

What's Yours Then?

Highlands & Western Isles CAMRA
Free Newsletter



Something is Brewing in Glenfinnan!
The Badenoch Two Resurface!

More Awards for
Local Brewers & Pubs

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



**CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE**

Winter 2006

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

- > Pubs-of-the-Year - *Your votes are needed*
- > Focus on Chris Goodhill
- > 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.

Spring Newsletter **deadline** is 1st March, with publication in time for the Easter holiday.

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
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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.

3,000+ 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.

Branch officers and local members enjoyed the famous Clachnaharry Inn hospitality at our AGM in November. Chairman Bill Tring opened by welcoming all to the first AGM to be held since the change of Branch name to Highlands & Western Isles. He complimented the committee on their hard work which had led to another successful year as the Branch continued to go from strength to strength.

Bill noted that trips to breweries and pubs had been well organised and supported, and are helpful for assessing suitable GBG candidates. Our newsletter is well established, receiving plaudits from many sources, and it attracts valuable feedback on local real ale matters.

Bill was pleased to be able to report that we now have an active tasting programme, and thanked all who have participated. (Please see diary for dates, and update on page 16).

In his report Secretary Eric Mills expressed concern over increased pressure on tenants, from major breweries and pub chains, to stop selling local ales and this has affected leased pubs in Stornoway, Portree, Inverness and Ullapool. Our quota of GBG entries is being increased by one, to 34, but more pubs than that merit inclusion as the number of local pubs dispensing high quality ales continues to grow. Cairngorm Brewery's Black Gold won our first Beer-of-the-Year award.

The Treasurer was able to report on a healthy financial position, and local membership has risen to over 150. The past year has seen a full calendar of events, with four Saturday outings, and meetings held at numerous pubs within a 50 mile radius of Inverness.

Brewery Liaison Officer (BLO) and pub reports followed, then election of Branch Committee. The outgoing committee and Branch Officers were returned unopposed, but with a vacancy for a Social Secretary. (Full details on web).

Bill thanked Landlord George MacLean for his generous hospitality and closed the meeting.

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Black Gold	4.4%

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Our Annual Isle of Skye Fun Day Out

There is a saying, (who said it by the way? Come on own up!), that lightning doesn't strike in the same place twice. Well I can quite categorically state that whoever said it was talking rot, pure banana oil. Our grand day out visiting the various hostelrys, and our pals Angus, Pam and the team at the Isle of Skye brewery was, as for last year, one of warm and brilliant sunshine from start to finish. And in September too!

Our minibus picked us up in Drumnadrochit village at 9.30. It was touch and go as to whether our Walter was going to make it, and we wondered if he would have to cancel again at the last minute as he did last year. I had started a bookie's line on this and was just wondering what to do with the winnings when said Walt sauntered out of the post office with his paper and free DVD.

Mike and Gareth were already on the mini bus. In the absence of Chairman Bill, Gareth was in charge of keeping us all in order, and ensuring that we visited as many of the real ale outlets along the way as time would allow. Travelling along the A87 the sky became bluer and it was a treat in itself just drinking in the mountains, glens and lochs as we wound our way through to Skye. It seemed that many other happy souls were also planning to enjoy the scenery, judging by the many half naked bodies we saw hanging out of car boots in an effort to change into their walking gear. Not the sort of glen I wished to look at, especially when wearing some dodgy checked and baggy under-pants!

We saw buzzards in Glen Shiel, and an otter swimming to the shore at Loch Duich. Did he need a lift? We soon caught our first glimpse of the Skye bridge, now crossed without toll, and made a few sampling stops on our way to the brewery:

Sligachan Hotel - On offer were their Cuillin Brewery house specials: Eagle Ale (3.7% ABV), Skye Ale (4.1) and Pinnacle Ale (4.7). Also available were a Roisin-Tayberry beer by Williams Bros (4.2), and Caley Deuchars IPA. I tried the Roisin-Tayberry (Score 2 on the CAMRA scale). It smelled very fruity, it was

the colour of rosehip syrup and had a very astringent taste. This was not a popular beer by any stretch of the imagination. Pinnacle Ale (3) went down as one of the better ones at our first stop. It had a slightly smoky, malty taste and a lovely golden colour. Skye Ale (2) also had a slightly smoky aftertaste, but was flatter than a witches boob! Most who tried this agreed that they would give it a miss in future. I did not try the Eagle Ale, which was clear but flat, and those who sampled it thought it nondescript.

