

What's Yours Then?

Highlands & Western Isles Branch **Free** Newsletter



The Highland Beer Festival season is in full swing:

- 5th Loch Ness at Benleva Hotel
- 3rd Inverness at Clachnaharry Inn
- 2nd Ullapool at Morefield Motel

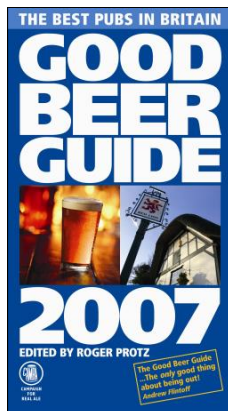
Look out also for regular events at Blackfriars



Ullapool



New Good Beer Guide - on sale NOW



**CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE**

Autumn 2006

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

- > Good Beer Guide 2007
- > Focus on Gareth Hardman
- > Socials & Outings Reports
- > Updated Branch Diary
- > Your letters and pub reports
- > Real Cider News
- > Pub & Brewery News
- > Updated Real Ale Pubs list

We welcome your letters, news, views and opinions. Let us know what is happening at your local, or tell us about pubs you have visited. Thanks to all who have taken trouble to send in pub and beer reports, or articles, but especially to regulars Chairman Bill & Secretary Eric, who keep us up-to-date with brews and what is happening in local pubs. Please note that the editor reserves the right to edit contributions sent for publication. All marks and copyright are acknowledged. Winter Newsletter **deadline** is 1st December, with publication in time for the festive season.

If you would like to place an advert, please contact one of the branch officers (page 6). Advertising rates are as follows:

- Full Page Advert.....£58.00
- Half Page Advert.....£33.50
- Quarter Page Advert.....£18.00

There is a discount on placement of a fourth consecutive advert. Adverts are accepted on condition that inclusion does not necessarily imply an endorsement or approval of content. We much prefer to receive artwork as a PDF or JPEG file, or Word document. We can help in preparing your advert if you wish.

3500+ 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.

Hold the Front Page!

Every editor, I am sure, is looking for the headline that will draw attention to his/her publication, and the local CAMRA newsletter editors are no different from the rest.

For our Spring 2004 newsletter, news of the Atlas/Orkney merger arrived just in time, but two years later our Spring 2006 edition had been printed and on the streets a couple of weeks before news of the company having gone into administration reached us.

The Summer 2006 edition had only just been delivered to the printers when two major stories hit the local real ale scene. Firstly came the very welcome announcement that Sinclair Breweries, formed by the hotelier & restaurateur Norman Sinclair and his wife, Christine, had bought the Atlas and Orkney Breweries out of administration. This was followed by gossip amongst drinkers at the Blackfriars early Summer beer festival of the pending new ownership at Clachnaharry Inn.

One knowledgeable local thought that the inn may have been sold to a pub chain, but that landlord George MacLean would lease it back - which turned out to be the case!

Full Clachnaharry story and views on page 14. 30th September is the end of the Branch year and our **AGM** is scheduled for 7th November. The Branch covers a massive geographical area, but with a relatively small population, and this is mirrored in our membership.

Even so, our membership is now at an all time high and we have a very active committee. In the early days we concentrated on monitoring the few real ale outlets, ensuring that those regularly offering quality real ale made it into GBG - still a very high priority - but now we are able to organise regular trips to breweries & real ale pubs, we have this newsletter, plus a website and, new for this year, a tasting panel. *Tell us what you think at the AGM.*

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Across the Minch to Stornoway

Our second trip of the year started on a Friday lunchtime in Ullapool, at the Ferry Boat Inn, where Old Speckled Hen (rated 3.5 on CAMRA's NBSS) and An Teallach Kildonan (4) were on tap. This Good Beer Guide listed bar, set on the waterfront with views over Loch Broom, is very popular. There was an advert in the entrance for a CD: 'David Orr sings Newfoundland and 9 other tracks'. David is owner of the nearby An Teallach Brewery. Next stop was to be the Argyll Hotel, but it was closed! New owners have taken over - the bar is being refurbished and is due to re-open in July. Onward to the Caley Inn - 3 hand-pumps, but no beer! 'We have just been taken over by a big company who are having problems with their beer deliveries'. Down to the Seaforth, near the ferry terminal, where Isle of Skye Brewery Red Cullin (3) was on offer. The bar had a foody feeling, more than a drinking place, but maybe it changes in the evening. Just time for a final beer stop at the Morefield Motel, on the northern outskirts of Ullapool. A very friendly and welcoming bar with Red Cullin (3), An Teallach Crofters (3) and Kildonan (not tried) beers available.

Time now to catch the evening ferry across the Minch to Stornoway. After a calm but misty crossing, and dropping our bags at the accommodation, time to see what Stornoway had to offer. First stop was the Caladh Inn, a modern café bar with one handpump, but no beer! Hebridean beers will be in here from July. Next to the GBG listed Whaler's Rest, no signs on the outside as it was being repainted. The large lounge bar has been finished in pine and has one handpump. London Pride had just finished and John Smith's (3) was on. They no longer sell Hebridean beers. The public bar has more pine but with a seafaring touch and is popular with locals. On to the British Legion, one handpump but no beer. They usually have a Hebridean brew in this good looking bar, but it seems that occasionally they have a rest from real ale if they think there is not going to be any custom. The Caledonian Hotel has been refurbished and no longer has real ale. On the harbour front is the Clachan Bar, normally serving four Hebridean beers in the

upstairs lounge (being refurbished) and one downstairs in the bar. There was a party on upstairs so three beers were on in the large multi-purpose bar. Islander(2, a bit cloudy), Seaforth (3) and Celtic Black (3.5). Time for supper and to bed; as we left a band was just setting up (they are open to until 2am).

In the morning we visited the Hebridean Brewery. Andy Ribbens set up the brewery in 2001 after he left the pharmaceutical industry to come back home to Lewis to take over his family croft, 5 miles outside Stornoway. Set in an old bus garage near the ferry terminal with steam powered 14 barrel equipment, bought from the Wolverhampton and Dudley brewery. Mike Whittle, the brewer, normally brews once a week but twice during the busy summer-time. There is a small bottling plant where 3 people can bottle 1400 bottles a day. Deliveries are through Flying Firkin and their own vans. Other outlets on the Islands that sell their cask beers are the Arts Centre in Stornoway, Isle of Harris Inn, Dark Island Hotel, Isle of Benbecula White House Hotel, Langass Lodge and Borrowdale Hotel. Bottles are sold all over the islands. We sampled Celtic Black Ale (3.9%), Clansman Ale (3.9%), Seaforth Ale (4.2%), Islander Strong Premium Ale (4.8%), plus Moo Coo Brew (4.4%); all were in excellent condition. Andy and his staff were excellent hosts, and as well as the beer they provided a large buffet, too much for us after our breakfast. Andy did not think he would ever fill the large building but as new casks, bottles, etc. started to arrive it has filled up quickly. A new office has been built and a new shop/reception area is now being set up. Tours are available but please ring to confirm. In July they run a large bar at the Island Celtic Festival and are now busy brewing a special beer for that. Over the next few weeks they are planning to condition Berserker in Whisky barrels and bottle it as bottled-conditioned - sounds interesting. Just before we left Andy opened a bottle of Berserker (7.5%) for us to taste - yummy, excellent for a winter's night in front of an open fire. Unfortunately we had the lunchtime ferry to catch, so many thanks to Andy and staff for their hospitality. The ferry ride back to Ullapool was calm and sunny. EM



THE HEBRIDEAN BREWING COMPANY.

