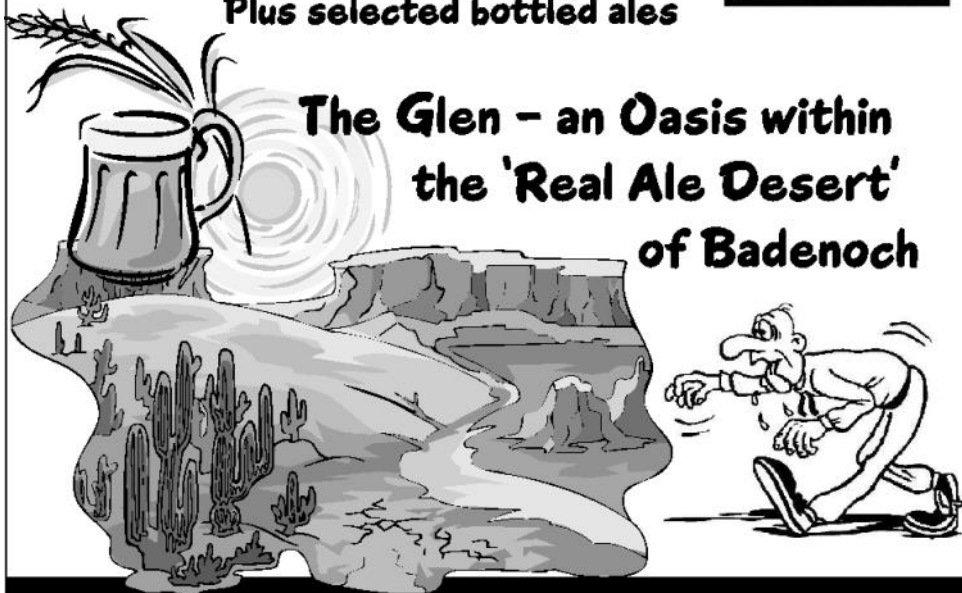
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refreshments and a short introductory talk in the brewery's hospitality suite, before embarking on a tour. Several of the party have visited regularly, and it has been interesting to monitor changes at first hand as the brewery has grown.



Branch Secretary Eric Mills presented Angus with a certificate for Black Cuillin, which came third in CAMRA's Champion Beer of Scotland; an achievement which further highlights the consistently high standards of this brewery, who have been represented in the finals ever since the competition started. Happily we were able to sample this wonderful dark ale, but this may have affected our ability to correctly guess the blend of this year's mystery beer. It seems harder each year to identify the mix of beers in the Leann Failte (Gaelic for Welcome Ale), as Angus and Pam find more ways to concoct blends which defeat our tasting skills! Post mistress Becki Crossland was the sole recipient of a pack of bottled ales.

More bottled beer was on offer, along with a variety of booby prizes, for those who could still "Get Plastered" - rubber rings were thrown at an array of nails (in a sheet of plasterboard). A cask rolling

contest followed, this time the spoils going to Stephen Crossland.

After so much exercise we were more than ready for the handsome buffet on offer, much of it cooked on the barbecue by John Jones, and washed down with

more beers. Our Branch meeting was held in the sunny courtyard, before we thanked our generous hosts and reluctantly departed.

We just had time for a quick visit to the Pub at the Pier, now partly owned by the Hebridean Brewery. Eight handpumps dispensed a fine range of Island ales (from Orkney, Skye and Hebridean breweries), plus one from Atlas. Most were tried and very good they were.

Time was moving on, but we were able to persuade our driver to make a couple of comfort stops on our homeward journey.

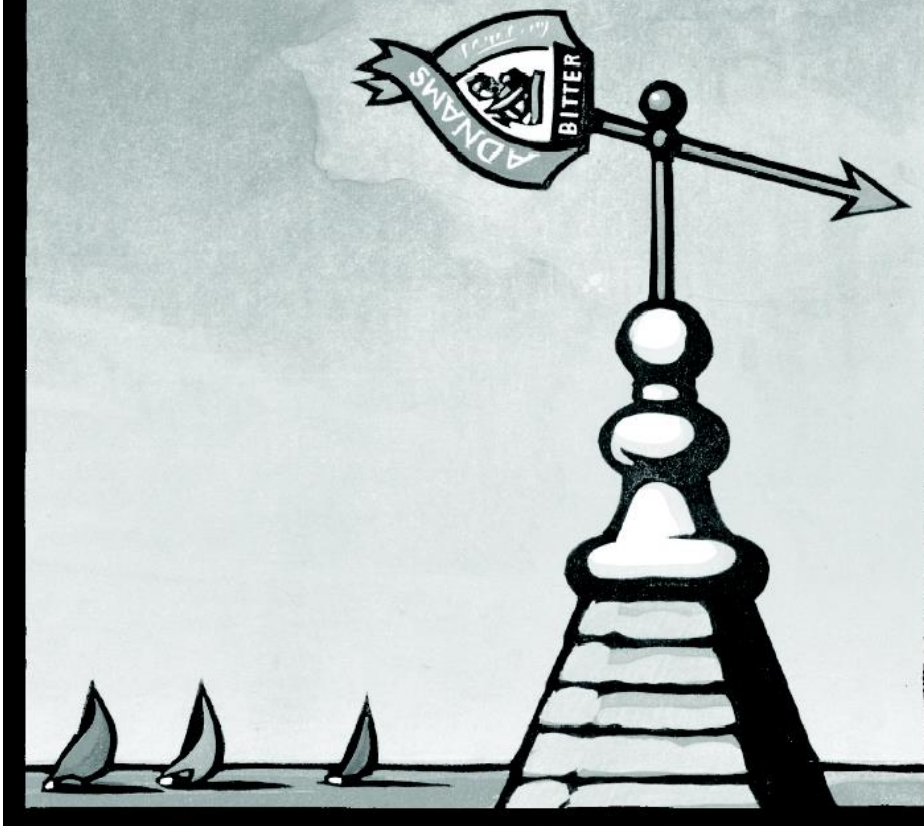
A quick visit to Portree, where we found Red Cuillin in excellent condition at the Bosville Hotel, newly listed in the Good Beer Guide. At the Royal Hotel we tried the house bitter, McNabs, also in good nick; and at the Isles Hotel we found Adnams Broadside, a 4.7% bitter and CAMRA Gold Medal Winner in the 2003 Champion Beer of Britain, and Everards Sunchaser, a 4.0% golden seasonal beer, made using lager malt and Hallertau lager hops, both enjoyed by all. A last stop at the Kintail Lodge Hotel, where we ended our day with a last pint of Red Cuillin.

