

What's Yours Then?

Highlands & Western Isles Branch
Free Newsletter



Black Gold

*has been voted
Beer-of-the-Year*

*by local
Real Ale drinkers
and was*

*placed second in
Champion-Beer-of-Scotland
as **Cairngorm Brewery**
narrowly miss out on a
CBoS hat-trick.*

*Full Results
on pages 23 & 35*



**CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE**

Summer 2006

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

- Best Local Brew - Your choice
- Focus on Rob Hill
- Socials & Outings Reports
- 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.

Autumn Newsletter **deadline** will be 1st September 2006, , with publication in time for the Autumn 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 6).

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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.*



No Smoking in Scottish Pubs

Not all visitors may be aware of recent developments: Since 26th March 2006 smoking has been

banned in pubs and other public places.

When the smoking ban was announced many publicans voiced concern about the impact of the ban on trade.

Happily two of the Good Beer Guide listed pubs in our area, at least, have reported that the ban has not had a negative effect on their businesses. Chris Goodhill, at the Glen Hotel in Newtonmore, has said that there is a noticeable increase in new customers, who are enjoying the smoke free atmosphere, while his regulars are staying longer and coming more often. Smokers have not complained. At the Clachnaharry Inn, our Branch Pub-of-the- Year, George MacLean also said that trade has increased since the ban; an increase in family groups coming in; and the smokers are happy to use the outside facilities when necessary.

Please let us know what you think. We would be interested to hear reports from publicans, and opinions or observations from both smokers and non-smokers.

At Edinburgh's Guildford Arms recently, I was interested to see "Gone for a Smoke" tags for drinkers to clip on their glasses when popping outside for a fag! Ed.

* Due to rising costs our advertising rates will be increased by 5% (from Autumn 2006). A first increase since this popular quarterly newsletter was re-launched in Winter 2003. Still very good value when compared to similar publications.

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Cairngorm Gold	4.5%
Wildcat	5.1%
Stag	4.1%
Nessie's	
Monster Mash	4.4%
Trade Winds	4.3 %
Black Gold	4.4%

Seasonal Cask Beers

Horizon	4.5%
Highland IPA	5.0%
Blessed Thistle	4.5%
60 Shilling	3.7%
Red Mountain Porter	4.5 %
Witches Cauldron	4.9%
Winter Flurry	3.8%
Santa's	
Sledgehammer	6.3%



Black Gold

ABV 4.4 %

Award winning Scottish Stout with a rich dark colour, traditional smooth sweetness with underlying roast barley hints



Trade Winds

ABV 4.3 %

Award winning light golden beer with masses of hop, fruit and citrus flavours



Wildcat

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Fax: 01479 811465

info@cairngormbrewery.com

www.cairngormbrewery.com

CAMRA Beer Tasting Course

In April the Benleiva Hotel in Drumnadrochit hosted the first ever taste training course to be held in the Highlands. Fifteen branch members attended, the large majority being novices. The course was enthusiastically conducted by Ian Brocklebank, CAMRA's Scottish Regional Tasting Co-ordinator.

The Highland Tasting Panel is short on trained members and has only been kept in existence over recent years by the efforts of just two active members; Eric Mills and Bill Tring. More trained tasters are therefore needed; these not only being the linchpin of CAMRA's function of providing beer descriptions for the Good Beer Guide; but more importantly for nominating beers for the award of Champion Beer of Scotland and Britain (CBOS and CBOB). Trained tasters rate the beers throughout the year on a scale of ten. The highest scoring beer in each beer category is then put forward to the regional rounds of these Champion Beer competitions. Chairman Bill coordinates all the completed tasting cards, with the help of an Excel spreadsheet, to provide the required information.

Ian's enthusiasm ensured that all present not only enjoyed the experience, but gained a well of knowledge of the finer points of beer flavours, plus the analysis of these flavours in the various categories of beers.

After a summary of the human body's tasting mechanisms, attendees were tested in their ability to distinguish between different dilutions of salt, sugar, and acetic acid (vinegar).

The beer brewing process was explained, with particular emphasis on the various ingredients used (water, malted barley, hops, and yeast.), and their effect on the flavour and character of the finished beer.

Five beers were then tasted, each emphasising a particular beer flavour or characteristic; the roast malt of Black Cuillin, the hops of Young Pretender, the balanced hop

and malt of the stronger Wild Cat, the bitter fruitiness of Trade Winds, and the complex flavours in the Cuillin Beast barley wine. Groups of up to four discussed their findings, with Ian on hand to lead and prompt on just what to look for in each beer.

Finally the important business of filling in the tasting cards was explained and all were asked to complete a card for each of the beers. Tasting Certificates were then awarded to all present.

Thanks were given to Ian and the hosts of the Benleiva Hotel for facilitating the running of this most worthwhile event.

It is now up to all the newly trained tasters to make sure that all the hard work put into holding this event is not wasted. To this end all present were encouraged to put into practice all they had learned, and throughout the year to complete as many cards as possible, thus ensuring that the wonderful brews from the breweries of the Highlands and Islands receive the recognition and promotion they so thoroughly deserve.

Tasting Matters - Update

In order to maintain the momentum, a number of informal tasting meetings have been arranged for the last Tuesday of the month, starting at 7.30pm. Please refer to page 6 of this newsletter, or to our on-line diary, for dates. These meetings will enable new tasters to get over their early fears of filling in the tasting cards, and will provide opportunities for discussions on various other aspects of tasting. Please try to attend as often as possible and complete as many cards as you can. It is also planned to have featured meetings, roughly once a quarter, focussing on some characteristic or aspect of beer, starting with a trip to Bairds Maltings at end of August (see Diary).

All interested real ale fans, particularly if you wish to learn more about the flavours and characteristics of the beers you drink, are welcome to join us at these meetings.

Contact: tasting@highlandcamra.org.uk



THE HEBRIDEAN BREWING COMPANY.

taste of the islands

clansman ale 3.9% ABV

Beer of Festival, Aberdeen, Grampian 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% ABV

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% ABV

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

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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



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2006 Branch Diary (Meetings start at 7.30 pm)

17 th Jun - 1 st Jul	* Beer Festival	Blackfriars, Inverness
4 th July	Branch Meeting	The Anderson, Fortrose
11 th July	Committee Meeting	Cairn Hotel, Carrbridge
25 th July	Tasting Panel Meeting	The Anderson, Fortrose
5 th - 19 th August	* Beer Festival	Ben Damp Inn, Torridon
Sat 12th August	Real Ale Bar	Marymas Fair, Inverness
26 th August	Scottish Branches	Glen Mhor Hotel, Inverness
29 th August	Tasting Panel Meeting	Trip to Baird's Maltings, then Blackfriars, Inverness
5 th September	Committee Meeting	Cawdor Tavern
Sat 9 th Sept		Annual Social/Outing to the Isle of Skye
22 nd - 30 th Sept	* 5 th Loch Ness Beer Festival	Benleva Hotel
Sat 23 rd Sept	* 5 th Loch Ness Beer Festival	Social/Outing
26 th September	Tasting Panel Meeting	Clachnaharry Inn, Inverness
Late Sept / Early Oct	Inverness Beer Festival	Clachnaharry Inn
3 rd October	Committee Meeting	Plough Inn, Rosemarkie
20 th - 22 nd Oct	* 2 nd Ullapool Beer Festival	Morefield Motel
20 th - 28 th Oct	* OctoberFest Beer Festival	Clachaig Inn, Glencoe
2 nd - 4 th Nov	20 th Aberdeen Beer Festival	McClymont Halls
7 th November	Annual General Meeting	Clachnaharry Inn, Inverness
5 th December	Branch/Committee Meeting	Heathmount Hotel, Inverness
19 th December	Inverness Walkabout & Social	Meet at N°. 27 at 7 pm

* Not all events listed are necessarily organised by CAMRA.

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

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

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news@highlandcamra.org.uk

* Eric will be away on his travels for extended periods and in his absence Gareth Hardman (01463 238462) will be helping out with secretarial duties.