Bosville Hotel, Portree - Only one beer on handpump, Cuillin Brewery's Pinnacle Ale (sprinkler) at £2.95 a pint! They now have a second handpump which had no pump clip but, when asked, the barmaid said they had run out of beer from the Isle of Skye Brewery.

Isles Inn, Portree - Adnam's Broadside (4.7% ABV) and Isle of Skye Red Cuillin (4.2% ABV). We tried the Broadside. It was very cold but had a good taste, a nice mix of malt and hops.

McNabs Bar (Royal Hotel), Portree - The only real ale on offer was McNabs Ale (Score 3, forgot to note the ABV). I was informed it was a house beer, specially done for the hotel, a mixture of Isle of Skye Brewery's Red and Black Cuillin ales. It was a lovely deep ruby colour but just a touch too cool.



We piled back onto the coach to travel on to what was our highlight of the day – the **Isle of Skye Brewery!** Such hospitality at this brewery - Angus (pictured in the hospitality lounge), Pam, and all there greeted us with

(Continued on page 12)



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 EXPORT PALE ALE 7.5% ABV

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



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Branch Diary (Meetings start at 7.30 pm)

Tues 9 th January	Committee Meeting	Glen Mhor Hotel, Inverness
Tues 30 th January	Tasting Panel Meet	Palace Hotel, Inverness
Tues 6 th February	Committee Meeting	Blackfriars, Inverness
Fri 9 th Feb - Sat 3 rd Mar	* February Fest	Clachaig Inn, Glencoe
Tues 27 th Feb	Tutored Tasting (Stouts & Porters)	Clachnaharry Inn
Fri 2 nd - Sun 4 th Mar	* Aviemore Beer Festival	Old Bridge Inn, Aviemore
Sat 3 rd March		Social/Outing (by train) to Aviemore Beer Festival (meet @ midday)
Tues 6 th March	Branch Meeting	Clachnaharry Inn, Inverness
Tues 27 th March	Tasting Panel Meet	The Anderson, Fortrose
Tues 3 rd April	Committee Meeting	Snowgoose, Inverness
Sat 21 st April		Social/Outing to Lochaber: Atlas Brewery & Real Ale Pubs
Tues 24 th April	Tasting Panel Meet	The Phoenix, Inverness
Tues 8 th May	Committee Meeting	Dornoch Castle Hotel
Sat 12 th May	Annual Tasting Refresher	Benleva Hotel (Starts at 2pm)
Tues 5 th June	Branch Meeting	The Anderson, Fortrose
Sat 23 rd June		Social/Outing to Wester Ross: (details in next edition or on website)
Tues 26 th June	Tasting Panel Meet	New Outlet (TBC), Inverness
Tues 3 rd July	Committee Meeting	The Glen Hotel, Newtonmore
21 st - 29 th September	* 6 th Loch Ness Beer Festival	
19 th - 21 st October	* 3 rd Ullapool Beer Festival	

* 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

A total of 58 beers and ciders were served at the **Loch Ness Beer Festival**, held at the Benleva Hotel in September. A total of some 3,200 pints. Ales from Broughton Ales, Ossett Brewery and Stewart Brewing made notable debuts and attracted some positive feedback, the best being The Ghillie (4.5% ABV) from Broughton. We have been told that it will be making an early reappearance on the bar! Other firsts were Williams Red, Caledonian Full Monty, Cairngorm Glen Ample, and several new ciders, including Westons Country Perry which was very well received. Beer-of-the-Festival was Blaven (from the wood) for the second year running. Scapa Special, Ghillie, and Fraoch ensured the voting was very close. Festival organiser Stephen Crossland asked us to thank all who attended, all who supplied the ales (particularly Skye, Cairngorm & An Teallach for supplying the extra pumps). Over £200 was raised for the SSPCA by selling glasses, as well as the raffle and quiz night. The festival was well supported by the local

CAMRA committee, three of whom walked to the festival from Inverness, an eighteen mile hike along the Great Glen Way. An enjoyable walk, if a little too much tarmac.

A warm day, and very thirsty work . Ed.

Highland Feast - 2006 was the eighth year of this celebration of food and drink in the Highlands. Festival Director Willie Cameron and his team again organised a variety of events to set your taste buds racing - seafood banquets, food and drink tastings, gourmet meals, chef demonstrations, plus ceilidhs. Clachnaharry Inn hosted the 3rd Inverness Beer Festival, offering a wide range of brews from Highland & Islands; at Cawdor Castle marquees held a feast of organic food and drink, including organic ales from the Black Isle Brewery; Highlands & Islands Food and Drink Awards were presented at a gala dinner; World Porridge Championships at Carrbridge; and ending with a Celtic Fayre in Aviemore where Scotland's Larder was joined by food, drink and music from Wales and Ireland.