We arrived back in Inverness a bit later than planned, having found it difficult to leave behind the wonderful hospitality we enjoyed throughout our trip.

Thanks again to all.

ADNAMS. BEER FROM THE COAST.

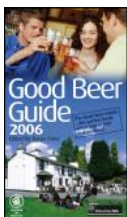
Adnams Broadside Always available at the Clachnaharry Inn



Regular readers will note that not all of the *Good Beer Guide* outlets in the Branch are listed or highlighted in this newsletter. CAMRA's Scottish & Northern Ireland Director has insisted that we cease this practice forthwith - apparently sales of the guide are being compromised! It seems that real ale drinkers who visit the Highlands & Islands no longer purchase the guide before venturing into the Branch area, but instead rely upon picking up one of our newsletters. I have to say that we're very flattered to think our newsletter, a relatively new publication, is already so famous.

This newsletter is committed to the support of local brewers and real ale publicans; a worthy cause, we believe. Perhaps if we help to ensure that a beer drinker's first taste of a new beer, or of real ale itself, is in a hostelry we think merits inclusion in the guide, then we hope it will be a thoroughly enjoyable experience. Maybe it will be so enjoyable that he/she will seek out more GBG listed hostelrys where similar experiences can be enjoyed? He/she may even be impressed enough to purchase a *Good Beer Guide* for use as a travelling companion?

Or is it more likely that sales of the guide have dried up in the Highlands & Islands since this publication was launched? The local real ale scene is changing as rapidly as anywhere in the country, perhaps more so than any other region currently. The number of real ale outlets has risen dramatically in the last couple of years, and will no doubt take some time to settle down as publicans experiment with different ales from the massive range available to them, and so on. The local real ale drinker does not need a guide to find out where a quality pint can be found, good news travels fast. No, the local beer drinker, CAMRA member or not, buys a *Good Beer Guide* to use on their travels to territories unknown.



"Branch newsletters should not contain complete entries from CAMRA publications (such as the Good Beer Guide) which could detract from sales of such publications. Short 'taster' entries which will promote sales are acceptable".

"There are no reasons why a Branch should not publish a list of the pubs selling real ale in their area however the list should not identify all of those which are in the GBG."

In future we will only be able to publish short *Good Beer Guide* 'taster' entries, and only partial *Good Beer Guide* lists.

More Awards for Local Real Ale Pubs & Hotels

- AA Hospitality Awards 2005-06, Scottish Awards, Best Seafood Pub -
The **Old Inn** at Gairloch
- Scottish Thistle Awards 2005, Flavour of Scotland Finalist -
Chandlery Restaurant at the **Bosville Hotel**, Isle of Skye
- Scottish Thistle Awards 2005, Hotel of the Year Finalist -
Loch Torridon Hotel, Wester Ross

The Old Inn

Gairloch, Ross-shire, IV21 2BD

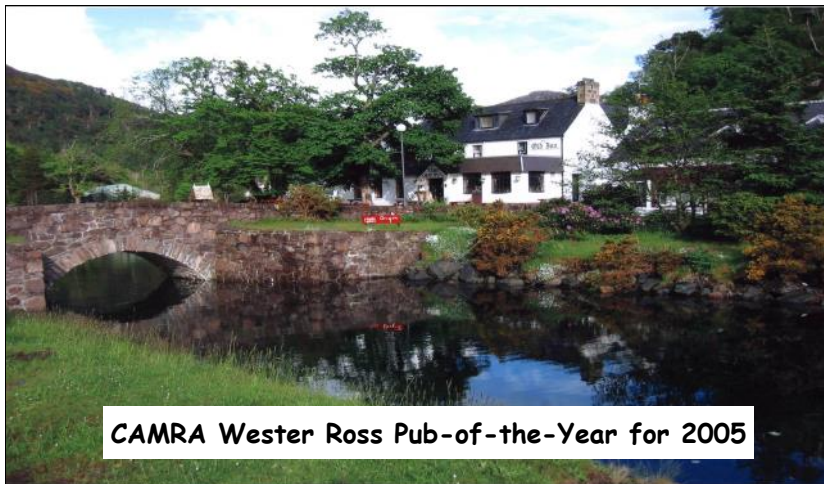
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Focus on Sean Tomlinson

Sean is Brewery Manager at the Cairngorm Brewery and the man behind the last two Champion Beers of Scotland; Trade Winds and Black Gold. He lives in Rosemarkie with his family.

Q: Where are you originally from?

A: I was born just outside Pontefract, a West Yorkshire market, mining, horse racing town and, of course, the home of the Pontefract cake and all things liquorice.

Q: How were you introduced to real ale?

A: In the late seventies I teamed up with a great guy (Brendan) as climbing and drinking partners (in that order); he introduced me to the *Good Beer Guide*, which I've traveled with ever since.

Q: What is your brewing background?

A: I worked in the chemical engineering industry for many years and with my interest in real ale growing I drifted out of that to do engineering work on breweries. Eventually I learned to brew commercially and in 1990 I built my own brewery in Pontefract which we ran until 1999 when we moved to the Black Isle.

Q: How do you get your award winning recipes?

A: Recipes for beers come as with food, you experience tastes and flavours in other beers, you wonder how one would marry with another, and you have the desire to experiment with new ingredients. Along with this, of course, you need to understand the

technicalities of brewing and what to expect from your raw materials. At Cairngorm Brewery this is just how Trade Winds came about as my first "seasonal" brew for them. Since then, in the last couple of years, we have created some really interesting beers, White Lady, Horizon, and now Blessed Thistle. Black Gold, however, was a superb recipe from Tomintoul Brewery which we have continued to brew to the best quality we can - as with Wildcat, a great strong northern ale.

Q: Any more new brews in the pipeline and when will they be out?

A: We have a rolling program of seasonal beers for next year, some new and some old favourites, so watch this space.

Q: What do you think of brews using unusual ingredients? Are Cairngorm Liquorice brews on the way?