Clachnaharry Inn *biting* You

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Festival News

Please put a reminder in your diary for our very own **Marymas Fair Real Ale Bar**. In the last two years this popular bar has sold out by early afternoon, and so we have ordered even more ale than ever before. The Marymas Medieval Fair takes place at the Northern Meeting Park in Inverness. The date is **Saturday 12th August**.



The **Great British Beer Festival** will be held at Earls Court (1st-5th August 2006) for the first time and is expected to be the biggest and best beer festival ever with over 700 real ales, ciders, perries, and bottled beers for visitors to sample.

Clachnaharry Inn again proved to be a popular **Ceol Beo Beltane Festival** venue. For the second year running, a packed

lounge bar, home of the weekly Ceol Beo Sessions, enjoyed a lively evening of traditional music hosted by Blazin' Fiddles founder member Bruce MacGregor.

A splendid selection of Scottish cheeses and oatcakes was provided by the **Gourmet's Lair**, washed down with Beltane Bonfire Ale from the **Cairngorm Brewery**.

The **Highland Feast** website is advertising the 2006 dates as Friday 29th September to Sunday 15th October (event listings are still for 2005). Clachnaharry Inn beer festivals in 2004 & 2005 coincided with this Food & Drink Festival. www.highlandfeast.co.uk

The **Shetland Folk Festival** organisers obviously recognise that good music invariably sounds even better with a glass of real ale, real cider, or real perry. As well as featuring the ales from the local Valhalla Brewery at their recent event, drinkers were able to enjoy Isle of Skye Brewery Fiddler's Ale (annual festival special) & Black Cuillin, and An Teallach Ale & Kildonan Ale. Other

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Scottish ales on offer included brews from Kelburn, Isle of Mull, and Harviestoun. For full beer, cider & perry lists, see on-line at www.shetlandfolkfestival.com/realale.php

The **Orkney Folk Festival**, held in May, was centred in and around Stromness where the Stromness Hotel and Ferry Inn are two of the main real ale outlets on the Islands. Two festival ales were brewed: Rob Hill's Highland Brewery produced an 'Orkney Folk Festival Special', a 3.6% ABV hoppy bitter; Shetland's Valhalla Brewery's 'Island Bere' was brewed using a heritage barley introduced by the Vikings, and which had a smoky, malty flavour.

The **Spirit of Speyside Whisky Festival** has branched out and now involves beer. Cairngorm Brewery ran beer tastings at the Mash Tun and corner Deli in Aberlour. The Highlander Inn in Craigellachie had three Cairngorm beers on, and hosted a whisky tasting and dinner with beer/whisky writer Michael Jackson. Dufftown's Whisky Shop and the Croft Inn at Glenlivet also held Real Ale tasting during the five day event.

As we went to press an early summer beer festival had just started at **Blackfriars**, with the theme being the animal alphabet. All beers either had the name of an animal in the beer's name, or in the breweries name, one for each letter of the alphabet - starting with Kelburn Aardvark, Black Sheep Best, and Isle of Skye Cuillin Beast!

The Darker Side

Highlands & Islands real ale drinkers are lucky to be able to enjoy some wonderful dark ales: the award-winning Cairngorm Black Gold and Isle of Skye Black Cuillin, the long-established Orkney Dark Island, Fyne Ales Vital Spark, Hebridean Celtic Black, Black Isle Organic Porter, and Islay Ales Black Rock Ale, to name but a few.

Highland Brewing Company's new 4% ABV **Dark Munro** is an excellent addition, and we are eagerly awaiting **Hector Ale**, from An Teallach, a 5% stout named after the ship that carried *33 families and 25 single men* from Ullapool to Nova Scotia in 1773.

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Traditional Cider Matters

It seems that our real cider cup runneth over. Real cider has been reported as being available in an increasing number of Highland pubs.

The Anderson, Fortrose

Addlestons cloudy cider has been regularly available on handpump since Spring 2005. Jim Anderson has reported that cider sales have increased threefold after replacing keg with traditional.

Eagle - Inn on the Loch, Laggan Locks

Thatchers Original Cider is served in this floating establishment.

Blackfriars, Inverness

After selling out of real cider in record time during their regular beer festivals, Westons ciders are now regularly available on handpump.

Stronlossit Inn, Roy Bridge - 12th May 2006

"Re: Cider. We have 2 x 5 gallons of Thatchers Cheddar Valley fresh in to-day, delivered from Somerset. First cask is now on the bar at £2.00 a pint." Maurice and Sandra Vallye, (and Peter Short, Barman).

Strathcarron Hotel

One of our roving reporters spotted Thatchers cask cider in early May. *Alas, no cider on Saturday 10th June. Rotate with beers apparently. Ed.*

Glen Hotel, Newtonmore - 12th May 2006

Westons Cider available at The Glen Hotel, Newtonmore from 22nd May 2006. Will alternate between 'First Quality' at 5% ABV and 'Old Rosie' at 7.2%!!! Thanks, Chris.

Benleva Hotel, Drumnadrochit - 26th May 2006

Quick update on the cider front. Westons Cider is now being distributed by Davie Orr of An Teallach. As a result Westons 1st Quality Cider (5% ABV) is now available at the Benleva. All being well we'll get one a week and, if sales are good, it will be a permanent feature.

Benleva Hotel, Drumnadrochit - 28th May 2006

Westons went on Friday afternoon, finished by Saturday night. Getting more this week!

Scourie Hotel - 6th June 2006

Westons First Choice Quality Draft Cider is now on tap. It is being delivered by Broughton Ales; along with of course a cask or two of their real ales.

King's Highway and **Alexander Bain**, JD Wetherspoons pubs in Inverness and Wick, offer Westons Organic Draught Vintage Cider and Westons Old Rosie Scrumpy. At the end of May another of our reporters found Thatcher's Heritage and Dry Cider on tap in Wick.

Tesco, Inverness Retail Park (off A96)

In our Winter 2005 edition of this newsletter we reported that "*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).*" Happily we can now report that Westons Organic Draught Vintage Cider (3 Litre Bag-in-Box) is on sale in Tesco, along with an interesting selection of bottled ciders.

Let us know if you find outlets we have missed. Ed.



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Cairngorm Brewery & Speyside Pubs Outing

7.30am, Saturday 7th April. Looked out of the bathroom window. "We are never going out in that!" It was snowing heavily. A white-out and the CAMRA members were going on a trip to the Cairngorm Brewery with diversions to other watering holes..

"Where are my boots? My compass? My hipflask? I needed to be prepared. Never let it be said that CAMRA members are not dedicated in the pursuance of sampling a decent pint or two for the benefit of others! We were not going to let a few inches of snow stop us.

I took my lucky horseshoe, packed my rucksack with sweets, and then set off to Inverness with Steve from the Benleiva to meet the others.

Inverness was bright and sunny. My weight-watchers diet was blown for the day as Steve persuaded me to go for a sausage and egg sandwich.

Everyone turned up suitably dressed for the worst; the driver for the day turned up on time, and off we went.

The scenery en route to our first stop was stunning. As I normally drive down the A9, I was able to enjoy the views for once.

We arrived at the **Cairngorm Brewery** before 11am and were warmly welcomed by Merlin and Ewen with our first sample of their newest brew, the Blessed Thistle. This beer had only been released two weeks before and is based on traditional methods using many different herbs and spices, in this case the Scottish Thistle! It is a full bodied brew, 4.5% ABV. Needless to say, like any brew that comes from Cairngorm, it went down a storm. At first most only wanted halves but their drinks were finished in minutes and their glasses replenished. The other beer provided on handpump was Black Gold, which was equally in perfect condition.

It did not stop there. Merlin kindly offered to open bottles of their other beers, including Wild Cat and the very famous and award-winning Trade Winds. Blessed This-



tle is also available in bottles and it cannot be long before it picks up its first award.

We reluctantly had to leave as we had other places to visit that day. Many thanks to Merlin and Ewen for their hospitality, and for the bottle of Blessed Thistle we were each given.

Its amazing how after a couple of pints everyone becomes more chatty, and after leaving the brewery the minibus was buzzing with conversation. The snow had disappeared and the sun came out.