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clansman ale 3.9% ABV

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islander strong premium ale 4.8% ABV

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

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celtic black ale 3.9% ABV

Siba Beer of Scotland, Bronze 2004. Milds Category

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Member of the Society of Independent Brewers

Branch Diary (Meetings start at 7.30 pm)

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 (Meet at 1pm)
Tues 26 th Sept	Tasting Panel Meeting	Clachnaharry Inn
Fri 29 th Sept	* 3 rd Inverness Beer Festival	Social/Outing (Meet at 3pm)
29 th Sep - 7 th Oct	* 3 rd Inverness Beer Festival	Clachnaharry Inn
Tues 3 rd Oct	Committee Meeting	Plough Inn, Rosemarkie
20 th - 22 nd Oct	* 2 nd Ullapool Beer Festival	Morefield Motel (See p9)
Sat 21 st Oct	* 2 nd Ullapool Beer Festival	Social/Outing (Meet at 1pm)
20 th - 28 th Oct	* OctoberFest Beer Festival	Clachaig Inn, Glencoe
2 nd - 4 th Nov	20 th Aberdeen Beer Festival	McClymont Halls
Tues 7 th Nov	Annual General Meeting	Clachnaharry Inn
Tues 5 th Dec	Branch/Committee Meeting	Heathmount Hotel
Tues 19 th Dec	Inverness Walkabout & Social	Meet at N ^o . 27 at 7 pm
Tues 9 th Jan	Committee Meeting	Glen Mhor Hotel
Tues 6 th Feb	Committee Meeting	Blackfriars
Tues 27 th Feb	Tasting Panel Meeting	TBA
Tues 6 th March	Branch Meeting	Clachnaharry Inn
Tues 27 th March	Tasting Panel Meeting	TBA
Tues 3 rd April	Committee Meeting	Snowgoose
Sat 21 st April		Social/Outing to Lochaber: Atlas Brewery & Real Ale Pubs
Tues 8 th May	Committee Meeting	Castle Hotel, Dornoch
Sat 12 th May	Annual Tasting Refresher	Benleva Hotel (Starts at 2pm)

* 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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Festival News

The inaugural **Champion Winter Beer of Scotland** (CWBOS) competition will be held at the Aberdeen Beer Festival.

Cairngorm Brewery are sponsoring the festival this year, which runs from 2nd to 4th November at McClymont Halls, Holburn St. (off Union St).

CAMRA trained tasters have been sampling Winter category beers over the past year and their reports have been collated and the top 6 to 8 beers have been selected for the CWBOS competition. Only the organisers know which beers have been selected. The beers eligible for the competition have to be brewed by a Scottish Brewery and fall into the following styles; Barley Wine, Stout, Porter, Old Ale or Strong Mild. Before the Festival opens, six judges (from different backgrounds: e.g. a publican, a CAMRA trained taster, a brewer, a beer writer, etc.) will blind-taste the beers. Blind tasting does not mean with blindfolds on but the beer will be served to them with a reference letter for each, so that they will not know the names. Once all the beers have

been tasted and the judges are happy, their score cards will be collected and the average score for each beer will be worked out. The results will be announced later that evening.

Local drinkers are able to enjoy an increasing number of Highland beer festivals, and events at the Old Inn, Clachaig Inn, Blackfriars, and Ben Damph Inn have meant a busy Summer.

The fifth Loch Ness Beer Festival kicks off our Autumn season, followed by Highland Feast, the Highland Food and Drink Festival, which runs from 29th September until 15th October. George MacLean at the **Clachnaharry Inn** is hosting the 3rd Inverness Beer festival, which features their own special ale and famous stovies; alongside ciders, ales 'from the wood', and eight real ales on tap at any one time.

Pop in for entertainment and jam sessions, the yard of ale competition & mid-week quiz night.

At the **Morefield Motel**, landlord Tony Oulton will be concentrating on the vast array of ales from local Highlands & Islands breweries, for his 2nd Ullapool Beer Festival.

Make sure the dates are in your diaries! Ed.

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Real Ale in the Highlands

The 2nd Ullapool Beer Festival

will take place between

20th and 22nd October 2006

at the

Morefield Motel, North Road, Ullapool

Live Music by

The Federals - Friday

Ness River Rhythm Kings - Saturday

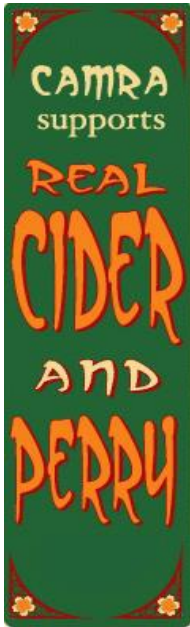


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Telephone: 01854 612 161

Fax: 01854 612 171

E-mail: mail@ullapoolbeerfestival.co.uk or stay@morefieldmotel.co.uk



Traditional Cider Matters

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

The Anderson, Fortrose - Addlestons Cloudy Cider

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

Blackfriars, Inverness - Westons Old Rosie, 1st Quality Cider and Herefordshire Country Perry

Stronlossit Inn, Roy Bridge - Thatchers Cheddar Valley Cider

Strathcarron Hotel - Thatchers Cider (rotated with cask ales)

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

Benleva Hotel, Drumadrochit - Westons 1st Quality Cider

Scourie Hotel - Westons 1st Quality Cider

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

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

Cider Report: Sunday 20th August - King's Highway, Inverness - Five (of ten) handpumps in service, two dispensing cider! Westons Old Rosie was in perfect condition. (Westons Organic Draught Vintage Cider - not tried)

Scientists in Glasgow are examining whether drinking cider may offer the same health benefits as eating apples. The researchers have found that English cider apples have high levels of "phenolic antioxidants" - linked to protection against strokes and cancer.

The next stage of the study, partly funded by the National Association of Cider Makers, is to analyse how humans absorb these chemicals from cider. Twelve volunteers have been recruited to take part in the tests. They will each drink a pint of cider, while avoiding all other dietary sources of antioxidants, and urine and blood samples will then be analysed.

Serena Marks, who is leading the study, said: "Previous research suggests there may be an association between phenolics and protection against some serious diseases, so we are trying to find out how we get phenolics from our diet." *(from the BBC news, 28th August)*

Cider Report: Friday 1st September - Blackfriars, Inverness - A first class pint of Westons Old Rosie, served from handpump. This really does slip down far too easily! CD, Ludlow.

FT reports that S&N is planting 33,000 apple trees near its Bulmers factory in Herefordshire.

CAMRA celebrates National Cider Month in October - *CAMRA has now set October aside as Cider & Perry Month. As you can see from above, lack of opportunity is no longer an excuse for not trying a glass of cider. Make a point of drinking some cider or perry this October. Ed.*

Orkney & Atlas Breweries have already seen some tremendous changes after being bought by Norman & Christine Sinclair of Sinclair Breweries. They are delighted to have their distinct range of bottled beers on the shelves in Morrisons, Tesco, Asda, and Waitrose stores. The Atlas seasonal brew, a clear 4.9% ABV wheat beer is available from the 1st September for three months; definitely worth trying. There is new labeling for three Orkney bottled beers: Dark Island, Red MacGregor and Northern Light. Another bit of exciting news, Atlas Latitude recently won the International Beer Challenge 2006 Awards for 'Best in Class Standard Lager'. *Norman & Christine have many plans and are obviously keen to continue improvements at both breweries, and we look forward to their taking them from strength to strength! Ed.*



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Tasting Panel Matters

A successful tasting evening was enjoyed at **The Anderson** in July. Thanks to Jim for his hospitality and for providing beers in such splendid condition.

Plenty of tasting cards were completed by Bill, Gareth, Allan, David; and of course Jim. (Black Isle) Yellowhammer was not as good as it can be, being vinous and lacking in its usual citrus fruit aroma. Blindmans Mine Beer's cheesy (not unpleasant) nose was analysed by Jim as a coming together of the sulphur and malt components. The Village Brewer (Hambleton Ales) Black Bull bitter was noted for its powerful bitterness in the mouth becoming even more dominant in the aftertaste.

The biggest talking point of the evening centred on the style of the Timothy Taylor's Ram Tam. Being dark in colour but lacking any barley roast characteristic ruled out stout, so it had to be either a strong mild or porter, or possibly an old ale. Its complex flavours were enjoyed by all and speaking to the brewer today confirmed that it is brewed as an old ale or winter warmer as they like to call it.

Thanks to all for their input to this excellent tasting evening. Bill, 26th July.