A: The first priority of any brewer should be to master the art of brewing from traditional ingredients to a high standard. then you can afford to experiment! I enjoy using different things, although a lot of these were used in days gone by. Liquorice is my speciality from the Pontefract days. Liquorice stout blended with a sweeter style of Kriek is something else! But I have used nettle, ginger, elderflower and now, of course, thistle in Cairngorm Blessed Thistle.

Q: What hobbies/interests do you have?

A: Beer, Beer, Beer... Oh and walking.

Q: What are your favourite beers/beer types/other brewer's beers?

A: This question has a hundred answers. Some of my early favourites were Fuller's London Pride, Gales HSB, Marston's Pedigree, Brakspear's Special, Timothy Taylor's Landlord and Ram Tam, Sam Smith's OBB and, of course, well kept Tetley's Bitter and



Sean (left) inspects the brew

Mild.

I am still a great fan of milds such as Bateman's and Harveys. It is a style that has faded in popularity in recent years but a good flavoursome, easy going, full bodied mild is a joy.

At the moment my favourite tippie is Weihenstephaner Hefe Weissbier, a classic quaffable wheat beer. However I am really enjoying the present crop of top quality Scottish beers on the go just now. The whole beer scene north of the border is so buoyant at the moment, I am just glad to be

Real Ale Pubs

This is a list of Inns and Hotels who are known to sell (or to have recently sold) cask-conditioned beer. Please let us know about the quality of real ales being served (see Rate-our-Beer on page 25), particularly if you think inclusion in the Good Beer Guide is merited. We make no claims as to the quality of the beer, and you should note that some of the more remote pubs may only stock real ale on a seasonal **(S)** basis:

Inverness City

Blackfriars
Caley Inn (S)
Chieftain Hotel
Clachnaharry Inn (GBG)
Glen Mhor Hotel
Heathmount Hotel
Hootananny
Inshes Gate (TP - Top Pressure)
Kings Highway (*Wetherspoons*)
McNabs Bar, Columba Hotel
Number 27
Palace Hotel
Phoenix Bar
Snowgoose
Thistle Inn

Inverness District

Benleva Hotel, Drumnadrochit (GBG)
Loch Ness Lodge, Drumnadrochit (S)
Clansman Hotel
Slaters Arms, Cannich
Brockies Lodge, Kiltarlity
Bothy Bar, Fort Augustus (GBG)
Caledonian Hotel, Fort Augustus (S)
Lock Inn, Fort Augustus
Whitebridge Hotel
Dores Inn
Glenmorrison Arms
Duck, Conon Bridge
Culbokie Inn
Royal Hotel, Cromarty (S)
Cromarty Arms
The Anderson, Fortrose
Plough Inn, Rosemarkie (GBG)
Old North Inn, Inchmore

National Hotel, Dingwall
Richmond Hotel, Strathpeffer
Inchbae Lodge Hotel, Garve
Caledonian Hotel, Portmahomack (S)
Cawdor Tavern, Cawdor
Caledonian Hotel, Nairn
The Classroom Bistro Bar, Nairn
Invernairne Hotel, Nairn (GBG)
The Deerstalker, Daviot
Tomatin Inn, Tomatin (S)

Aviemore & Cairngorms

Cairn Hotel, Carbridge
Heatherbrae Hotel, Nethy Bridge
Boat Hotel, Boat of Garten
Cairngorm Hotel, Aviemore
Dalfaber Country Club, Aviemore
Glenmore Lodge, Nr Aviemore
Old Bridge Inn, Aviemore (GBG)
Winking Owl, Aviemore
Suie Hotel, Kincaig
Glen Hotel, Newtonmore (GBG)
Lodge Hotel, Newtonmore
Silver Fjord Hotel, Kingussie
Topsy Laird, Kingussie (S)
Ben Mhor Hotel, Grantown-on-Spey
Strathspey Hotel, Grantown-on-Spey (S)

* Strictly the following four pubs are in the Aberdeen, Grampian, & North Isles branch area, but are barely outside the Cairngorms and are worth a visit.

Mash Tun, Charlestown of Aberlour
Highlander Inn, Craigellachie
Croft Inn, Glenlivet
Glenavon Hotel, Tomintoul

Skye, Lochalsh & Hebrides

Isle of Raasay Hotel
King Haakon Bar, Kyleakin
Ardvasar Hotel
Isle Ornsay Hotel
Claymore, Broadford
Dunollie Hotel, Broadford
Hebridean Hotel, Broadford
Old Inn, Carbost
Coruisk House, Elgol
(*Restaurant - Real ale served with food only*)
Sconser Lodge Hotel
Sligachan Hotel

Taigh Ailean Hotel, Portnalong
 Dunvegan Hotel
 Stein Inn, Waternish (GBG)
 Edinbane Hotel
 Lodge Hotel, Edinbane
 Ferry Inn, Uig
 Uig Hotel, Uig
 Pub at the Pier, Uig
 Flodigarry Hotel
 Duntulm Hotel (*coming soon*)
 Greshornish Lodge
 Bosville Hotel, Portree
 Isles Inn, Portree
 Royal Hotel, Portree
 Cluanie Inn
 Glenelg Inn
 Kintail Lodge Hotel
 Clachan Bar, Dornie
 Loch Duich Hotel, Dornie
 Balmacara Hotel
 Kyle Hotel, Kyle of Lochalsh
 Tingle Creek Hotel, Erbusaig
(by Kyle of Lochalsh)
 Plockton Hotel, Plockton (GBG)
 Plockton Inn, Plockton (GBG)
 Lochmaddy Hotel, North Uist
 Tigh Dearg, Lochmaddy, North Uist
 Carinish Inn, North Uist
 Langass Lodge, North Uist (S)
 Westford Inn, North Uist
 Dark Island Hotel, Benbecula
 Isle of Benbecula House Hotel
 Borrodale Hotel, South Uist
 Orasay Inn, South Uist (S)
 Lochboisdale Hotel, South Uist
 Polachar Inn, South Uist
 Cladh Inn, Stornoway
 Royal British Legion, Stornoway
 Whalers Rest, Stornoway
 Shawbost Inn, Isle of Lewis
 Harris Hotel, Tarbert (S)

Wester Ross

Applecross Inn, Applecross
 Summer Isles Hotel, Achilitibuie (S)
 Am Fuaran Bar, Altandhu (S)
 Ledgowan Hotel, Achnasheen
 Drumchork Hotel, Aultbea (S)
 Dundonnell Hotel

A Fine Day for a Great Ale?