Next stop was the **Boat Hotel** (at Boat of Garten). This is Glenbogle country and the train station the minibus pulled in by was that used by the BBC series.

The steam train was in the station and drew quite a crowd. However we were here for the beer and in we went. Two of Cairngorm's brews were on handpump, Blessed Thistle and Trade Winds; the landlord must have known we were coming.!

Although the TV series filmed in this area had long since finished the consensus was that the prices charged for the beers were over the top at £2.90 per pint. We all felt that the food and wine also was generally over the top.

We sampled both beers and everyone commented positively on the condition. However I felt that the first glass of Blessed Thistle was too cold to appreciate it. The 2nd however was much more appreciated.

Our leader (BT) had by this time disappeared for a few minutes, but returned holding up his trophy, a pint of Howler.

"Its on good form!" was his comment, "but we've got to get back to the coach for the next pub." No time to be lost. A few of us legged it to the public bar to sample.

Hmm! The day could have ended here but was soured by the fact that the beer was 50p cheaper to locals drinking in the public bar! We felt that the Boat had blotted their copybooks here by charging two prices.

The rest of the coach party had followed by this time and after sampling this fine brew several members began howling!

Back to the minibus and off to Aviemore

(Continued on page 26)

the glen hotel

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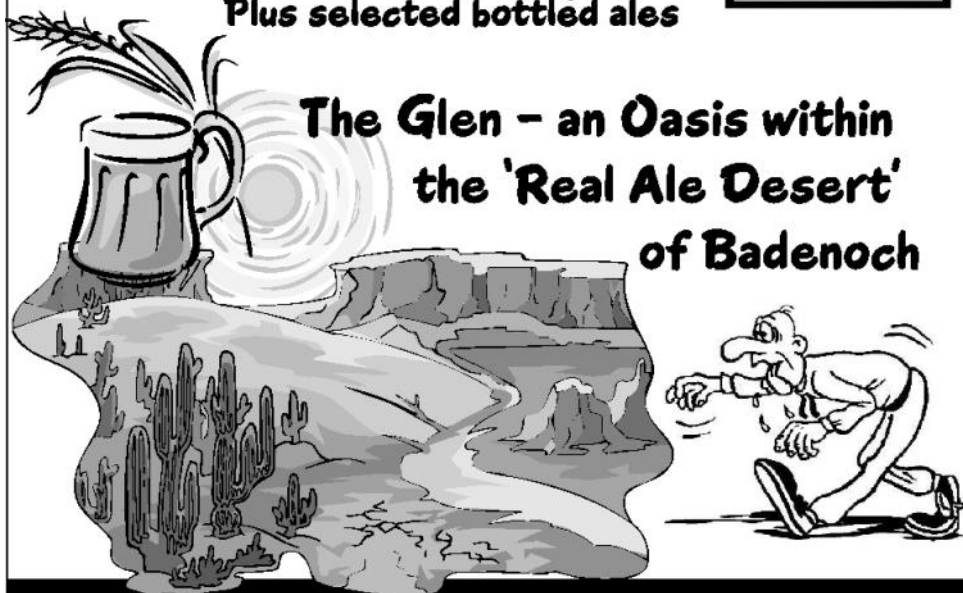
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An Alternative Container for Cask Ales

During the past 10 years outlets selling cask ales in the Highlands and Islands has risen from around 60 to 200. A lot of the trade is during the tourist 'summer' season. Outside of this time, with low turn over and wastage from the 9 gallon casks, outlets sold less real ale or took it off, especially in rural areas.

Angus MacRuary, owner of the Isle of Skye Brewery, has been trying to introduce real ale to new outlets, and to help both new and existing outlets to sell it all year round. He tried 4.5 gallon pins initially, but these became more expensive and then unavailable. The brewery searched over the years for a substitute container. Several were tried unsuccessfully until early 2004 when success was achieved by recycling syrup containers.

These containers, the majority of which were manufactured by Cornelius Ltd, were originally used to dispense soft drinks such as lemonade, coke, and orangeade through 'guns' on bar counters. However, with the introduction of throw away 'bag in the box' syrups these 'Cornelius Containers' (Corns) became obsolete. After much trial and error the Isle of Skye Brewery has been able to develop a means of converting these Corns so that they can be used for dispensing cask ale in a manner that is true real ale.

Roughly the size of an old red water fire extinguisher, there are many advantages:

- Small footprint means less storage space taken up in cellar or under the bar.
- Rubber handles on top make for easy moving.
- Pressure release valve much easier and quicker to operate than spile or broacher.
- No requirement for broaching.
- Changing containers in seconds – technical knowledge is not required.
- Dispense point is on top, no loop of line/tap protruding – safety benefit.
- Double skin provides element of insulation when temperature-controlled cellar is not available. Maintains temperature at least four times longer than single skinned pin.

Corns have proved invaluable to publicans, consumers, and the Isle of Skye Brewery. The success of the Corns is such that the brewery now has a stock of 500 and growing. In the past two years the brewery has undertaken around 60 installations in the Highlands and Islands, including 10 on the Isles of North and South Uist, where almost no cask ale was sold. Approximately 50 of these installations are for outlets which did not previously consider cask ale as viable.

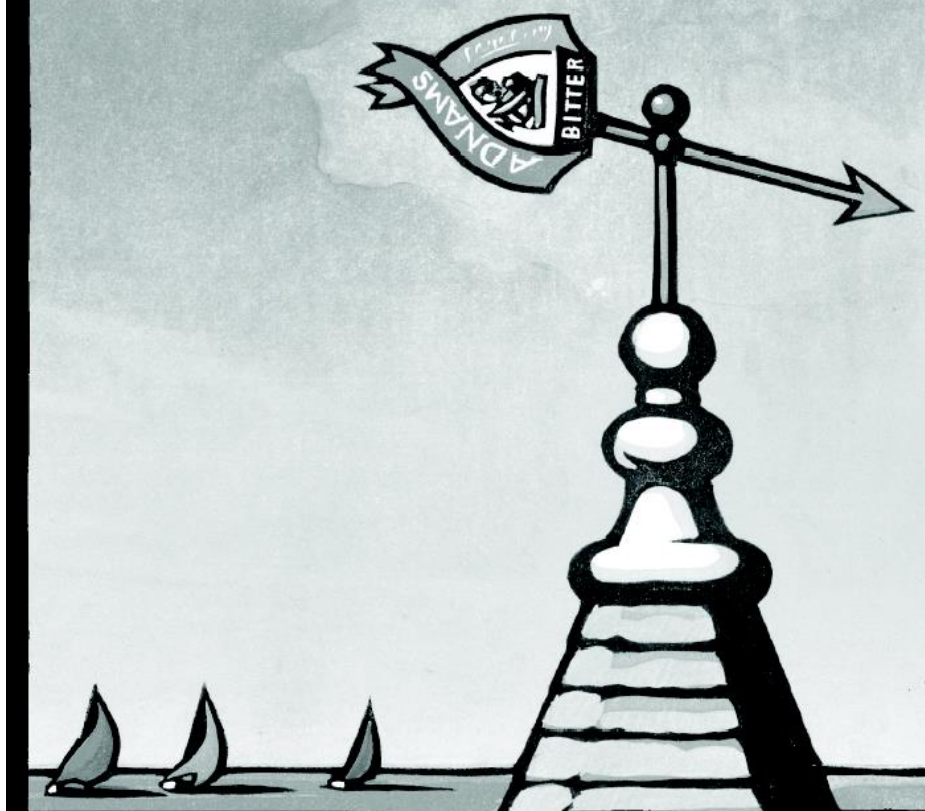


666 - Day of the (Cuillin) Beast

Angus, from the Isle of Skye Brewery, chose the warmest (and some may say the scariest: 6th June 2006) day of the year for his wedding to brewer Pam. Chairman Bill and Secretary Eric joined members of the family and other friends at the Registry Office to witness the wedding in tropical Inverness. Celebratory drinks followed at Blackfriars, where the 'Beer of Honour' was a special Skye brew called **Two Rings**: a lovely fruity hoppy amber ale. The Branch wish Angus and Pam all the best in their future together, and look forward to the union continuing to produce the superb brews which the Isle of Skye Brewery has become famous for.