Tasting panel members Bill, Gareth, Allan and Sean enjoyed a most informative trip to the **Bairds Malt** last night. Mark Kinsman, the production manager, showed us round this large malting. The scale of operation was quite daunting with vats putting 250 tons of barley at a time through the processes from drying to seeping, and kilning. Mark explained in full how each of these processes requires accurate timing, monitoring of temperature, and so on. A fascinating insight.

After the Bairds Malt it was time for some tastings and **Blackfriars** was but a short stroll away. We sampled Brains Bitter, An Teallach Kildonnán, and Cairngorm Gold. Sadly for this GBG listed pub the Brains had an off taste and was undrinkable. Discussions centred on the sweet character of the Cairngorm brew and the unusual flavours of the very drinkable Kildonnán. All in all an evening which was both informative and enjoyable. Bill, 30th Aug.

Please see the diary for tasting dates. Ed.

Great British Beer Festival 2006

"Wow" is an expressive word but one that fully describes the Great British Beer Festival. For a number of years I had been considering visiting but it was not till this year that I finally booked up - not just to attend, but to be one of the 1,000 volunteers who work at the event. GBBF 2006 was to be one of change, for it had moved from Olympia to Earls Court and the organisers were wondering if this would effect attendance. It certainly did, with a massive total of 66,000 people attending - a whacking 40% up on last year!

The role of festival volunteer proved to be an interesting and entertaining activity. I arrived for duty at 11.00 on Thursday and as this was my first year I decided to be a steward, as this would give me a good impression of all the activities. Following a very good briefing on personal safety and our duties we were on duty right through, with breaks, to 11.30 pm.

We worked to a rota which covered a variety of activities throughout the building, including security duty at the bar entrance - searching bags for people taking in bottles of alcohol! You report in the morning, and choose from the list of jobs to be done. On Friday I chose to work in the shop selling old bar materials, anything from beer mats to hand pumps. On the last day I opted to work at the front foyer.

Being a volunteer is not all work. They have a special section where you can go and relax and, at certain times of the day, a free bar with a wide range of beers to try - some of which were not in the main hall. My input to the 283,680 pints that were consumed was a solitary pint. You may be questioning the point of going to a beer festival and not drinking beer, which is a very good question and deserves an answer: I had left Inverness with a rumbling stomach which sadly continued throughout the festival, making it impossible to drink beer. I am afraid there is only one solution and that is to go back again in 2007.

If you have considered going to the festival as a volunteer, have no fears about going alone; I met a very friendly group of people at a well organised volunteer event, with a fantastic range of beers (I will enjoy next time). HW

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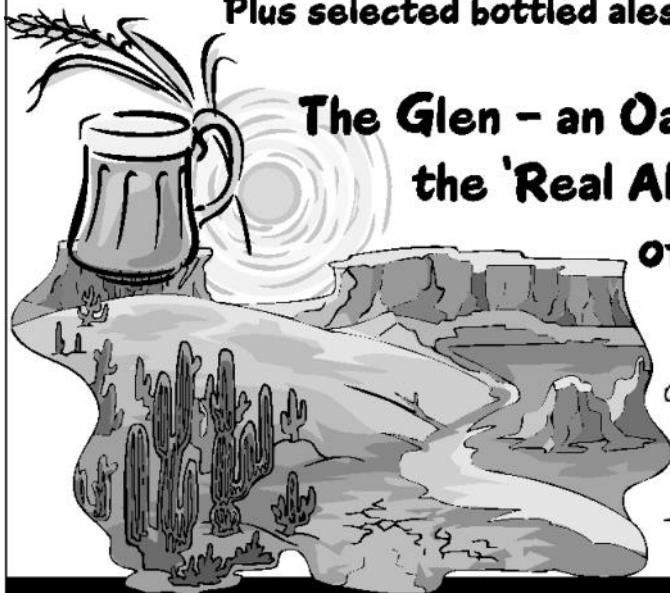
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Brewer is inn with a chance

No change at popular pub despite takeover

By Clive Dennier Highland News - 13 July, 2006

ONE of Inverness's best loved pubs has been sold to a big brewery chain - but its landlord insists its character and style will remain the same.

The Clachnaharry Inn - one of the best real ale pubs in Scotland - has been sold by landlord George Maclean to Dunbar-based Belhaven, which was recently taken over by brewing giant Greene King.

However, he insisted: "As a condition of the sale, Clachnaharry Inn Ltd, a company owned by me, has leased and will continue to run the business.

"The Clachnaharry is home for me, as I also owned it in the mid-1970s, and the deal negotiated with Belhaven also allows the opportunity to expand further on the real ale market. As one who has been in the licensing business for almost 40 years and owned a few other places, I thought it was a good opportunity as I will still have total control of the business that I will still live in. It's a case of change but no change at The Clachnaharry."

He added that the move would enable him to get on with "other projects", though he is not revealing what these are.

George, who refuses to reveal his age, added: "Retirement is not an issue and the running of the Clachnaharry business and personnel will stay the same. However, Veronica Finlay, who had been at the Clachnaharry for 18 years and now runs our sister pub The Duck in Conon Bridge, will be moving back to take full responsibility for the running of The Clachnaharry."

As an old coach inn, the Clachnaharry, on the banks of the Caledonian Canal, has been keeping punters happy since it was first given a licence in 1836. The Clachnaharry won the Inverness & Highland CAMRA Pub of the Year in 2000-2003 and 2005, as well as the Scottish CAMRA Pub of the Year in 2001.

Pub Chain Threat?

Dear WYT, I read with some dismay that the Clachnaharry Inn, the number one Highlands & Islands free house, has been sold to Belhaven and is now part of their pubs chain operation.

I suppose it was inevitable that as the business continued to grow and prosper it would attract attention from the greedy pub chains.

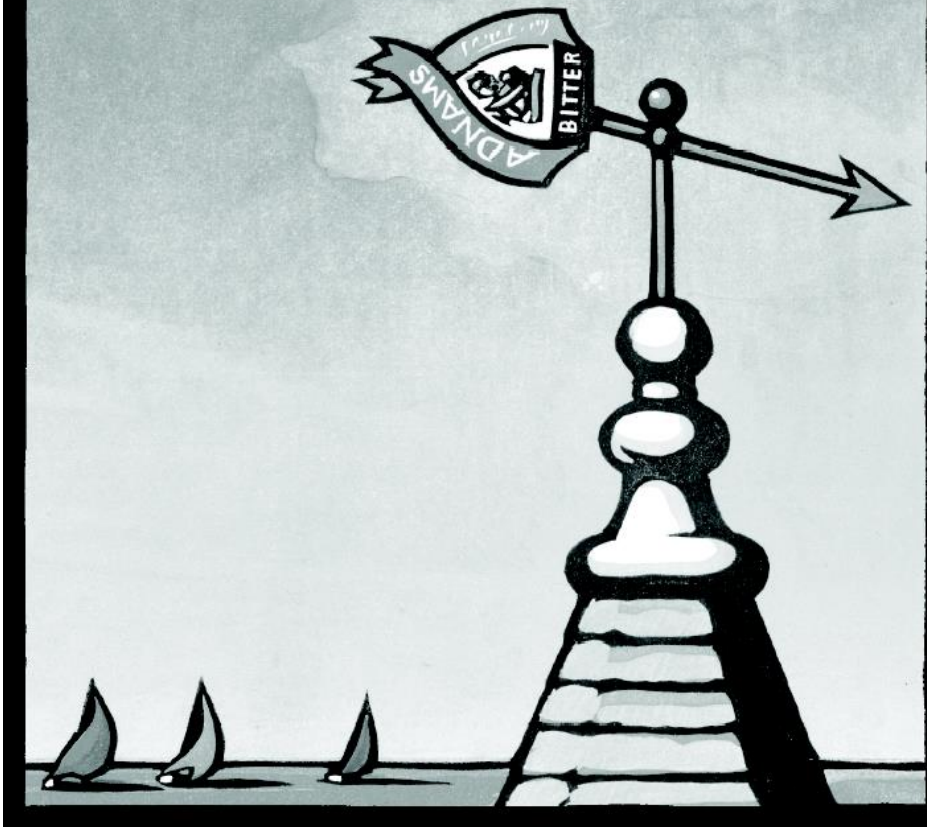
Landlord George MacLean, who I understand has leased the pub back from Belhaven, has said "it is really no change for our customers". Maybe so, and I hope not, but will we really continue to be able drink real ales from local breweries? Can breweries still sell directly to the pub or must beers be supplied by Belhaven? I expect that the larger breweries such as Isle of Skye and Cairngorm will distribute casks via Belhaven, but what about the smaller brewers like Fyne Ales, An Teallach, and Hebridean? Clachnaharry has been the only pub in the Inverness area, as far as I am aware, to regularly serve the excellent new ales brewed by Rob Hill. For how long will be still we able to drink these fine local real ales at the Clachnaharry Inn?