A Great Day for A Fyne Ale!

Kinlochewe Hotel
 Loch Torridon Country House Hotel
 Badachro Inn
 Glendale House Hotel, South Erradale
 Loch Inn, Gairloch
 Myrtle Bank Hotel, Gairloch (S)
 Steading Cafe & Restaurant, Gairloch
 Old Inn, Gairloch
 Lochcarron Hotel, Lochcarron
 Rockvilla Hotel, Lochcarron
 Strathcarron Hotel
 Tigh-an-Eilean Hotel, Shieldaig
 Argyll Hotel, Ullapool
 Caley Inn Bar, Ullapool
 Ferry Boat Inn, Ullapool (GBG)
 Morefield Motel, Ullapool
 Seaforth Hotel, Ullapool

* In total 33 of the pubs listed are in the Good Beer Guide (GBG). We cannot indicate all entries, you will have buy the guide for that. You may find some clues elsewhere in this newsletter.



Caithness & Sutherland

Scourie Hotel, Scourie (GBG)
Inchnadamph Hotel
Burghfield House Hotel, Dornoch
Royal Dornoch Golf Club
Castle Hotel, Dornoch
Invershin Hotel
Sutherland Arms Hotel, Golspie
Tongue Hotel
Melvich Hotel
Mackays Hotel, Wick
Alexander Bain, Wick (GBG)
(Wetherspoons)
Central Hotel, Thurso
Commercial Hotel, Thurso

Fort William & Lochaber

Ben Nevis Inn, Fort William
Capercaillie, Fort William
Grog & Gruel, Fort William
Ben Nevis Hotel, Fort William
(formerly the Milton Hotel)
Nevisport Bar, Fort William (GBG)

Invergarry Hotel (S)
The Eagle, Laggan Locks
(An Inn on a boat on the water)
Spean Bridge Hotel
Roy Bridge Hotel
Stronlossit Hotel, Roy Bridge
Tomdoun Sporting Lodge
Factor's Inn, Torlundy
Glenfinnan House Hotel
Steam Inn, Mallaig
Old Forge, Inverie
Ben View Hotel, Strontian
Four Seasons, Onich (GBG)
Nether Lochaber Hotel, Onich
Inn at Ardgour
Mamore Lodge, Kinlochleven
Tailrace Inn, Kinlochleven (GBG)

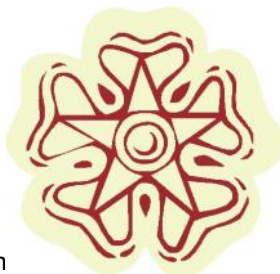
* Strictly the following three pubs are in Glasgow & West of Scotland branch area, but are not very far from the "border" and are worth a visit.

Laroch Bar, Ballachulish
Clachaig Inn, Glencoe
Kings House Hotel, Glencoe

Stronlossit Inn

at Roy Bridge

Freephone:
0800 0155321



Open all day,
food & drinks
available all day,
3 real ales on tap

Stronlossit is a real gem of tradition - a warm, welcoming character. The 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. 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.

Authentic Scottish highland inn-style Hotel of class and

'Real Ales, and a substantial Bar Meals Menu in "The Stronlossit Lounge.'

"The hospitality of the house will compliment the experience"

Your hosts: Maurice and Sandra Valley

www.stronlossit.co.uk

E-mail: stay@stronlossit.co.uk

Pubs-of-the-Year (POTY)

Up until 2004 we invited voting for your Town and Country Pubs-of-the-Year. In 2005, in recognition of the ever-growing number of pubs selling real ale throughout the Branch area, we decided to increase the number of awards to seven -

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

There is obviously any number of ways to divide up the Branch area. We gave this matter a good deal of thought, but we are sure that our final choice will lead to much debate in hostelryes up and down the land.

- 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.

Pubs are listed by POTY area (pages 20-22).

Please use the voting form below and post to the Secretary (address on page 6). Alternatively you can either e-mail your selection to the secretary or use our new on-line voting form. Further information at www.highlandcamra.org.uk

**Highlands & Western Isles Branch of CAMRA
2006 Pub of the Year Voting Form**

- Inverness City
- Inverness District
- Aviemore & Cairngorms
- Skye, Lochalsh & Hebrides
- Fort William & Lochaber
- Wester Ross
- Caithness & Sutherland
- Member's Name/No.

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, Hebridean Gold, Young Pretender and Blaven. Seasonal, House, and special event ales are regularly brewed.



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.



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 & Aviemore breweries, which they own. Ales include Trade Winds, Wildcat, Stag, Highland IPA, and Black Gold. Seasonal ales are regularly brewed.

Hebridean Brewing Company - Based at Stornoway in the Outer Hebrides. Began brewing in January 2002, now producing five regular and some seasonal ales. Beers include Clansman Ale (first ale ever brewed in Stornoway), Islander Strong Ale & Berserker Export Pale Ale.



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

An Teallach Brewery - Brewing moved to the family croft at Camusnagaul, near Dundonnell, during March 2003. Ales include An Teallach Ale, Crofter's Pale Ale, 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.

Highland Brewing Company - Started brewing in late 2004 at Moorhouses (Lancs). Brewery is to be located in the old Swannay cheese factory at Birsay, on Orkney.

Oyster Brewery - Located in Ellenabeich, on the Isle of Seil, near Oban. Set up late in 2004, first brews in the Spring of 2005. Ales include Easd' Ale, Red Pearl, and Oyster Gold.

Isle of Mull Brewery - Started in May 2005 with a 5 barrel plant in Tobermory. McCaig's Folly and Galleon Gold ales.

* 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.

Not all of the breweries listed are in our branch area are all in the Grampian & Isles area; Brewery Ayrshire & ea; while Islay Ales, Breweries Glasgow & ilarily for High- rianius & islands pubs listed in the GBG, pubs in Orkney and Shetland are submitted by the Aberdeen, Grampian & Northern Isles Branch.



Join CAMRA Today - Membership Form on Page 38

Rate our Beer

Highlands & Western Isles CAMRA would appreciate a little help in surveying the pubs in our massive Branch area. To help us decide which pubs in the Highlands & Western Isles are worth considering for the Good Beer Guide, we are using CAMRA's 6-point scale to record Beer Quality, month by month.