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Adnams Broadside Always available at the Clachnaharry Inn



Good Beer / Good Pub II

Sir, I never anticipated, when I attached an email to my Pub voting slip on line, that the email would end up as a discussion article in "What's Yours Then". Unfortunately I never proof read it, and so left in the gaffe of Pub instead of Beer between the Good and Guide. Apologies for that.

However that does not alter what I was trying to put across. I also feel that to balance the article you could have noted that notwithstanding my comments about the Benleva, in the spirit of the GBG I still voted for it as the Inverness District pub of the year, by virtue of the quality of its beers.

You also mention "foodie pubs" disparagingly, and in this you may be correct. However the magazine carries many advertisements for pubs, that give equal billing to their serving of real ale and food. And so they should, as many of these pubs would cease to exist without income from food. The result of this would be less real ale outlets, less choice.

Finally you note that the GPG is not a CAMRA publication. So what? Does that make it a less valuable "tool" for someone seeking out a combination of good real ale and pleasant relaxing surroundings. I think not. I, for one, always have both guides readily at hand and would suspect your enlightened members would do likewise.

Yours sincerely, DM

A very good point, and well made. Food in pubs is definitely a plus, both for customers and, as DM points out, as a welcome and necessary source of income for publicans. Hopefully there is room in our pubs for both food and drink. I recently purchased, and have already made good use of, Cumbria Branches' excellent Cumbria Real Ale Guide. A paragraph in Jim Chapple's editorial sums up the subject of food taking over drinking space far better than I could:

"As pubs rely more on tourism the demands for food also increase, which is turning

many into eating places that sell beer, rather than the other way around. In many cases the drinker can feel uncomfortable in an environment where all the seated area is adorned with knives and forks, vinegar and sauces, and menus. In extreme cases the drinker is openly discouraged by "Reserved" markers on the tables. Whilst we appreciate the economic pressures of offering meals, let us hope that, in time, these pubs will get the balance right, and that we do not finish up with so called pubs that insist upon dining reservations being made to gain entry."

Thanks again to DM for his thoughts. Ed.

Jim Chapple also noted in his editorial that Cumbria Branches have as many real ale pubs as local CAMRA members. He points out that if Cumbria Branches could double their membership, then local members would have somebody to go to the pub with!

*I have to admit that his observation struck a chord. In this edition we list **182** Highlands & Western Isles pubs which sell real ale. At the last count our Branch membership stood at **149**. So it would appear that Highlands & Western Isles members are not only having to drink alone, but a number of them are having to put in some overtime as well!!*

I had a very wet walk yesterday on part of the Great Glen Way which runs from the Aberchalder swing bridge at the top of Loch Oich down to South Laggan. By the time we reached the Great Glen Water Park, refreshments were called for, and the hope was voiced that their restaurant might have some reasonable bottled beers. I was surprised and delighted to discover a handpump with Red Cuillin on, and had a pint and a half before being dragged away to consume sandwiches off site. I'd like to award the beer more than a 2, but it was a little cold for the flavour to come out, and there was a faint nose initially, so it may have been about to go off. Perfectly drinkable though, and very enjoyable for being so unexpected. Not my idea of a traditional pub, but a watering hole worth noting. Cheers, BH.

The Old Inn

Gairloch, Ross-shire, IV21 2BD

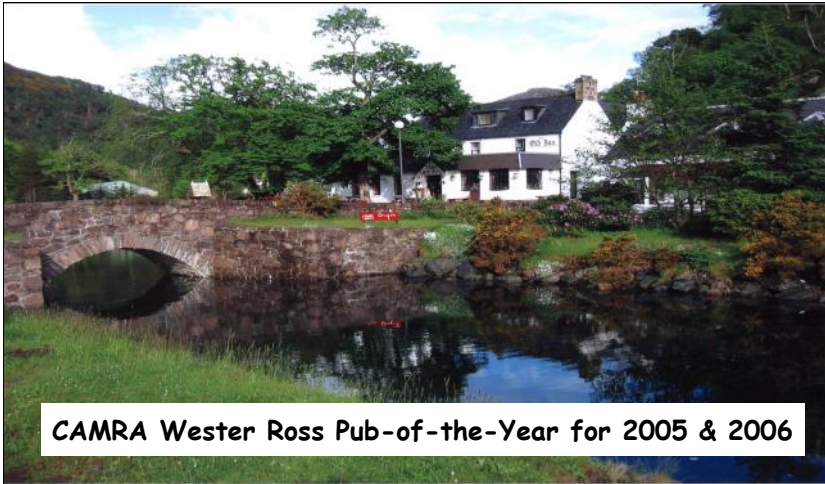
Telephone: 01445 712006 Enquiries - *Call Free* - 0800 542 5444

Scottish Tourist Board 3 Star Inn

AA Best Seafood Pub for Scotland 2005/06

Abbot Ale Perfect Pub for Scotland 2005/06

AA Pub of the Year for Scotland & Northern Ireland 2003



Real Ale, Real Food, Real Fires, Real Welcome
Accommodation - All rooms en-suite - Families welcome

Nestling at the foot of the Flowerdale Glen, with the river flowing under its charming old stone footbridge, The Old Inn is a traditional coaching inn located in a picturesque setting with spectacular views across Gairloch Harbour to Skye and the Outer Isles.



Up to eight Real Ales

Beer Garden

Food served all day

Website: www.theoldinn.net

E-mail: enquiries@theoldinn.net



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

THE AN TEALLACH ALE COMPANY

An Teallach
ABV 4.2 %

ers Pale Ale
ABV 4.2 %



Beinn Dec
ABV 3.8 %

use Special
ABV 4.4 %

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

Focus on Rob Hill



Rob Hill started the Highland Brewing Company at Swannay, at the north end of the Orkney mainland. He has bought a large range of farm buildings, formerly cattle sheds and a cheese factory. Rob was the Head Brewer at the Orkney Brewery when they rose to be one of the top breweries in Scotland. When Atlas

and Orkney Breweries merged Rob was made redundant. His first (Highland Brewing Company) brew, Scapa Special, came out last year and was brewed at the Moorhouses Brewery in Burnley while he started to sort out the farm. Now with a small temporary brewing plant in place he has started brewing at Swannay. He has so much passion for real ale.

Q: Where are you originally from?

A: I was born in Glasgow and the family moved to Burnley when I was three.

Q: What is your brewing background?

A: My first trade was in engineering, aircraft parts, but I was not enjoying it. I joined Moorhouses Brewery and spent thirteen happy years there learning the trade. I then had a chance of becoming Head Brewer at

the Orkney Brewery. I met Roger White the owner, was impressed and enjoyed nine years there.

Q: How were you introduced to real ale?

A: During a family holiday to Bude in Cornwall I had a pint of Bass and thought yes, this is it, this is what I have been looking for: flavour in a beer. I then went on to try other real ales and liked them.

Q: What is the best part of your work?

A: Meeting people and, of course, drinking the finished product.

Q: What is the worst part of your work?

A: All the travelling. At the moment I am travelling all over the UK; to sell the beers I produce on the way down, and pick up brewing equipment and supplies on the way back.

Q: Favourite beer/beer style?

A: I like well rounded dark beers like Moorhouses Black Cat but they are so hard to find. Also Balanced session beers like Timothy Taylor Landlord and Marstons Pedigree both have body and that something extra, which is why they are such big brands.

Q: What are your hobbies/interests?

A: When I have time I like to garden, fish and cook.

Q: Why move to Orkney?

A: When I came to work for the Orkney brewery we liked the place so much that we built our own house on the Island. Also the children's education was very good.

Q: What are your plans for the future, are any new brews planned?

A: I have already started other brews.

Besides the Scapa Special at 4.2%, I have St Magnus Ale at 4.5%, Orkney Blast is a 6% strong ale, and I have just brewed an Orkney Folk Festival Special at 3.6%.