Under the stewardship of firstly David Irvine and latterly George MacLean the Clachnaharry Inn has changed from a run-down roadside inn, with much potential, into the best real ale free house in the Highlands & Islands. Whatever deal George has agreed with Belhaven may allow him to continue to run the business in much the same way as before, but what about the future? What will be the terms for the next leaseholder? Where might Clachnaharry Inn end up in the next merry-go-round of mergers and sell-offs of pub chain real estate?

Whilst I wish owners of local real ale free houses such as the Benleva Hotel and The Anderson every success, it is worrying (in my opinion) to note that pub chains are starting to Hoover up pubs and hotels in even the remotest parts of the Highlands & Islands. CVM, Inverness.

ADNAM'S. BEER FROM THE COAST.

Adnams Broadside Always available at the Clachnaharry Inn



West Coast Weekend - Eagles, Ale and Seafood!

In mid-July, with the Good Beer Guide in tow, we set off for a long weekend on the west coast to enjoy the beautiful scenery, the local fresh seafood and, of course, the real ales! As a birthday treat for my husband I offered to be the driver so that he could concentrate on the serious job of tasting and taking notes.

Our first stop was in Lochcarron just before lunchtime, at the Rockvilla Hotel. We sat by the window and enjoyed the superb views over the loch, using the binoculars that the hotel had placed for all to use. They had also thoughtfully provided books on local interests, walks and wildlife. My husband thought the house beer, from the Isle of Skye Brewery, tasted rather good and had a second pint!

Next stop was at Plockton, for lunch, stopping on the way at the garden centre just outside the village. Arriving at the Plockton Inn just after 2pm, we ordered drinks (London Pride, also very good) and asked for the menu.

(According to the GBG: "Meals and snacks are served all day in the lounge and in the award winning restaurant, where locally caught fish and shell fish take pride.."). Alas, not today! Too late for food, the barmaid advised us to go round the corner to the Plockton Hotel, which we did. After a few minutes in the empty bar we were eventually approached by the barman, only to be told that he wasn't sure at what time the chef started that day. We didn't even bother to stay for a pint!

Having given up on a bar lunch we bought a snack at the local shop, and moved on..

Wake up Plockton, it's the tourist season, and folk don't come just to look at the palm trees! Over the bridge to Skye, and to the Old Inn at Carbost. At the Carbost turn we stopped for quite a while to watch a pair of eagles circling just above us, what a magnificent sight! More good ale at the Inn, Blaven from the Skye Brewery in very good form, and food served all day! We were heading for Stein Inn, and the Lochbay Seafood Restaurant, but the Old Inn has been added to our list of open-all-day food-all-day, pubs (good service too).

We saw more eagles near Dunvegan, circling

very close to the road, on the way. At the Stein Inn there is always a buzz in the bar, and magnificent views whatever the weather. Super seafood as always, and yet more good beer. Next morning, after a hearty Stein Inn breakfast, we set off to browse in the local craft workshops (fantastic knitwear, jewellery, paintings, pottery and prints – there has to be some compensation for driving all weekend!), and saw another eagle at the Fairy Bridge.

At Portnalong we found a garden centre with organic fruit and vegetables (pub there was closed), before heading down for a quick look at the Talisker Distillery (killing time before a return visit to the Old Inn for more Blaven).

On the way to Dornie, where we were to stay for the night, we checked out the Loch Duich Hotel - Red Cuillin in good nick, and a real fire, before settling down in the cosy Clachan Bar for a feast of excellent seafood, real ale, and with friendly service. We had a great evening, and the music was really entertaining! Next morning we drove over the Mam Ratagan pass to Glenelg where we explored the Brochs and the beach before visiting the Glenelg Inn for a tasty pint of Black Cuillin. The menu looked very inviting, but we needed to move on.

On our journey home we stopped for a while at the Cluanie Inn (again the food looked very appetising). My husband was a little surprised to find that reports of real ale being served here were true, and he thought the Hebridean Gold was arguably best pint of the weekend. We decided to take a diversion to Glengarry and the Tomdoun Hotel. An incredible setting with the bubbling river and surrounding hills and forests! We sat outside on the veranda, adorned with pots of herbs, and watched an osprey fishing in the river below. We vowed to come back and stay overnight so that we could sample the menu of local produce.

Last stop was at the Bothy in Fort Augustus where we watched the busy canal activity. The menu looked good here too, but this was a real ale weekend, and we will have to do this trip again, but with the focus on food!!

What a great weekend for beer, food, scenery and wildlife (and shopping!) and almost on our own doorstep! The Wife, Inverness.

The Old Inn

Gairloch, Ross-shire, IV21 2BD

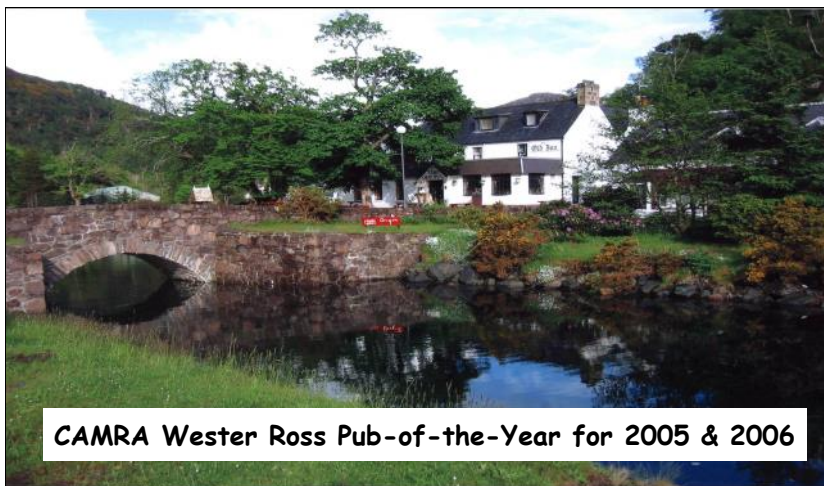
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Abbot Ale Perfect Pub for Scotland 2005/06

AA Pub of the Year for Scotland & Northern Ireland 2003



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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.



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ABV 4.2 %



ers Pale Ale
ABV 4.2 %

Beinn Dec
ABV 3.8 %

use Special
ABV 4.4 %

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Tel/FAX: 01854 633 306 E-Mail: anteallachale@dundonnell.freerve.co.uk

Focus on Gareth Hardman

Gareth is a Branch committee member, is married with one stepdaughter and lives in Inverness. He is the grocery stock control & merchandising manager at the large Tesco store in Inverness.

Q. Where are you originally from?

A. I was born in Shepperton, Middlesex, and lived and worked around the West London area before moving north to Inverness in 2002.

Q. Why move to this area?

A. My wife made me! We met 10 years ago when we were both working in Tesco's and she had always wanted to return home to Inverness after many years away. I ended up here before her as I secured a quick transfer between stores and ended up staying with family before we could all move up permanent-

ly. I knew after a few weeks I would never want to move back south due to the way of life, friendly people, stunning scenery and the Clachnaharry 15 mins walk away.