Please use the on-line Rate-our-Beer form on our website.

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.



We would really welcome your regular input, to help ensure that local pubs who consistently serve good quality real ale make it into the 2007 Good Beer Guide.

First Impressions ?

I am a member of some 20 odd years who moved into the area in the spring. Now that my wife and I have had the chance to settle in and have a look around I thought I would share a few of my views and opinions on the local real ale "scene".

The nearest concentration of outlets for us is Lochcarron and naturally, at first, our main port of call was the Lochcarron Hotel as it was in the GBG 2005. We found the lounge bar (at the front) cosy & friendly and the one beer, Red Cuillin (it never changed), always in good condition. The back (public) bar looked a bit too young & lively for us. The owners were in their first season and we have heard rumours since that the hotel is up for sale again.

The Strathcarron Hotel is also under new ownership. It used to be a good drinking & eating place a few years ago when it was a GBG regular. We went in quite often on our regular holidays to the N. W. Highlands, but of late it has become run down. I have to admit to only trying the place once since we moved up here because of this and that was earlier this summer when there was nothing on the handpumps, despite signs on the main roads advertising "Scottish real ales". I have heard that the situation has improved and when the new regime has bedded in will give it another try.

The third outlet in the area is the Rockvilla Hotel in Lochcarron main street. Yet another hotel under new ownership. The owners Peter & Wendy Bartlett have a catering background and have continued the policy of two rotating guest beers.

Although Peter is new to cellar-work he seems determined to do it right and beer quality has definitely been of GBG standard. He is hoping to keep 2 beers on through the winter "off season" but may go down to one to maintain quality (the food is also good). Most popular beers are from Skye and Atlas with contributions along the way from Inveralmond, Orkney & Black Sheep. Check opening times in winter though as there is talk of closing on Monday & Tuesday.

Badachro Inn. - We have been going in here on & off for years and have never understood why it has never been in the GBG as the beer is much more consistent than the Old Inn at Gairloch. It has a proper country pub atmosphere, a superb waterside setting, excellent food and two Scottish ales often from An Teallach. I think the Old Inn tries to sell too many ales to maintain consistent quality.

Plockton Hotel. - Usually has Deuchars IPA & (Skye) Hebridean Gold in excellent condition but is more of an eating place in busy season. We thought the Plockton Inn beer pretty ordinary.

Applecross Inn. - Has two Isle of Skye beers, Red and Black Cuillin in decent condition, superb views but again, more of an eatery especially in summer.

Sligachan Inn. - The beer has always been average and always served dead flat. The new (Cuillin) brewery's beers are not very full flavoured and don't punch their weight gravity wise. I think the Old Inn at Carbost, 2 Skye beers on this summer, is a better bet for a good pint. It also has a more "pubby" feel than the barn like bar at Sligachan.

Inverness - not too impressed with the Blackfriars (cloudy Deuchars) but it has since changed management. Ditto the Glen Mhor - warm and hazy Taylor's Landlord, didn't feel like a place to drink, more of a restaurant. Clachnaharry Inn has decent beer and a nice atmosphere but I can't understand why, with all the Highland micros producing excellent beers, space is wasted on McEwans 80/-, Adnams Broadside & Abbot Ale. If you are going to serve English beers there are hundreds better than these two.

The two pubs which have most impressed me by their "commitment to the cause", (for want of a better phrase) have been Benleva Hotel and The Anderson. Both have very friendly and knowledgeable proprietors. Incidentally The Anderson does

not only sell Scottish or Independent beers as stated in the GBG. It often sells beers from south of the border. In fact I was very disappointed on one visit when the selection was John Smiths Bitter and Ruddles Bitter - not much Scottish or Independent (or tasty) about that!

Hope to do more exploring and tasting and will be in touch again in a few months time all being well.

Yours Aye. MR, Strathcarron

Thanks for a very comprehensive and far ranging report which will no doubt trigger much comment in real ale circles.

Your letter suggests that you have found a variety of pubs, not necessarily all to your liking, but we are pleased to note that beer quality is mostly good! Ed.

DISCOVER

Real Caledonian Flavour

QUAL



EIGHTY

A Pub to Recommend

Hi, I've just spent a week up in Scotland and found a pub that served three real ales that were all in top notch condition, along with good food and accommodation and very friendly staff. The pub is the Stronlossit Inn at Roy Bridge, which is in an area void of good real ales apart from the recommended pubs in Fort William. This pub would be an excellent addition to CAMRA's list in this area. Best Wishes, C.A., Manchester.

Steep Prices

On a recent visit to the unpretentious Culag Hotel in Lochinver I was surprised to see the sum of £8.40 on my bill. I was even more surprised when I found out that it was for the two bottles of Orkney Dark Island I had enjoyed with my meal. Is there no limit to the rip-off prices beer drinkers are subjected to? W.A.T.

It seems not. Beer prices in Lochinver would appear to be even steeper than the surrounding mountains! Ed.

Return to the Fold

Blackfriars has been a bit of a disaster since Alexander MacDiarmid left, and rarely worth a visit in my opinion. I was tempted to return by the Autumn beer festival, and I'm glad that I did. The staff were friendly, the sensibly priced

food was very good, and the beers were in top class condition. I have been in for a pint several times since, and I can confirm that this town centre pub is now definitely back on track. ICT, Inverness

And very glad we all are to hear it! Ed.

New to the Fold

Spotted an ad in the Highland free-sheet for Brockies Lodge at Kiltarlity - "under new management and serves cask ale". I went over on Sunday (20th Nov) and had a passable Directors (2). The guy behind the bar said they had been doing cask for a couple of months, one hand-pump only, and it was going ok. He said that when people came in and tried it, they stayed on it all night! He wasn't too sure which other beers had been on, but seemed to remember a Belhaven and a Caley 80/-. Another pub to be added to our real ale pubs list! GH, Inverness

Supermarket Watch

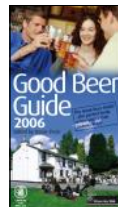
Tesco stores in Inverness and Dingwall continue to stock the largest selection of bottled beers, including beers from Isle of Skye, Orkney, and Black Isle. We have heard that all Morrisons stores will be stocking Orkney Dark Island and Red McGregor from January. A small selection of bottled beers on offer in the Co-Op store at Muirton includes Arran Blonde.