Coming out soon is a 4% mild style brew. There is still a little tweaking to do to the recipes, to get the brews how I want



them, and maybe changing some names. The best part of the farm is the cheese store, which is temperature controlled and ideal for storing the full casks before delivery. Of course, I still have the rest of the brewery to build.

Judging by the picture there looks to be plenty of potential! Ed.

Secretary Eric recently joined Aberdeen CAMRA Branch colleagues on a trip to the Orkney Isles to present Rob Hill with their "Best-of-the-Festival" award.

Congratulations to Rob on brewing an award-winning ale, **Scapa Special Ale**, so soon after setting up his new brewery.

Real Ale Pubs

These Inns and Hotels are known to sell (or to have recently sold) cask-conditioned ale. Please let us know about the quality of real ales on offer (see 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 pubs may only stock real ale on a seasonal **(S)** basis:

Inverness City

Blackfriars
Caley Inn (S)
Chieftain Hotel
Clachnaharry Inn
Nico's Bar, 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

Inverness District

Benleva Hotel, Drumnadrochit
Loch Ness Lodge, Drumnadrochit (S)
Clansman Hotel
Slaters Arms, Cannich (S)
Brockies Lodge, Kiltarlity
Bothy Bar, Fort Augustus
Caledonian Hotel, Fort Augustus (S)
Lock Inn, Fort Augustus
Lovat Hotel, Fort Augustus
Whitebridge Hotel, Loch Ness South
Dores Inn
Glenmorriston Arms
Duck, Conon Bridge
North Kessock Hotel
Culbokie Inn
Royal Hotel, Cromarty (S)
Cromarty Arms (TP)
The Anderson, Fortrose
Union Tavern, Fortrose
Plough Inn, Rosemarkie
Crofters Café Bar, Rosemarkie (TP)
Munlochy Hotel (TP)
Old North Inn, Inchmore

National Hotel, Dingwall
Richmond Hotel, Strathpeffer
Ben Wyvis Hotel, Strathpeffer
Aultguish Inn, by Garve
Inchbae Lodge Hotel, Garve
Castle Hotel, Portmahomack
Edderton Inn, Edderton
Cawdor Tavern, Cawdor
Classroom Bistro Bar, Nairn (TP)
Invernairne Hotel, Nairn (TP)
Tomatin Inn, Tomatin (S)

Wester Ross

Applecross Inn
Summer Isles Hotel, Achiltibuie (S)
Am Fuaran Bar, Altandhu (S)
Ledgowan Hotel, Achnasheen
Drumchork Hotel, Aultbea (S)
Dundonnell Hotel
Kinlochewe Hotel
Loch Torridon Country House Hotel
Ben Damp Inn
Badachro Inn
Glendale House, South Erradale (S)
Loch Inn, Gairloch
Myrtle Bank Hotel, Gairloch (S)
Steading Cafe & Restaurant, Gairloch (S)
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
Morefield Motel, Ullapool
Seaforth Bar & Restaurant, Ullapool

Fort William & Lochaber

Grog & Gruel, Fort William
Ben Nevis Hotel, Fort William
Ben Nevis Inn, Fort William
Nevisport Bar, Fort William
Invergarry Hotel (S)
The Eagle, Laggan Locks
(*An Inn on a boat on the water*)
Loch Oich Restaurant/Bar, South Laggan
Spean Bridge Hotel
Stronlissit Hotel, Roy Bridge
Tomdoun Sporting Lodge

Glenfinnan House Hotel
 Steam Inn, Mallaig
 Old Forge, Inverie
 Ben View Hotel, Strontian
 Strontian Inn
 Four Seasons, Onich
 Nether Lochaber Hotel, Onich
 Inn at Ardgour
 Mamore Lodge, Kinlochleven (S)
 Tailrace Inn, Kinlochleven

* 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

Aviemore & Cairngorms

Cairn Hotel, Carrbridge
 Heatherbrae Hotel, Nethy Bridge
 Boat Hotel, Boat of Garten
 Cairngorm Hotel, Aviemore
 Dalfaber Country Club, Aviemore (TP)
 Glenmore Lodge, Nr Aviemore
 Old Bridge Inn, Aviemore
 Winking Owl, Aviemore
 Suie Hotel, Kincaig
 Glen Hotel, Newtonmore
 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
 Glen Avon Hotel, Tomintoul

Caithness & Sutherland

Scourie Hotel, Scourie
 Inchnadamph Hotel
 Burghfield House Hotel, Dornoch
 Royal Dornoch Golf Club
 Castle Hotel, Dornoch
 Trentham Hotel, Dornoch
 Invershin Hotel
 Sutherland Arms Hotel, Golspie (S)

A Fine Day for a Great Ale?



A Great Day for A Fyne Ale!

Sutherland Arms Hotel, Brora
 Tongue Hotel
 Melvich Hotel
 MacKay's Hotel, Wick
 Alexander Bain, Wick (*Wetherspoons*)
 Central Hotel, Thurso
 Commercial Hotel, Thurso (S)

Skye, Lochalsh & Hebrides

Isle of Raasay Hotel
 King Haakon Bar, Kyleakin
 Ardvassar 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
 Edinbane Hotel
 Lodge Hotel, Edinbane
 Ferry Inn, Uig
 Uig Hotel, Uig
 Pub at the Pier, Uig
 Flodigarry Hotel
 Duntulm Hotel
 Greshornish Lodge
 Skeabost House Hotel
 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)

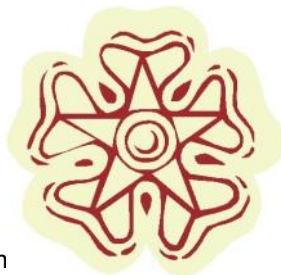
Plockton Hotel, Plockton
 Plockton Inn, Plockton
 Lochmaddy Hotel, North Uist
 Tigh Dearg Hotel, Lochmaddy, North Uist
 Carinish Inn, North Uist
 Langass Lodge, North Uist (S)
 Westford Inn, North Uist
 Dark Island Hotel, Benbecula
 Isle of Benbecula House Hotel
 Borrodale Hotel, South Uist
 Orasay Inn, South Uist (S)
 Lochboisdale Hotel, South Uist
 Polachar Inn, South Uist
 Am Politician, Eriskay
 Cladh Inn, Stornoway
 Royal British Legion, Stornoway
 Whalers Rest, Stornoway
 Shawbost Inn, Isle of Lewis
 Harris Hotel, Tarbert (S)

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

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 Vallyely

www.stronlossit.co.uk

E-mail: stay@stronlossit.co.uk

Highlands & Western Isles

Beer-of-the-Year

Cairngorm Brewery

Black Gold, 2005

Champion Beer of

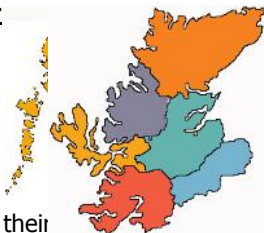
Scotland, has been

voted by Highlands

& Western Isles

real ale drinkers as their

Beer-of-the-Year for 2006.



Highlands & Western Isles CAMRA

2006 Beer-of-the-Year

1st - Cairngorm Black Gold

2nd - Isle of Skye Black Cuillin

3rd - Cairngorm Trade Winds

Isle of Skye Brewery's Black Cuillin came a very close second, with Cairngorm Trade Winds, 2004 Champion Beer of Scotland, taking third place. Congratulations and well done to all at both breweries.

Black Gold - 4.4% ABV

A Scottish stout with a wonderful rich dark colour. A smooth medium bodied beer with subtle bitterness gives way to late sweetness and underlying roast barley hints.

Black Cuillin - 4.5% ABV

The dark one, brewed with rolled roast oatmeal and honey. It takes its name from the world renowned mountains of the Isle of Skye, and is a unique strong flavoured dark ale.

Trade Winds - 4.3% ABV

Light golden in colour, with a high proportion of wheat and corn giving it a clean fresh taste. The mash blends together with the Perle hops and elderflower providing a bouquet of fruit and citrus flavours.

This result confirms that dark beers have lost none of their popularity, and continue to be enjoyed by real ale drinkers.

Thanks to all who voted for their favourite beers, and remember to note down the best beers you find over the next 12 months.