Q. How were you introduced to real ale?

A. It was when I was in the Venture Scouts. After one particular meeting it was suggested a visit to a pub was in order and a Young's pub in Hersham was chosen. Me in my naivety said "Oh good, I like a pint of (Young-er's) Tartan." I was soon put in my place and remember having a pint of Hock which I think was Young's mild although Fuller's call their mild Hock. Anyway, I remember not liking it very much and had a pint of bitter, the classic Young's "Ordinary" and the rest, as they say, is history, I was hooked. As to why a

group of 16-21 year olds in the late 1970's were into real ale and not lager and fizz I have no idea, unless there was influence from the Scout leader and we all discovered it tasted better.

Q. How much say do you have in ordering bottled beers for your store?

A. Not enough. I have trawled through all the Tesco listings for bottle ales and have stocked as many as I can get hold of. The sad thing is that out of 68 different ales only 18 are from Scottish breweries, however Tesco now has a Scottish office established and I have heard that there will be much more focus on Scottish lines and lines sourced that are local to individual stores so hopefully things will change. I would love to see some Cairngorm ales and more Black Isle beers stocked in local Tesco stores as these are what both local customers and tourists will buy.

Q. Do bottle-conditioned beers sell?

A. There are only six bottle-conditioned ales (BCAs) in the range that is stocked in my store and I have to admit that there are no significant extra sales on these lines compared to the regular lines. From a personal point of view I think they tend to be over carbonised due to the secondary fermentation which detracts from making them similar to the real ale version. I was disappointed to read a recent article in *What's Brewing* that Summer Lightning BCA is a different recipe to the draft version. I don't think a BCA has to replicate draft real ale and I think that Timothy Taylor Landlord is an excellent example of a standard bottled ale that tastes similar to the cask version.

Q. Describe a typical working day.

A. It usually starts early at 6 or 7 a.m. when the stock control team count a section of the shop to ensure the book stocks are correct. This is then followed by a scan of the shop floor to



identify and correct any gaps. I will liaise with the merchandising team to see how the new merchandising plans are going. There is usually one meeting a day as we hold a team meeting, promotion meeting and various other meetings each week although these generally last less than an hour. During the day time will be spent planning future promotions and ordering stock as well as planning the following weeks merchandising which follows a company schedule. I should finish around 3 or 4 but this may drag on some days due to the needs of the business.

Q. What made you join CAMRA?

A. Despite drinking real ale for many years I never had any inclination to join

(Continued on page 23)

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)
Clachnaharry Inn
Nico's Bar, Glen Mhor Hotel
Heathmount Hotel
Hootananny
Inshes Gate (TP - Top Pressure)
Kings Highway (*Wetherspoons*)
Number 27
Palace Hotel
Phoenix Bar
Snowgoose

Inverness District

Benleva Hotel, Drumna drochit
Loch Ness Lodge, Drumna drochit (S)
Smiddy Bar, Lewiston
Clansman Hotel
Slaters Arms, Cannich (S)
Brockies Lodge, Kiltarlity
Bothy Bar, Fort Augustus
Caledonian Hotel, Fort Augustus (S)
Lock Inn, Fort Augustus
Whitebridge Hotel, Loch Ness South
Dores Inn
Glenmoriston Arms, Invermoriston
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
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, Achilitibuie (S)
Am Fuaran Bar, Altandhu (S)
Ledgowan Hotel, Achnasheen
Drumchork Hotel, Aultbea (S)
Dundonnell Hotel
Kinlochewe Hotel
Loch Torridon Country House Hotel
Ben Dampn 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
Rockvillia Hotel, Lochcarron
Strathcarron Hotel
Tigh-an-Eilean Hotel, Shieldag
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
Old Station Restaurant, Spean Bridge
Spean Bridge Hotel
Stronlossit Hotel, Roy Bridge
Tomdoun Sporting Lodge
Glenfinnan House Hotel
Steam Inn, Mallaig

Old Forge, Inverie
 Ben View Hotel, Strontian
 Strontian Inn (S)
 Four Seasons, Onich
 * Corran Inn, Onich - see page 31
 Inn at Ardour
 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, Kinraig
 Glen Hotel, Newtonmore
 Lodge Hotel, Newtonmore
 Silver Fjord Hotel, Kingussie
 Typsy Laird, Kingussie (S)

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

Ben Mhor Hotel, Grantown-on-Spey
 Strathspey Hotel, Grantown-on-Spey (S)
 Mash Tun, Charlestown of Aberlour
 Highlander Inn, Craigellachie
 Croft Inn, Glenlivet
 Glen Avon Hotel, Tomintoul

Caitness & Sutherland

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

A Fine Day for a Great Ale?



A Great Day for A Fyne Ale!

MacKays Hotel, Wick
 Alexander Bain, Wick (*Wetherspoons*)
 Central Hotel, Thurso
 Commercial Hotel, Thurso (S)

Skye, Lochalsh & Hebrides

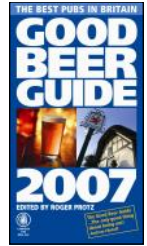
Isle of Raasay Hotel
 King Haakon Bar, Kyleakin
 Ardvasar Hotel
 Isle Ornsay Hotel
 Claymore, Broadford
 Dunollie Hotel, Broadford
 Hebridean Hotel, Broadford
 Old Inn, Carbost
 Coruisk House, Elgol
 (*Restaurant - Real ale served with food only*)
 Sconser Lodge Hotel
 Sligachan Hotel
 Taigh Ailean Hotel,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

Edinbane Hotel
 The Lodge at Edinbane
 Ferry Inn, Uig
 Uig Hotel, Uig
 Pub at the Pier, Uig
 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
 Clachan Bar, Stornoway
 Cladh Inn, Stornoway
 Royal British Legion, Stornoway
 Whalers Rest, Stornoway
 Shawbost Inn, Isle of Lewis
 Harris Hotel, Tarbert (S)

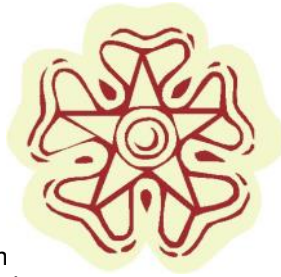
* In total 33 of the pubs listed are in the Good Beer Guide (GBG). We cannot indicate entries, you will have buy the guide for that, but you may find some clues elsewhere in this newsletter.

Good Beer Guide 2007
 Full details on page 36



Stronlossit Inn

at Roy Bridge
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Stronlossit is a real gem of tradition - a warm, welcome 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.

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Your hosts: Maurice and Sandra Valley

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CAMRA even though I would regularly attend the Great British Beer Festival in London. In fact I didn't join until I came up to Inverness where I picked up a copy of this newsletter. I was very impressed with the quality of WYT given how small the branch membership and committee were, and the vast area it had to cover. I decided to boost the local membership by joining, using the form in the newsletter, and a few months later offered to join the committee.

Q. What is your favourite type of pub?

A. Apart from the fact it must have real ale? Probably the same answer as most people give as it depends on the day/mood/activity/weather etc. Clachnaharry on a warm evening, Blackfriars on a Saturday night when there is a good local band on. Clachaig Inn, in Glencoe, after a day out walking or cycling. The Old Inn at Gairloch for dinner and an overnight stay. We do have some great pubs and inns here.

Q. Favourite beer/beer style?

A. I will try them all, my favourite beer style is a classic bitter such as Young's Ordinary but I have to admit my head has been turned by some of the great dark ales produced by the breweries here. Last April at the Benleva I had an Isle of Skye Black Cuillin which received my only 5 score to date as it was sublime. If I had to make that awful choice of only one beer to drink for the rest of my days then it would be TT Landlord, an absolute classic.

Q. What are your hobbies/interests?

A. I don't mind a bit of DIY and dabbling in the garden, and I enjoy hill walking and cycling.

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mecca”

Good Beer Guide 2005-2007



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real cider
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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 were taken out of administration in June 2006 by Sinclair Breweries Ltd, a company formed by the hotelier & restaurateur Norman Sinclair and his wife, Christine.