Website Matters

Does your pub sell real ale and have a website? If so then we would be pleased to add a link to our on-line list of hostelrys which sell real ale. We would be delighted if you include a link from your website to our own Branch website. Are you listed in the Good Beer Guide? If so, please remember that you can use the GBG artwork on your site.

Our newsletter, current and past editions, can now be downloaded from our website.

Please let us know how we can add to or improve our website content.





THE HEBRIDEAN BREWING COMPANY.

taste of the islands

clansman ale 3.9% ABO

***Beer of Festival, Aberdeen, Gram-
pian and Northern Isles Camra festival
2004***



Golden Hebridean bitter, brewed with Scottish malts.

Lightly bittered, a session ale with a light golden colour.

Good all day beer, plenty of hop and malt character, with lots of malt in the finish.

islander strong premium ale 4.8% ABO

SIBA beer of Scotland, Bronze 2002, Silver 2003. Premium Ale



Brewed with special coloured Scots malt, deep ruby in colour and predominantly malty with robust hopping to match.
Complex like the Hebrides themselves.

celtic black ale 3.9% ABO

Siba Beer of Scotland, Bronze 2004. Milds Category

Runner up North Hertfordshire Camra Beer of Festival 2004

A dark porter style ale full of flavour, balancing a aromatic hop combined with a subtle bite and a pleasantly smooth caramel aftertaste.



**BERSERKER
EXPORT PALE ALE 7.5% ABO**

Brewed using traditional methods and based on 19th century recipes. Then matured over a number of weeks to develop a smooth intricate flavour.

Brewed with a robust bitterness blended with a sweet smooth aftertaste and a hoppy aroma.

New seaforth ale 4.2% ABO

A classic blonde ale brewed with a variety of hops giving a complex fulsome bite balanced by pleasant refreshing citrus aftertaste.



Brewed and bottled entirely in the Outer Hebrides



Member of the Society of Independent Brewers

News of Brews

A number of new ales have been spotted of late. Cairngorm Brewery's **Blessed Thistle** is a reddish brown ale, bittered with thistle and late Goldings hops, and is reputed to have health-enhancing anti-inflammatory properties as well as aiding liver reconstitution. Initially a September special, this 4.5% ABV brew has proved so popular that it may well feature regularly in both cask and bottle.

Cairngorm's **Horizon** is a trial brew named after the single American hop used in the beer. This is the first time Cairngorm have used the Horizon hop, which gives the beer a good level of bitterness and a pleasant late ginger flavour.

Skye's Grand Ale is the Isle of Skye Brewery's 1000th gyle, at 4.3% ABV a light, refreshing beer with a citrus-like zing and a bitter finish.

Isle of Skye's "X" is a 4.5% ABV Best Bitter, dark ruby in colour, with intense malt flavour and aroma, brewed to commemorate the brewery's 10th anniversary.

Isle of Skye Brewery has also produced two bottled conditioned beers; **Misty Isle** is a 4.3% ABV citrus, cloudy wheat beer, and **Am Basteir** (The Executioner), at 7% ABV, is a strong winter ale.

Shetland's Valhalla Brewery has brewed a limited edition beer in recognition of the closing down of the RAF radar base on the island of Unst where the brewery is based. We're told that the **RAF Saxa Vord Commemorative Ale** is reminiscent of Young's Double Chocolate Stout.

Isle of Skye Brewery's **Young Pretender** won "Best Bitter" at the Wakefield Beer Festival. Overall it was placed second in

the Festival Championship - Fraoch won "Best Speciality" category and overall Champion. Wakefield had over 150 beers. Cairngorm Brewery's **Black Gold** has won Beer of the Festival at Darlington. Black Gold came 1st out of 50 beers. Darlington CAMRA members visited the Highlands in early December to present the award.

Iain Turnbull, formally a head brewer at Restalrig Village, Fisherrow and Fowler's breweries, has moved to Lewis and joined the Hebridean Brewing Company.

Cairngorm's **Trade Winds** was Beer of the Festival runner up, behind Heather Ales "Ebum" at the 10th Watford Beer Festival. Watford & District members travelled to Scotland to visit the winning breweries. A very comprehensive report of their trip can be found in their Oct/Nov newsletter, Pints of View, which can be downloaded from the South Herts CAMRA website - www.hertsale.org.uk.

Changes at Orkney Brewery who have a new logo, "more modern in some ways, and more Orcadian in its artistic inspiration". A special **Dark Island Reserve** is being bottled, and we hear that more changes will be unveiled soon on their website.

Atlas are trunking three beers - Latitude, Three Sisters, and Nimbus - south to be bottled at Robinson's Brewery.

Just bottled, a new strong tawny winter ale: Black Isle Brewery **Hibernator II**.

Look out, during December and January, for some stronger seasonal brews. Be very careful not to get caught in an Atlas **Blizzard** (4.7% ABV), or hit by Cairngorm Brewery's **Santa's Sledgehammer** (6.3% ABV). Rumour has it that Skye's **Cuillin Beast** (7.0% ABV) is also loose again..



*Five Real Ales plus selection of bottled ales.
Selection of Malt Whiskies and Wines.
Food served 12 - 9pm 7 days*

*Tuesday – Quiz Night
Thursday – Folk Music with Schiltrum
Friday – Retro Party Night
Saturday – Live Band
Sunday – Schiehallion Celtic Sounds*



*Wishing you all a very
Merry Christmas
&
Happy New Year*



A warm welcome and a friendly atmosphere.

Festival News

Benleva Hotel's Loch Ness beer festival got the Highland real ale festival season off to a very good start. Although this was only the fourth year, this event is already attracting regulars from south of the Border. Organiser Stephen Crossland is well known for promoting ales from Scottish independent breweries but, for the first time, his festival ale selection included beers from an English Brewery! Five ales from Cropton, a Yorkshire microbrewery, took the total number over the half century for the first time. Another festival first was a choice of real ciders.

Collectors of beer festival memorabilia were able to buy T-shirts and glasses. Festival beer mats were also spotted.

At Clachnaharry Inn, George MacLean ran his festival in conjunction with Highland Feast 2005. A wide and varied range of beers, including brews from Rob Hill's new Highland Brewing Company, complemented the seafood platters and other festival specials. Music offerings included jam sessions, rock band reunions, and some very lively tunes from the fiddle & vocal duo 'Coinneach', often accompanied from the bar by an anonymous drummer!