*Come along and try a glass of Black Gold from the Real Ale bar we are running at the **Marymas Fair** in Inverness in August.*

Draught News From The Anderson

(May e-mail-out)

Hello, Better Beer Fans --

The Anderson is proud to announce the installation of our 3rd handpump!

Whilst business during the winter months once again ground to a gut-wrenching halt, real ale sales for the period allowed us to maintain 2 handpumps as well as our "no ale on more than 4 days" policy straight through.

And now that the Highland Hibernation is over, our new antique, quarter-pint-pull Angram will allow us to offer 3 ales throughout the warm months, in addition to Addlestone's cask cider and our rotating Guest Belgian ales.

Here's what's on this fortnight:

REAL ALE

- Black Sheep Best Bitter (3.8%)
- Houston Killellan (3.8%)
- Fraoch Heather Ale (4.1%)
- Cairngorm Mild May (4.0%)
- Robinson's Young Tom (4.0%)
- Black Isle Yellowhammer (3.8%)
- Bath Gem Best Bitter (4.1%)
- Cairngorm Trade Winds (4.1%)
- Hall & Woodhouse Badger First Gold (4.0%)
- Wentworth Best Bitter (4.1%)

GUEST BELGIAN ALES

- Chimay Trappist White (9%)
- Straffe-Hendrick (6%)
- Leffe Brune (6.7%)
- St. Arnoldus (7.2%)
- Maredsous 8 (8%)

Do come help keep our ales fresh!
Jim Anderson

A number of local pubs and hotels send out newsletters via e-mail, and it is well worth adding your e-mail address to their mailing lists! A very easy way of keeping up with news and events at your favourite hosteleries. Ed.



Highlands & Islands Brewers in 2006



* **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 Blonde, Dark, and Sunset.



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, Black Rock, and Dun Hogs Head; plus seasonal brews.

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 now 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**.

* In Administration at time of going to press, further information on page 29.

Not all of the breweries listed are in our branch area - pubs in the Grampian & Isles area; Brewery Ayrshire & Sea; while Islay Ales, Breweries Glasgow & ... Similarly for Highlands & 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, or send us an e-mail.

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 which consistently serve good quality real ale make it into the next Good Beer Guide.

(Continued from page 12)

town centre. As we had a number of establishments to choose from we split into groups. The diehard walkers found a very good pint of Trade Winds at the **Dalfabour Country Club**, some to the Cairngorm Hotel, and the rest of us went to the **Old Bridge Inn**. Here the Bridge had Wildcat, Deuchars IPA, and Caley 80 Shillings on offer. My companions had the 80/- and I ordered the Wildcat. I had to admit that my beer was somewhat tired, and a touch cloudy. I could not finish it. The other two enjoyed their 80/- though. After a spot of soup and haggis we went on to meet the others at the **Winking Owl** - No do not even go there with any modifications to its name! Deuchars only was on offer and our colleagues advised us not to bother as the beer was very mediocre and £2.70 per pint. Word was that the pub had had problems with another brewery, and had only the one handpump out of three in service.

Next venue: The **Cairngorm Hotel**.

We all met here and sampled the only beer on offer, the Cairngorm Stag, which was wonderfully clear, the temperature spot on. This was the first pub to have Stag on and it made a welcome change. It was also nice to see that despite this being very much a haven for tourists, it sold decent food and had available traditional pub games like cribbage, cards and dominoes. Along with an accordion player playing highland tunes for the tourists. We all felt that a second, perhaps lighter ale, could be provided, but on the whole we had an enjoyable experience here.

We then set off to the **Suie Hotel**.

"Oh, that's what it looks like then!" We were greeted by a large timber shed, but as the minibus pulled into the car park a very traditional manor house came into view. The only thing was that there was nothing on the road signage to suggest that real was sold here, only a faded Tennent's sign. A few commented on this. On going inside there was a most welcoming real fire. Decked out with traditional stags head decor. Perhaps the landlord wanted

this place to be kept a secret?

Skye's Red Cuillin and Cairngorm's Trade Winds were on handpump. I tried the Red Cuillin which was served to perfection, as was Trade Winds. We stayed to watch the Grand National (see picture) which was on that day. We had a sweepstake. Needless to say BT won! With AP 2nd and Steve C 3rd. This was definitely a place to revisit.



Our next stop was the **Silverfjord Hotel** in Kingussie. Here we sampled the Isle of Skye Special. We were not sure whether this was a blend of Hebridean Gold and Young Pretender, but there was nothing wrong with the taste. It was served a bit too cold, which was why it had a slight haze (according to EM). There were mixed reviews about this though.

Next stop, The **Tipsy Laird**.

New owners have taken over recently. There had been some good reports since their arrival. Not the most inviting entrance when we walked in. This is a bar with a dining area. On handpump was Trade Winds - seemed to be the most popular beer in the area, and seems to have been targeted towards those lager drinkers who wanted to drink something decent for a change. We had only one drink there, and it seemed fairly average.

And so to the last pit stop, the **Glen Hotel** in Newtonmore. BT still continuing to wax lyrical about his win on the gee gees - beam him over to Aintree someone!!

On offer at the Glen, surprise of the day, was Theakston's Old Peculier. A bit flat for



Black-

Great Beer

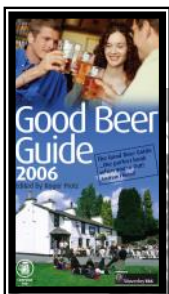
Great Service



FIVE REAL ALES ON TAP
PLUS SELECTION OF BOTTLED ALES

WIDE SELECTION OF MALT WHISKIES AND WINES

REGULAR LOCAL ENTERTAINMENT



*Two for one offer now
available on lunch menu*

*Watch out for our regular
beer festival dates*



**Traditional Menu Served 7
Days**

**93-95 Academy Street
Inverness IV1 1 LU**

BEN DAMPH INN

Real Ale Experience

Sun 6th – Sat 19th August 2006



Slowly does it... enjoy the last slug

Live music

Fri 11th & Sat 12th and Fri 18th & 19th

Take away your own stamped tankard, Over 14 Scottish real ales to try...
from 5 Scottish breweries. Great Pub grub available.



my taste but appreciated by those who ordered it. Blessed Thistle (which was considered to be a big contender to Trade Winds), and Glenbogle Ale (brewed by Skye Brewery) were also available. The latter we tried to figure out whether it was a mixture of Blaven and Young Pretender? What was it Angus??

All three went down well, especially with the delicious food served up. Our many thanks go to Landlord Chris Goodhill (who was in fact in Edinburgh watching a musical). Also to his staff for looking after us with warmth, especially Derek.

A reassuring note here was that the majority of the customers were drinking real ale, especially the Glenbogle Ale.

On the whole, we were all pleasantly surprised how much local real ale was on offer, and at the consistency in quality.

This was indeed an excellent day.

A special mention to the driver from Charlie Fraser's coaches, who again kindly and patiently ferried 10 alcohol infused CAMRA members around for the day.

As for the weather? Well the snow cleared only to be followed by the rain, but we did not care. We had been pleasantly watered on the inside. CW, Drumnadrochit

News of Brews

Red Cuillin and Cuillin Red

Named after the famous hills of the Isle of Skye, Red Cuillin is a premium ale brewed by Isle of Skye Brewing Company at Uig, which has won many awards.

"Red Cuillin" is a registered trademark.

We have heard that the Cuillin Brewery, which is located in the old public bar of the Sligachan Hotel, have recently brewed 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



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

beer call "Red", and which is being served in their Seamus Bar.

Confusion has arisen between Red Cuillin and Cuillin Brewery "Red", with visitors to the Isle of Skye reporting that they have been drinking Isle of Skye Brewery Red Cuillin at Sligachan. Isle of Skye Brewery does not supply beers to Sligachan Hotel.

Cairngorm Brewery's seasonal brew for May, "Mild May" (3.7% ABV), was on tap at the Duck for our May branch meeting. In splendid condition, and enjoyed by all.