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 & ilarly for High- iatus & 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.

Recent visit to The Highlands

I would like to just drop you a line to let you know what a wonderful time my wife & I had on a recent Holiday to Morar, near Mallaig. It was made all the better by the very helpful people at the "Isle of Skye Brewery". I found out in advance that where we were staying there was a distinct lack of Real Ale available in the local Pubs / Hotels. I contacted the brewery and they were more than happy to provide us with a Polypin (36 pints) of Blaven @ 5% for £44. Not bad at £1.23 per pint.

We were travelling up from Norfolk via Glasgow and Fort William where we stayed for the first week. We had pre-arranged to collect the Polypin from the Nevisport Bar in Fort William on the Saturday before we left to go to our cottage in Morar. We found the staff at the Nevisport were very helpful in accommodating our quest of getting hold of some Real Ale. We dropped in there a couple of times and beer was excellent, a great place for a beer, nice place. We also called in the Grog and Gruel in Fort William, also a good choice of Beer tasted there. The polypin became invaluable as there was no real ale within a walkable distance from Morar. We did manage to get some, after a boat trip from Mallaig, to the "Old Forge Inn" in Inverie, although we were a bit shocked to see that they were charging £2.80 for a pint and £1.60 for a half of the same. Having said that both the beers they had on were very good, Deuchers IPA and Isle of Skye Cuillin Beast.

The beer ran out on the Thursday night, just before we had to return back to Norfolk, a day early in fact as we were getting eaten alive by midges, mosquitoes, etc. It was great to visit so many Pubs in Glasgow, Edinburgh and around the Fort William area that did not stock any Greene King beers. Coming from East Anglia means that it is virtually impossible to avoid GK beers. We make a point of not drinking any GK beers due to their policy of buying up old traditional breweries and then closing them, just to get their hands on the Pubs. Once again thank you to all at the Isle of Skye Brewery and the Nevisport Bar for making our holiday so much better than it already was. S&JH, Norfolk.

Marymas 2006

Visitors to the Marymas Fair in mid-August enjoyed a varied range of ales from Highlands & Islands brewers, including Cairngorm Black Gold, our local Beer-of-the-Year.

The Marymas bar is run by the local CAMRA committee and we always try to offer a range of beers which gives drinkers a chance to sample ales of varying strength and character. In addition to Black Gold, Atlas Latitude, Isle of Skye Hebridean Gold, An Teallach Ale, and Hebridean Islander Strong Ale were served directly from stillage at our open air bar.

The event clashed with the nearby Belladrum Music Festival, which attracted 8000 people, a German Beer Festival in the town, and home games for both Caley Thistle and Ross County. The sporadic drizzly rain may also have kept the numbers down, and for the second year running we did not manage to sell out all the beer; so some lucky customers went home at the end of the day with a free carry-out. The

good news is that we managed to cover our costs, even making a small profit, and again successfully promoted CAMRA and Highlands & Islands brews to a large number of people.

The day was certainly voted a success by all who visited our bar. The Beer of the Festival (the one to sell out first) was the Hebridean Brewery Islander Strong Ale, and Andrew at the brewery was delighted with this news.

There was a good turnout from the branch this year, with Barbara and Caroline doing a fine job behind the bar while Bill, Gareth and Allan helped out with the washing up, fetching and carrying, etc., and of course entertaining and advising imbibers at the bar. Thanks to all who helped on the day, and to Eric, Hamish and Gareth for helping to set things up on Thursday afternoon. We have an established routine from Thursday through to Saturday, and thanks are also due to Mike Coulburn and his Eden Court staff for having the stall ready, and for providing other facilities on the day.



Black-

Great Beer

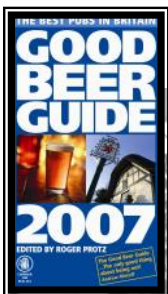
Great Service



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beer festival dates*

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Real Ale in Sweden

You may already know of this, but I didn't and was pleasantly surprised when I travelled around Southern Sweden for a week following a weeks sailing near Gothenburg.

I don't normally like theme pubs and tend to avoid all Irish theme pubs when abroad apart from Sherpa O'Shea's in Kathmandu which just had to be visited! However when wandering about with Ian Douglas in Gothenburg, I spotted this front door leading into a basement bar and suggested that we went into an English Theme pub called the Bishop's Arms. What a find this was! A wonderfully cosy atmosphere, no world cup on big screen.

There were 4 or 5 English real ales on hand-pump. I had Wadsworth's 6X, which to my untutored palate seemed excellent. Apart from that there was a huge range of the more usual continental type beers and a vast number of interesting bottled beers. They would have had any specialised local beers, all keg though as far as I could see. More unusually there was every kind of single malt that I have ever heard of and more besides.

The pub boasted "interesting prices" which was the only down side, a pint being £4.50 or so. However for Scandinavia this is not too bad and as you know our prices are escalating. The new owners of Nicos instantly put up prices by 10p, so for an often dubious tasting pint you have to pay £2.80!

Anyway, the barmaid in the Gothenburg Bishop's Arms, explained that there were 21 of these throughout Sweden, often associated with a posh hotel. The owner had a passion for English pubs and exercised great attention to detail. We moved on to Trollhatten and found another Bishop's Arms which had been opened just a few days before. I was able to recommend it to a tourist guide who we met, who said that she really liked whisky. Anyway this is a case of the imitation being far better than the real thing.

It might be worth a mention in the excellent "What's Yours Then?" in case any of your readers venture to Sweden as I think that they might find the places interesting.

There is a website at www.bishopsarms.com

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but it is all in Swedish. I hope that this lot may be of interest.

Best wishes, PC

Tour of Pubs

I picked up a copy of your CAMRA mag in the Highlands this week & thought you might like some feedback from members outwith your area. I was touring between the 14th & 19th July and this is what I found.

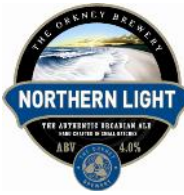
Corran Inn (formerly the Nether Lochaber Hotel) had very enthusiastic & friendly staff. I think it was taken over about a month ago by Andy, a mountain guide from Roy Bridge. They had a house beer from Skye, Corran Dhu at 4.2%, as well as Blaven, replaced by Red Cuillin (all from Isle of Skye Brewery).

The 4 Seasons had Trade Winds which was acceptable but not great and tasted like the end of the cask. It was replaced by another Skye house beer, Ben Nevis. Red Cuillin was also on. The Tailrace in Kinlochleven had (Atlas) Latitude and 3 Sisters.

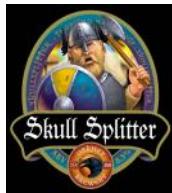
In Fort William the Nevisport Bar and the Grog & Gruel both had a good se-



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lection of which I had (Atlas) Wayfarer and (Isle of Skye) Cuillin Beast in the Nevisport, and in the Grog I had An Teallach Ben Dearg and (Atlas) Nimbus.

Next stop was the Eagle at Laggan Locks, a lovely pub but the rudest barmaid, who I assume to be the owner, I have encountered in over 20 years. She was silently hostile to all but one of her customers who had the same accent and may have been a relative. Simple pleasantries were beyond her. As an aside, a bloke who I assume to be her son, was talking about how much money they could make by putting in Budweiser or Miller. Despite this the Wayfarer was on good form, but I fear for the future of the pub & I won't be returning as long as it is in the same ownership.

At Fort Augustus, in the Lock Inn, I was charged £4.35 for a pint and a half of very average Deuchars. Next door in the Bothy it was £2.70 a pint for Blaven/Deuchars. The hard-pressed staff were doing their best but struggling to cope with demand.

In the Glenmoriston the Red Cuillin was on

gravity and was superb, incredibly complex and totally different from on handpump. The Plockton Hotel had (Isle of Skye) Hebridean Gold on good form and also Caley Nectar. The Plockton Inn had another good pint, this time Caley 80/- but I was disappointed in the choice, only Caley or Abbot.