The Blackfriars festival, the first of a series of seasonal events we understand, offered both regular favourites from local brewers, and beers that are less common this far north - Timothy Taylor's Ram Tam, Bateman's Victory Ale, Greene King IPA, and Springhead Roaring Meg to name but a few. The excellent Robinson's Old Tom was voted Beer-of-the-Festival. A variety of events ran throughout the festival, with music to the fore. Rooty Ma Toot, a

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

February 2006

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

local seventeen piece big band, entertained a packed Saturday afternoon bar, including a party of bemused Forres Mechanics fans en route to a cup final!

The Morefield Motel was the venue for the first ever Ullapool Real Ale festival. Organiser Tony Oulton served a selection of Highlands & Islands beers, including brews from the Far North and Valhalla breweries. Very encouraging to see fellow festival hosts, George MacLean and Steve Crossland, both arrive with parties from their pubs - Are we not all on the same (real ale) side after all?

A mixture of local musicians played all day, seamlessly coming and going it seemed, while Tony and his staff worked hard to keep the beer flowing as casks ran out. Bar meals were served all day, with the

restaurant opening in the evening. All in all this was an excellent festival and a very good day out. Roll on next year.

The 19th Aberdeen Festival, sponsored this year by the Atlas Brewery, was held

at the McClymont Halls. After last year's early sell out an additional 27 casks were ordered, making a record choice of 76 beers. A large Thursday turnout, and busy Friday, left Saturday with only 35 beers.

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Inns & Things

In our Summer edition we reported that some regulars at the **Suie Hotel** were less than happy that their local could not even be considered for inclusion in the Good Beer Guide due to the fact that top pressure was used in dispensing some of the beers. We have since heard that all real ales are now served using CAMRA approved methods of dispense.

We hear that Scottish and Newcastle has recently struck a deal with British Waterways to be the sole supplier to all their outlets. The canal-side **Bothy**, in Fort Augustus, is one of 300 waterside pubs and hotels throughout the UK owned by British Waterways, and the tenants are no longer able to offer local ales.

Sligachan Hotel & Cuillin Brewery have closed for a Winter refurbishment.

been well represented over the past few years and two other GBG listed pubs, the Applecross Inn and Plockton Hotel, have also won this prestigious award. As well as good ingredients, serving the highest quality food or real ale requires much hard work in preparation, and it is often the case that pubs and hotels who excel in one area, do so throughout.

The Anderson in Fortrose is featuring cask ales of a "festive strength" during December as a thank-you to their loyal real ale customers - Black Isle Tawny Ale (6.5%), Theakston's Masham Ale (6.5%), Cairngorm Santa's Sledgehammer (6.3%), Fuller's ESB (5.5%), Young's Winter Warmer (5%), Orkney SkullSplitter (8.5%); in addition to some guest Belgian strong draught ales: La Chouffe (8%), Westmalle Trappist Dubbel (7.5%).

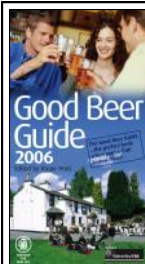
Please check www.highlandcamra.org.uk for latest real ale pubs list

Calendar Girls

The GBG-listed Old Forge girls (and boys) are starring in a calendar girls style, nude calendar. All the proceeds will go to breast cancer. Dorothy Walsh is the photographer and, according to the Old Forge website, is getting some really candid shots. The pub has donated £1000 which will pay for all print costs and means 100 per cent of the sale price goes to breast cancer awareness. You can order direct from the Old Forge -

Telephone 01687 462267 or
E-mail info@theoldforge.co.uk

Old Inn owner Alastair Pearson travelled south to Gleneagles recently for the presentation of the AA Best Seafood Pub for Scotland 2005/06. Wester Ross has



GBG Tasters

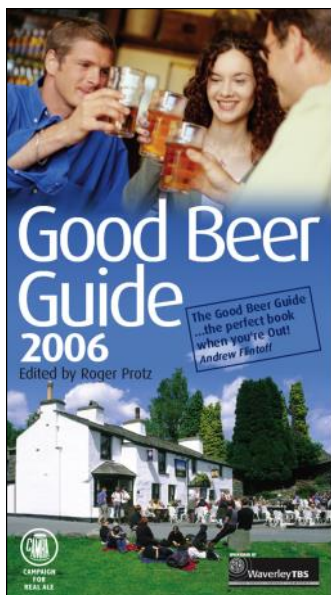
1. Applecross Inn

Spectacular setting on the shore of the Applecross peninsula. Two Isle of Skye Brewery beers are served. Fresh shellfish is a speciality. Accommodation within and campsite nearby. Can be reached by the highest vehicle pass in Britain, Bealach nam Bo, or by a longer and no less scenic route.

2. Grog & Gruel

In the shadow of Britain's highest mountain, this bare-floored ale house with church pew seating keeps up to 6 beers in summer (less in Winter). Owned by the same family as the Clachaig Inn in Glencoe, regular beer festivals are held.

Full details of the Applecross Inn, Grog & Gruel, and all the top Highlands & Western Isles real ale pubs can be found in the Good Beer Guide.



Good Beer Guide 2006

"The Good Beer Guide... the perfect book when you're Out" Andrew Flintoff - England Cricket All-Rounder.

The Good Beer Guide details 4,500 of Britain's best pubs.

These pubs are regularly surveyed by CAMRA members who visit them and you can therefore rely on this being the most up to date and well vetted of all pub guides. There are no fees charged for selection of pubs, just honest opinion from the people who know... your fellow beer drinkers!

Find out the best pubs to visit in towns, cities, and the countryside throughout the UK. For each of the 4,500 pub entries you will find full details of beer food, entertainment, family facilities, history, and architecture.

The guide contains an expanded Breweries Section which lists every brewery that produces cask beer. The majority of beers have tasting notes provided by trained CAMRA tasting panels. Keep up to date on the brewing scene, and find out who is in, and who is out this year.

Members can purchase the GBG 2006 from their Branch committee for £10:00, a saving of £3.99, and gives the Branch a small profit which is used to promote local pubs & breweries. **Sorry, sold out, please contact CAMRA HQ directly.**

A Change of Name ?