Highlands and Island Breweries (HIB) has gone into administration following "cash flow problems"

From *The Publican*, published 5th May 2006

The company owns two Scottish breweries; Atlas Brewery, based in Kinlochleven, where it brews brands such as Latitude, Nimbus and Three Sisters, and the Orkney Brewery, which brews Red MacGregor and Dark Island.

Fraser Gray of administrators Kroll says: "We're continuing to trade the business and are in talks with customers and suppliers to secure their ongoing co-operation. "We appreciate this is a worrying time for employees and would like to thank them for their continuing support." HIB employs 12 staff and last available figures revealed annual turnover in the region of £1.5m.

Western Isles Visit I

I have just come back from visiting Lewis/Harris and before I went I took the liberty of checking whether there were any GBG listed pubs there. To my disappointment there were none, at least in the 2005 edition. However, when we were staying in Tarbert, we had dinner in the Harris Inn (I think that is the name, it is next to the main hotel there). To my delight, the bar contained three handpumps, with two Hebridean Brewery beers (Islander and Seaforth) and Skye Red Cuillin Ale. The quality was excellent and the ambience conducive to simply having a quiet pint as well as a meal. I think that this place should be considered as a possible GBG entry. Incidentally, I also toured the Hebridean Brewery and took home some of their bottled beer, which I have greatly enjoyed.

Regards, AG, North Sussex CAMRA

Western Isles Visit II

I'm a Herts Essex Borders branch member, and GBBF bar manager, as well as looking after beer at several smaller festivals. My wife and I were on holiday in the Western Isles over Easter, and thought you might like to know our beery experiences, limited as they tend to be on the Isles.

I picked up a copy of What's Yours Then? at the Pub on the Pier in Uig - probably the best CAMRA magazine I've seen - a great read and very informative. I browsed over a Red Cuillin from next door whilst waiting for the ferry - in excellent condition scoring an easy 4 on the CAMRA scale.

We were surprised at the increase from last year in bottled beers available on the Western Isles, thanks in large part, it would seem, to Andy at Hebridean. Both the Co-op and the private shops sell a wide range (although not a lot of BCA). This was just as well as our week on North Uist was dry on the cask front. The Lochmaddy Hotel had a handpump, but no

beer, and enquiries at the bar suggested that the pump was unused. The new Tigh Dearg Hotel in Lochmaddy was very apologetic about having sold out of their house ale brewed by the Skye Brewery, but they did have the bottled version, which was very nice, if rather warm.

On Lewis for our second week, we visited the brewery to top up our bottled supplies. Unfortunately, the Whalers Rest was not serving the local brew while we were there - they had Theakstons and Pedigree, and as we can drink them anywhere, we decided to stick to the bottles, which we can't.

We will be returning next year, so with any luck, I'll have a bit more to tell you then!

Best Wishes, Ben.

Blackfriars I

A recent visit to this excellent pub was notable for two reasons apart from the beer. Firstly, I discovered WYT and was highly impressed - as good as any CAMRA newsletter I've seen, and from an area that must have a relatively limited membership. Well done!

Secondly - I knocked my beer over while sorting my bags out and went to the bar to ask for a cloth. Not only was the spill cleaned up for me but I was offered a free replacement pint straight away. Another 'well done'!

PD, Sheffield.

Blackfriars II

Hello! Myself and a journalist colleague have just returned from Inverness having been drinking the best Real Ale ever! Your (Isle of Skye Brewery) Black Cuillin is nothing short of exceptional. I only wish there was an outlet for it in London and the South-East of England, as we are having withdrawal symptoms! I was fortunate to taste it at the Great British Beer Festival, but it was almost at the end, so not the best pint I fear. I don't think your bottled Black Cuillin is cask conditioned (or bottled

conditioned)...is it? Either way I doubt it would quite match the splendid flavours of your draught version. If there are any outlets down south I'd be grateful for a reply e-mail. In the meantime I wish you well for the future, and hope to taste Black Cuillin

again when I am next in Scotland.
Sincerely, CB, Broadcaster.

*Good service and exceptional beer.
Well done indeed. Ed!*

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Inns & Things

In our Spring edition we reported that the **Deerstalker pub & restaurant** at Daviot is to be demolished to make space for two houses. A message on the Deerstalker website (www.thedeerstalker.co.uk) reads:

"Unfortunately this bar & restaurant is now closed and Andy & Deeds are actively searching for new premises in which to continue with their plans to provide high quality food, service, and surroundings at very attractive prices.

Please return here periodically to see the latest details of their progress."

We wish them every success. Ed.

Portable Pub - "Amber Iris presents to you the Worlds first inflatable pub" Find out more at www.amberiris.co.uk

The Strontian (www.thestrontian.co.uk)

Sam and Huseyin Araz have written to tell us: "We have just taken over the Strontian (hotel) in Strontian and are stocking real ales. We intend to have at least one real ale on all year round with additions.

For example, today we have on Heb Gold and Red Cullin and are waiting for new stock of 3 Sisters and Nimbus.

Welcome to the fold. Ed.

Old Bridge Inn, Aviemore

"Due to continual demand and wishing to upgrade our facilities, and react to consumer demand and legislation, we have now added a new toilet block and smoking verandah - which in turn has created more space for diners and drinkers. The final stage is the re-siting of the bar which should be concluded this Autumn."

Eagle - Inn on the Loch

The Eagle Barge at Laggan locks, that most unusual and characterful location for real ale and great sea food, has new owners. Gordon, that loveable eccentric, has sold up and taken to the road. According to the

new owners he is now touring Britain in a camper van. Paul and Janet Betts previously owned the Old Pantry restaurant in Aberlour, and it is their intention to run 'The Eagle' essentially the same as did Gordon. Paul, who is also a trained chef, intends also to source his sea food supplies from Kinlochbervie, and simply provide seafood of the day meals as before. There will be nothing as complicated and stressful as a menu, though they do intend to be a little more diverse and provide options for non-fish-eaters and vegetarians. They will also provide tea and coffee during the day.

The Branch wish Gordon, and Paul & Janet every success with their new ventures.

New owners at the **Sutherland Arms Hotel in Brora** are carrying out a major refurbishment which includes a new cellar. They hope to serve at least one Scottish real ale at all times of the year.

The **Glen Mhor Hotel** in Inverness has recently changed ownership. John Erasmus, a South African now based in Inverness, has taken over from Nicol Manson and hopes to continue his many years of good work in establishing the hotel's reputation for excellent food and cask ale.

I had lunch at the **Whitebridge Hotel** today with friends. Two decent pints of Deuchars IPA (3), which is the most regular real ale as it is a favourite of the owner. He made a point of speaking to us as he knows our interest in real ale, and told us he has been talking to Skye Brewery and will almost certainly be installing a second handpump in around a month's time, to have a second real ale for the summer season.

Also, and slightly off topic, I had problems getting into the place with my partner in a wheelchair, and when I mentioned it he promised to look into installing a permanent or portable ramp, so he gets a vote of confidence for that. *Rightly so! Ed.*



Morning Coffee and
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Cairngorm Brewery
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Fully licensed with separate bar, 11 - 11. Meals served lunchtime and evenings.



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

23rd May **Grog & Gruel**, Ft. William Atlas Three Sisters - 2, Atlas Nimbus - 3
I also visited on May 24/25 when I drank Latitude. Score of 3 on both days. Bit disappointed on the 22nd as Three Sisters was the weakest beer, the other choices being Dark Island and Nimbus. After a hard day on the hills in bad weather I, and my friends, really wanted a session beer. One member of the bar staff who was on all three days that I visited could not grasp the concept of a full pint. I appreciate that this is a national problem but it is useful info to have about the G&G for future reference. It wouldn't stop me or my friends - the other six prefer to drink real ale but aren't CAMRA members - from visiting here in future or recommending it to other friends.

24th May **The Eagle**, lagan Locks Atlas Three Sisters - 4
I had two pints here and was really impressed with the beer quality. After leaving one of my friends commented that he had seen the woman behind the bar give the cask a shake after saying to some other customers that she didn't think there was much beer left. If I had known this while there I would have said something.