The Applecross Inn had a Skye house beer, Applecross Festival Ale which apparently had not been overly popular with some but I liked its citrus-like flavour. Finally on the way home we stopped at the Benleva Hotel for An Teallach Ale, and at the Clachaig for Wayfarer. Overall beer quality was good, some very good. Service however varied enormously; ranging from excellent in the Corran Inn, both Plockton pubs, the Applecross Inn and the Benleva; to disinterested (particularly the Fort William pubs) and abysmal in the Eagle. Sadly, short measures were also not uncommon, generally in the same pubs which would not win prizes for service quality.

All things considered though, an enjoyable few days, especially as the weather was fantastic.



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Cheers, NS, Glasgow.

New Owner, New Name

Andy Ross, from Spean Bridge, is the new owner of the Corran Inn - formerly the Nether Lochaber Hotel. This is Andy's first dip into

the trade but we have heard he has many good ideas for this popular little bar, which sits beside the slipway of the Corran ferry. Corran Dubh (Black Corran), the 4.5% ABV house ale, is from the isle of Skye Brewery.

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Inns & Things

Scotland on Sunday's Spectrum magazine regularly includes a "**Weekend Pass**" item which typically features a hotel or inn in a scenic location. In the 9th July edition, Nick Drainey wrote:

"The west coast of Scotland needs no introduction as one of the most scenic areas in the world. In recent years the accommodation has improved, and much more use has been made of the region's wealth of fresh food. One of the best places to appreciate what is on offer is the **Old Inn**, close to the harbour at Gairloch, which not only serves wonderful food, but is ideally situated for an exploration of the many beaches, coastal paths and mountains in the area."

"Local produce is at the heart of the Old Inn's philosophy and, with seafood landed just a few hundred yards away, the variety of fish and shellfish on offer is enough to satisfy any gourmand. Local beef, lamb and game also feature prominently on the menu. Best of all is dining al fresco, at a table next to the river. Watching dippers and heron while you tuck into prawns washed down with a pint of real ale (for which the pub has regularly won awards from the Campaign for Real Ale) is a treat not often available in the Highlands - or anywhere else."

Spectrum magazine also includes a regular "**Pub Guide**", mostly featuring hostelries in the Glasgow area, but for 20th August Phil Basset had managed to find his way north to the **Ben Damp Inn** - "...an ideal stop-off after a hard day's Munro-bagging or fishing on the loch, when you'll have built up an appetite and a prodigious thirst."

Sadly the **Chieftain Hotel** on Milburn road is no longer selling real ale. Manager Ralph says that there is not enough customer demand to sustain the sale of Dark Island or McEwan's 80/-. The situation may be reviewed at some date in the future.

Norman Sinclair reports that every second pint sold at the **Cawdor Tavern** is now real ale.

The **Kinlochewe Hotel** has been under new ownership since April. The new landlady is Gail Straddon, and husband Andrew is in charge of

the kitchen. Customers have already noted the change in atmosphere that the new owners have brought. Gail and Andrew do not have previous experience in the hotel trade but they feel that their learning curve has now peaked. Gail says that real ale sales are going well and she will continue to dispense Red Cuillin and another Isle of Skye Brewery beer.

In Grantown-on-Spey the Strathspey Hotel has ceased trading and is now a bank. Better news at the **Ben Mhor Hotel**, almost opposite, which has built up a roaring real ale trade, dispensing three Cairngorm beers from hand-pump: Trade Winds, Wildcat and the seasonal brew. The Ben Mhor Hotel, run by mother and daughter Phillipa and Sandra Renforth, is popular with both tourists and locals. Trade is also boosted by custom from the nearby Cairngorm National Park offices. Phillipa and Sandra have noted the success of local pub beer festivals and are considering running an annual beer festival, starting in 2007.

It is common for Highlands and Islands hotels only to be able to sell real ale in the summer months when trade is boosted by visitors from the south. The **Lodge Hotel** in Newtonmore bucks this trend. They have a good real ale trade in the winter months when their clientele is mainly from climbers and walkers, whereas in the summer months trade is from coach tours who, it seems, prefer keg beers.

Tie-Free Chain!

While on holiday in Harrogate we visited the Old Bell Tavern. A super pub, with a very good range of local ales and excellent food. Non-smoking too, which is still uncommon south of the border. I was surprised to find that the Old Bell was part of a pub chain, but one without any brewery ties. Market Town Taverns operate ten bars in Yorkshire, which are un-themed, and offer a wide range of real ales from Independent Brewers. (Ales are purchased direct from Brewer where possible). We also enjoyed fine ales and good food at their Tithe Bar in Northallerton.

We also enjoyed hand-cut real-potato chips with meals in a number of pubs - it seemed to be a local Yorkshire thing, very good. Not seen this in too many places unfortunately. CVM.



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Pub Reports –

Hi, I'm just back from Scotland; here are some tastings for you:

Fort Augustus - Lock Inn

- 30th Jul - Caledonian Deuchars IPA = 4
- 31st Jul - Isle of Skye Young Pretender = 4
- 5th Aug - Isle of Skye Hebridean Gold = 4
- 6th Aug - Caledonian Deuchars IPA = 4,
- Isle of Skye Red Cuillin = 3

Inverness - Number 27

- 1st Aug - Orkney Dark Island = 4,
- Caledonian Deuchars IPA = 4

Inverness - Clacnaharry Inn

- 8th Aug - Orkney St Magnus Ale 4.5% = 4,
- Belhaven 80/- = 4

Glenmoriston Arms (Tavern)

6th Aug - Red Cuillin - barrel ended, so took the beer back to a foreign barmaid who I had trouble explaining the beer had gone! Ended up having a bottle of Stella as it was that or coke!! = 0

Fort Augustus - Lovat Arms

- 3rd Aug - no real ale = 0

Fort Augustus - Caledonian Hotel

- 3rd Aug - Red McGregor = 3 £2.40
- 6th Aug - Red McGregor = 3
(also did bottles of Dark Island)

Aviemore - Winking Owl

- 4th Aug - Caledonian 80/- = 3

Aviemore - Old Bridge Inn

- 4th Aug - Caledonian Deuchars IPA = 2
(bit too warm and went flat quick)

Aviemore - Cairngorm Brewery Tour

- 4th Aug - Mountain Dew = 5!!
(ended up buying a polypin of this)

Drumadrochit- Benleva Hotel

- 10th Aug - Tattoo Ale 4.2% = 4.

I would say the Benleva Hotel was the best beer - it was superb in fact. Closely followed by the Clacnaharry Inn, and what a beer garden that was. Cheers, MM.

News of Brews

Congratulations to **Cainnrgorm Brewery** on **Trade Winds** winning CAMRA's Champion Speciality Beer of Great Britain for the third year running. Trade Winds was initially brewed as a one-off seasonal beer, but it became a regular brew following the massive demand from local real ale drinkers, and it won Champion Beer of Scotland in 2004.

The beer is noted as a speciality beer due to additional natural flavours, in Trade Winds case elderflowers being mixed in with the hops. Sean Tomlinson, Brewing Manager, describes the beer "as having a light golden colour with a high proportion of wheat giving it a clean fresh taste, on top of which there are masses of hops, fruit and citrus flavours".

Isle of Skye Brewery have just brewed a beer called "**USAle**". We took on a young American student (University of Vermont) for a month last year and a month this year, for work experience. This followed a meeting with his father (a Philadelphia lawyer) when he was on holiday two years ago. His son (Ben

Garber) wants to set up and run his own micro in the States and so we agreed to show him the ropes. Last year Ben built up to helping out on a brew. This year Ben was allowed to formulate his own recipe and brew (under Pam's supervision). The result is "USAle". He wanted it to be an American-style "brown beer" but it is more correctly described as a dark red one. At 4.5% it has a decent amount of strength, but tastes of less alcohol. To my taste it is a floral scented (American Cascade hops) light-malty ale, with a hint of chocolate and a lingering, slightly-sweet taste. Head retention is excellent due to the addition of torrified wheat. Overall assessment would lead to the conclusion that it was a session beer, although it is a bit strong for that.