It had been suggested earlier, and was proposed formally at our AGM, that the Branch name is no longer appropriate and should be changed to one which better represents the local real ale landscape. When the Branch was formed, initially as an Aberdeen sub-Branch, things-real ale very much revolved around Inverness apart from a few notable outposts - mainly in Lochaber and Speyside. In the intervening years real ale outlets, selling ales brewed throughout the Branch area, have spread (rapidly of late) to all corners of the Highlands & Islands. Alice, the sole Inverness brewery, closed many years ago. Meetings, once held exclusively in Inverness, now take place at any number of rural venues, and the majority of members no longer live in Inverness.

"Highlands & Islands" was proposed as, in most eyes (including visitors to Scotland), this title best describes the area. Further, Inverness & Highland plus Aberdeen, Grampian & NI entries are combined under this heading in the Good Beer Guide.

Unfortunately this all-inclusive title is seen as treading on the toes of neighbouring CAMRA Branches who represent Orkney, Shetland, Arran, Mull, and so on.. "Highlands" or "Highland" was suggested, but this seemed to exclude the Outer Hebrides, whereas Skye is considered to be part of the Highlands (see www.visithighlands.com). After much debate on the merits of "**Highlands & Western Isles**" and "Highlands & Hebrides", the former was selected pending, of course, approval by CAMRA HQ Scotland.

Pub Reports - *A small selection only from the many on-line reports & e-mails. Ed.*

Sorry for not filling in the on-line forms, I have limited Internet access.

I have only seen a few other newsletters as comprehensive as your Highland & Islands 'What's Yours Then?' & they were the Darlington Drinker & Norfolk Nips. Well done on all the time & hard work you must put in & long may it continue. I have put together a few bits & pieces from the other weekend which might be useful. Scores given are out of five:



11/11/05 **Benleva Hotel**, Drumnadrochit - Cairngorm Black Gold 5, Atlas Tempest 4
Food good, but monk fish portions a bit on the small side for price. Accommodation with breakfast extremely good value. The landlord certainly knows his real ale. Disappointed to miss the beer festival which was earlier in the year. Will be back if not just for that next year!

12/11/05 **Village Inn**, Arrochar - Atlas Three Sisters 3
Cosy place with separate dining area. Would have stayed if not been booked Dinner, Bed & Breakfast elsewhere in the village.

13/11/05 **Oban Inn**, Oban (in the bar) - Atlas Three Sisters 3
The smoking ban cannot come quickly enough with places like this.

14/11/05 **Oyster Brewery**, Seil (15 miles south of Oban) - Clachan Boy 4
(Not unlike what draught Bass used to taste like).
Nice wee place well worth seeking out. As with previous places, very picturesque.

14/11/05 **Boat Inn**, Boat Of Garten - Cairngorm Trade Winds 5, Blessed Thistle 5
(Blessed Thistle not unlike Atlas Three Sisters). A shame I only had lunchtime to savour these! Who needs solids when this quality of beer is available?

Sweetmeal Sam, Aberdeenshire

27/10/05 **Clachaig Inn**, Glencoe - Atlas Latitude 4, Williams Fraoch 4
Luck landed me in this wonderful place, whilst travelling southwards towards home, during a small beer festival. Time did not allow me to sample more of their delightful wares, but will be looking to return as soon as I can.

IC, Coventry

18/11/05 **Blackfriars**, Inverness - Marston's Pedigree 4
The Pedigree was really rather good.

CVM, Inverness

25/11/05 **Blackfriars** - Young's Winter Warmer 4, Ridley's Old Tom 3
Also on but not tried - MacMullen's Country, Skye YP & Beast, Deuchar's IPA, Castle Eden. Two handpumps with the "coming soon" label - Jennings Cocker Hoop, Westons Old Rosie (Cider)!! Not a bad choice..

CVM, Inverness



In the Spring edition:

Highlands & Western Isles Beer-of-the-Year Award

Your chance to vote for the best beer brewed in the Branch area.

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

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Forename(s):

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Partner (if joint membership):

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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

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Send to: The Membership Secretary, CAMRA,

230 Hatfield Road, St Albans, Herts, AL 1 4 LW



Highlands & Western Isles

Real Ale in a Bottle

This is the next best thing, and the bottled equivalent, of the draught real ales you can enjoy at the pub. The beer is unpasteurised and is not artificially carbonated. It is a natural live product which contains yeast for a slow secondary fermentation in the bottle.



CAMRA launched an accreditation scheme, known as 'Real Ale in a Bottle', in August 2004. The aim was to recognise bottle-conditioned beers as a separate category to other bottled beers, and to encourage buyers to stock and promote them in their retail outlets. Breweries who participate in the scheme can use the CAMRA hallmark (shown above) on their bottle label artwork. So far 105 breweries are taking part, including four in Scotland: Isle of Skye, Bridge of Allan, Islay Ales and Moulin.

And Finally..

Thanks again to all of you who have sent e-mails or letters. If I have truncated your article to fit it in or if I have only included extracts, through lack of space, then I hope that I have not in any way detracted from the original sentiment. My sincere apologies to those of you who have taken trouble to send in articles which have not been published. I do hope we have found time to respond to all your e-mails - if not, please write again and let us know.

Please be assured that all beer reports we receive are logged and taken into consideration when recommending pubs for inclusion in the Good Beer Guide. We are committed to high quality real ale being available in Highlands & Western Isles pubs and hotels. Wherever possible the Branch follows up reports of poor beer quality. Hopefully you are enjoying a good pint of real ale or cider as you read this newsletter.

Cheers, Ed.



The and restaurant
GLEN Hotel



H O E

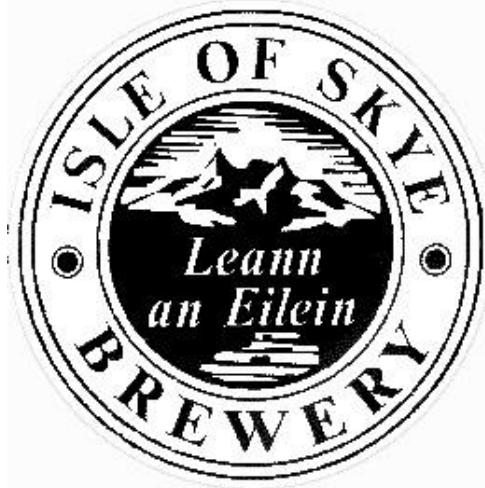


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