24th May **Factors Inn**, Torlundy No Real Ale - 0 Visited by myself and friends between 21st - 25th May. Rarely open, no real ale available, no handpumps.

25th May **Stronlossit Inn**, Roy Bridge Cairngorm Trade Winds - 4
£2.80 a pint! The Trade Winds was so good I had 3 pints. Friends were drinking (Isle of Skye Brewery) Red Cuillin which they said was very good. There is great affection in our group for Red Cuillin after finishing a cask at the Old Forge, Inverie, some years ago and it was difficult to get them to try the Trade Winds. An Teallach Ale was also on. The friends from London were shocked at having to pay £2.80 a pint in the Highlands.

RR, Dumfries. *A regular Highlands visitor and beer reporter. Thanks, Ed.*

Champion Beer of Scotland Cairngorm just misses out on a hat-trick!

Cairngorm Brewery just missed out on a hat-trick of Champion Beers by winning 2nd and 3rd place in the 2006 competition. They won the Champion Beer of Scotland title in 2004 and 2005. Kelburn Brewery's **Cart Blanche** has been voted Champion Beer of Scotland at the Scottish Traditional Beer Festival, held in Edinburgh at the beginning of June.

Eight Scottish beers were selected by CAMRA tasting panels, which judge beer quality and taste throughout the year (see page 4), for entry into this year's final.

The final results were:

- 1st Kelburn – Cart Blanche
- 2nd Cairngorm – Black Gold
- 3rd Cairngorm – Trade Winds
- 4th Inverlismond – Ossian's Ale

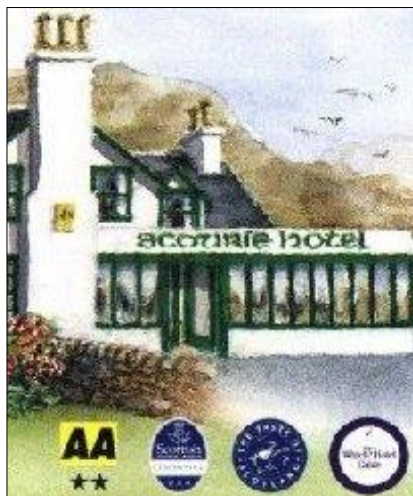
Other finalists

- Isle of Skye – Young Pretender
- Kelburn – Red Smiddy
- Orkney – Red MacGregor
- Sulwath – Solway Mist

The winner, Kelburn's Cart Blanche, is described in CAMRA's Good Beer Guide as "A golden, full-bodied ale with dry aftertaste". It derives its name from the white waters of the River Cart which flows past the Kelburn Brewery in Barrhead, East Renfrewshire.

Eat Safe at the Glen

The **Glen Hotel** in Newtonmore, Aviemore & Cairngorms Pub-of-the-Year, has received the prestigious **Eat Safe Award** from the Food Standards Agency. Establishments are not able to apply for this award which is given by inspecting officers to restaurants that operate to standards above those currently required by law.



Scourie Hotel

Scourie, Sutherland, IV27 4SX
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E-mail: patrick@scourie-hotel.co.uk

Cask Ales and Real Cider are served

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Overlooking Scourie Bay and with views to the distant tops of Ben Stack, Arkle, and Foinaven



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

Highlands & Western Isles Pubs-of-the-Year for 2006

Chairman Bill has been busy out on the road visiting your Pub-of-the-Year (POTY) winners to present their prestigious awards. Local CAMRA members voted these pubs as their 2006 Pubs-of-the-Year:

Aviemore & Cairngorms	Glen Hotel
Caitness & Sutherland	Scourie Hotel
Fort William & Lochaber	Grog & Gruel
Inverness City	Clachnaharry Inn
Inverness District	Benleva Hotel
Skye, Lochalsh & Hebrides	Stein Inn
Wester Ross	Old Inn, Gairloch

George MacLean and his hard-working **Clachnaharry Inn** team regained the overall **Branch Pub-of-the-Year** award,



Chairman Bill with Chris & Kim Goodhill at the Glen Hotel in Newtonmore, Aviemore & Cairngorms area winner.

and they were pitted against the Creel Inn in Catterline, and the Ericht Ale House in Blairgowrie, in the first round of the process to select the Scottish and Northern Ireland Pub-of-the-Year. Sadly they narrowly lost out to the Creel Inn in the "area" round of judging. Full results as follows:



Bill presents POTY awards to: Alistair at the Old Inn, Wester Ross (top left); Steve, Alan, & Jamie at Benleva Hotel, Inverness District (above); and an as yet unnamed young lady at the Grog & Gruel, Fort William & Lochaber.

Congratulations again to all the publicans and staff at the pubs voted by local CAMRA members as their Pubs-of-the-Year for 2006 *Well Done, Ed.*



Patrick Price at the Scourie Hotel (left), Caithness & Sutherland; and Angus McGhie at the Stein Inn, Skye, Lochalsh & Hebrides.



North - 1st Creel Inn, 2nd Clachnaharry Inn, 3rd Ericht Ale House.

Central - 1st Gothenburg, 2nd Waverley Hotel, 3rd Kilmarton Hotel, 4th Commercial Inn.

West & NI - 1st Failford Inn, 2nd Caven Arms, 3rd White Horse, 4th White Cart.

The next round of voting will see the Creel Inn, the Gothenburg, and the Failford Inn compete to represent Scotland and Northern Ireland in the National Pub of the Year.

Ayrshire's Falford Inn, West & NI winner, started up a brewery recently and hoped to have their first brew, "River Ayr Way Ale", on tap for a beer festival to be held in conjunction with the official opening of the **River Ayr Way** trail by Fred Macaulay on 10th June. The River Ayr Way is the first sea to source route in Scotland. It begins at Glenbuck, the source of the River Ayr and birthplace of legendary Liverpool manager Bill Shankly, and follows the river to the sea at Ayr.



Clachnaharry Inn landlord George MacLean shows off the **Highlands & Western Isles Pub-of-the-Year** award

'Drink up - it's good for you!' was the title of a half-page article on Real Ale and the Highlands & Western Isles Branch of CAMRA which appeared in an Inverness Courier **'Fresh from the Highlands'** supplement. The article featured an interview with Branch Chairman Bill Tring, listed local breweries, and named a selection of their brews, plus website addresses. *"Over the last few years this area has been producing some great real ales that have been winning national awards. Pubs in the area are also realising the benefits of serving real ale. It might take some looking after as far as the publican is concerned, but it's great for customers and tourists love it"* Bill remarked. The article noted that beer is increasingly recognised as a healthy food stuff, packed full of vitamin B, and research indicates it could help reduce the risk of heart disease.

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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



Highlands & Western Isles

Just a few lines of news from the wilds of the North-West:

Tried the Ben Damph Inn in Torridon (near Annat) at Easter. It is part of the Loch Torridon Hotel I think, although a completely separate building. It was called the Ben Damph Lodge last year and it is a one story modern building with a conservatory-ish frontage divided internally into a bar and restaurant, although they don't seem too fussy about where you eat and there is also a sandwich menu in the bar.

The bar is done out in a sort of Wetherspoonish modern take on the traditional pub theme and is comfortable and roomy, a cast iron stove, maps etc. on the walls and a selection of different seating.

The beer was in good condition and has been expanded this season (I think they close for the winter) to four beers. Two from Cairngorm - Trade Winds & Stag and two from Skye - Blaven and the "house" beer Ben Damph Ale, which is a blend of Hebridean Gold and Red Cuillin and incidentally is now on sale at the Rockvilla in Lochcarron badged as Rockvilla Ale. I don't know what the blending proportions are but it is darkish and roasty-malty in flavour so I think it leans more towards the Red Cuillin. A good drink anyway and the place is a good watering - hole when visiting this spectacular area - a circular drive from the Achnasheen roundabout via Kinlochewe - Torridon - Sheldraig - Kishorn - Lochcarron is highly recommended. A good time to visit would be in July when they are advertising a Torridon beer festival. I have no further details on this but perhaps they have contacted you about it already.

I have also been told the Lochcarron Hotel has been sold (again) and the new people are due to move in mid May.



Yours Aye, MR.



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