Ben has now returned to the States and will graduate in December, after which he starts at the Trout River Brewery in Vermont. This is a small brewery but is about to undergo a big expansion. Whilst this takes place Ben will, in effect, be the brewer for the existing brewery. Excellent experience for a 21 year old! AM



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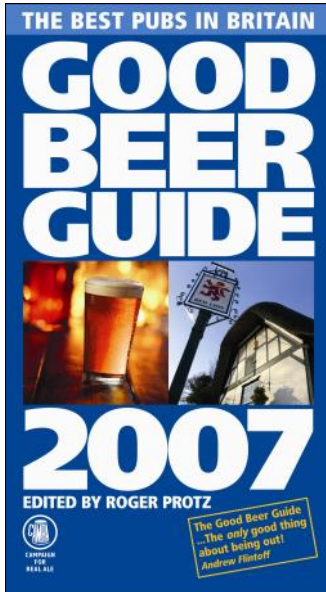
An ideal base for game fishing, hill-walking, bird watching (Handa Island is nearby), or exploring the famed empty quarter of Western Sutherland, a lunar landscape of lochs and mountains.

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.





Good Beer Guide 2007

Edited by Roger Protz, Britain's foremost beer writer and taster, and now in its 34th edition, the guide is the number one best-selling guide to pubs which sell fine quality real ale.

Year after year the *Good Beer Guide* champions fine quality real ale while providing a comprehensive guide to the nation's best pubs, from sophisticated city bars to cosy country inns, and from tiny off-beat locals to grand architectural gems.

The *Good Beer Guide* is the long-established pub guide and is beloved by beer enthusiasts. The Guide contains 4500 of the top real ale pubs in the UK, including details of which beers they serve, opening hours, addresses, information on food, amenities for families, and atmosphere.

As well as being a pub guide, the book contains details on all the country's breweries - from the largest companies to the smallest microbreweries. It also includes tasting notes for the vast majority of beers brewed in the UK.

The guide is indispensable for beer lovers and includes a selection of features on beer, brewing and pubs.

Local CAMRA members can purchase the GBG 2007 from their branch committee for £10.00 (or £9.50 in October & November), which is a saving up to £5.49 and gives the local branch a small profit which is used to support your local pubs and breweries.

Good Beer Guide 2007

This year we have again nominated a total of 33 Highlands & Western Isles pubs, our full GBG allocation, including six new entries -

- Badachro Inn, Badachro
- Boat Hotel, Boat of Garten
- Suie Hotel, Kincaig
- Rockvilla Hotel, Lochcarron
- Stronlossit Hotel, Roy Bridge
- Kintail Lodge Hotel, Shiel Bridge

Locally landed shellfish is a speciality in the **Badachro Inn** which is situated in a stunning position on the shores of Loch Gairloch. The inn is popular with outdoor enthusiasts, and the yachting fraternity are able to tie up at the adjacent jetty.

A short stroll from the River Spey, not far from RSPB Osprey Centre, next to the Strathspey Steam Railway, overlooking the golf course; the **Boat Hotel** is the ideal base for exploring the Cairngorms National Park. Ales from the local Cairngorm Brewery are served.

The **Suie Hotel** has a separate warm and friendly 'locals' bar with a large open fire, a choice of real ales, bar food (until 8pm), and a large selection of malt whisky. Views of the nearby Monadhliath Mountains can be enjoyed from the sun terrace during the summer.

Drinkers can enjoy beautiful views of loch and mountain from the **Rockvilla Hotel** bar. A range of beers is served in this Lochcarron waterfront hostelry, including a house ale from the Isle of Skye. Food is served all day in the friendly and welcoming bar.

Near to the Glen Roy National Nature Reserve, and at the foot of the Nevis mountain range, the **Stronlossit Hotel** is the perfect place to relax after outdoor activities. Real cider and a selection of real ales are on tap in the bar, and delicious Highland food is served.

On the shores of Loch Duich at the foot of the Five Sisters of Kintail, and close to Eilean Donnan castle, the **Kintail Lodge Hotel** is the perfect base for exploring Skye and Lochalsh. An Isle of Skye Brewery ale is served in this former Highland shooting lodge.

The number of Highlands & Western Isles pubs which merit inclusion in the Good Beer Guide has grown almost every year and, until 2005, all pubs recommended by the branch have been included. Since 2006 the number of pubs in the branch area has exceeded our allocation of 33. For the 2007 edition of the guide the committee were again faced with the unenviable task of deciding which pubs to put forward and which not to.

Recommendations for inclusion are based strictly upon reports received from CAMRA members, and only pubs which consistently serve good quality real ale are put forward. Please keep sending in your pub reports.

(Pubs on Orkney & Shetland are listed under Highlands & Islands in the guide, but these are submitted by the Aberdeen, Grampian & Northern Ireland branch).



In August it was the turn of the local Highlands & Western Isles Branch of CAMRA to host a Scotland & Northern Ireland Branches meeting, which was held at the **Glen Mhor Hotel** in Inverness. At the bar the Isle of Skye **Red Cuillin** was in very good form, as was Cairngorm Brewery's **Mountain Dew**, a seasonal brew. Both were enjoyed by the discerning delegates, and offered some much-needed respite from the

meeting's very lengthy agenda. Thanks to Glen Mhor for their hospitality.

Cairngorm Brewery continue to brew a wide range of seasonal brews, and **Glen Ample**, their September offering, is described as "A refreshing late Summer fruit beer. An easy drinking light blonde beer matured with fresh Highland raspberries giving a pink hue and tart bitter sweet refreshing finish."

The name comes from the variety of raspberry used in the 4.5% ABV brew.



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Highlands & Western Isles Branch



More Pub Reports –

This is a well overdue report (computer problems - don't even ask) as I visited the Whitebridge Hotel over a week ago and discovered that they have finally installed a second handpump. They had Deuchars IPA and Red Cuillin on, both in good condition, and apparently both beers are selling well. I was told they will keep two beers on for as long as it is viable, and certainly over the Christmas period, which is honest, sensible and encouraging. I should also add that the new portable wheelchair ramp was in evidence but we didn't try it out as it was too nice a day to be sat inside ! Cheers, BH.

We visited the Old North Inn at Inchmore at the end of August. The lounge bar was recently refurbished to a very high standard indeed, and there can be few better in the Highlands. We were welcomed at the door by a waitress, but she quickly lost interest when we headed for the bar rather than to a table. Our two half-pints of Red Cuillin were served in goblets and, at first glance, could easily have been mistaken for Gaelic coffees! The beer was very good, but we thought a little pricey at £3 for two halves. It may cost less in the public bar. ICT, Inverness.

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

The Winter edition will be out just before Christmas. Publication of the Autumn newsletter usually coincides with our annual trip to Skye. The hospitality to be enjoyed at the Isle of Skye Brewery in Uig is not to be missed, and the ever-growing number of real ale hosteleries in Skye & Lochalsh means that careful scheduling is a must! We're sure that those of you who enjoyed CW's Speyside trip write-up in our Summer edition will be looking forward to another tell-it-how-it-is report in our next newsletter. *We hope you will find time to visit one of the Autumn beer festivals. Please let us know what you find. Cheers, Ed.*





The and restaurant
GLEN Hotel



H O E

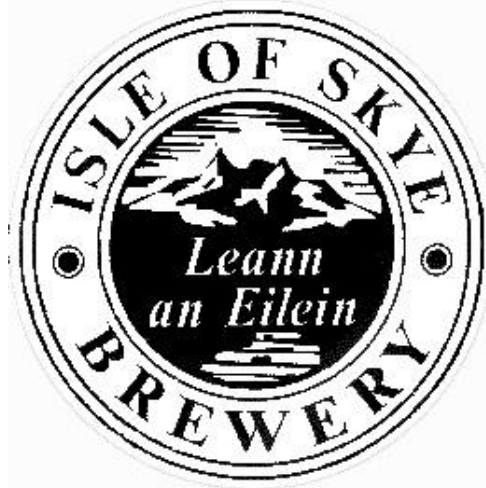


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