Ireland were represented by Strangford Lough

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Brewery who were selling their bottled brews. The festival is getting bigger and better every year; look out for the 2007 dates.

Events during the first two weeks of October included festivals at Morefield Motel (report on page 28), Clachaig Inn, and Kings Highway. Scottish Beers are always top of the bill at **Clachaig Inn's annual OctoberFest**. 30 ales, dispensed through 15 handpumps, ensured plenty of choice throughout the week.

The "Clachaig Blog" reports that fastest selling ale was a close run thing between Isle of Skye's Red Cullin (4.2%), Orkney's Skullsplitter (8.5%) and Hebridean's Berserker (7.5%).

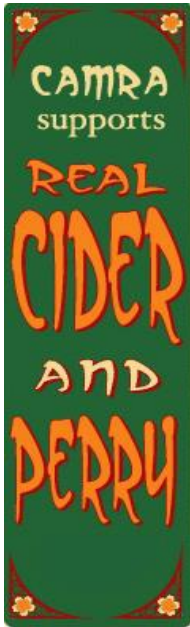
JD Wetherspoon's **Full Moon Beer Festival** at the end of October featured a range of dark and light beers. Some were seasonal offerings and some, such as Moorhouses Broomstick 4.0% ABV and Exmoor Beast 6.6% ABV, were obviously selected for the Halloween theme. Two local ales, Orkney Dragonhead Stout 4.0% ABV and Cairngorm Witches Cauldron 4.8% ABV, were included in the festival list of 33 beers. The excellent tasting notes listed

the beers in ABV order.

A first attempt to visit the festival at **Kings Highway** failed when, on Saturday night at 8.30, we were refused entry because the doorman said the bar was 'full up'.

On the second Saturday of the festival the bar was busy at 5.30pm, but with enough space for a couple of extra drinkers! Beers on tap were Shepherd Neame Whitstable Bay 4.1% ABV, Theakston Paradise Ale 4.2%, Caledonian XPA 4.3% ABV, Highgate Lone Wolf 4.6% ABV, Marston's Wicked Witch 4.6% ABV, and two handpumps serving Westons Vintage Cider! Sadly, there was only time for a quick pint of very tasty Wicked Witch.

Ember Inns (the **Snowgoose** is the only one on our patch) ran a Cask Fresh Ale Festival from 13th October until 26th November and offered CAMRA members 500 free pints (Winners, on a first come first served basis, were sent their vouchers after completing a simple form on the CAMRA website). One local member, at least, enjoyed a free pint at the Snowgoose! *Worth filling in the form! Ed.*



Traditional Cider Matters

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

The Anderson, Fortrose - Thatchers Heritage Cider

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

Blackfriars, Inverness - Westons Old Rosie, Westons 1st Quality Cider, and Herefordshire Country Perry (one at any time)

Stronlossit Inn, Roy Bridge - Thatchers Cheddar Valley Cider

Strathcarron Hotel - Thatchers Cider (rotated with cask ales)

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

Benleva Hotel, Drumadrochit - Westons 1st Quality Cider

Scourie Hotel - Westons 1st Quality Cider

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

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

Cider Report: Two ciders on handpump seem to be the norm currently. Old Rosie was in good form, and Westons Organic Draught Vintage was also available on handpump - **King's Highway**, 1st December. CVM.

Cider and Perry are now festival regulars. At the **Aberdeen & North East Beer Festival:** Thatcher's Cheddar Valley (6%) and Heritage (4.9%), Orchards Farmhouse medium (6.6%), Simpkins medium dry (8.4%), Wilkins medium sweet (6.5%), and the Perry was Newton Court medium (7.2%). Only a few pints of the Cheddar Valley were left at the end of the Festival.

Real ciders from Thatchers and Westons are now regular offerings at the well-established **Loch Ness Beer Festival**, held in September at the Benleva Hotel, and Westons Traditional Scrumpy was served on handpump at the **Ullapool Beer Festival**. The **Aviemore Beer Festival** in March, to be hosted by Nigel Reid at the Old Bridge Inn, will also feature real cider.

At the **Clachaig Inn**, "complete lack of complaints over the decision to replace Dry Blackthorn with a 'real' cider from Somerset - Thatcher's Heritage. The first 10 kegs went down a treat!"

New Real Cider - After the success of Addlestone's Cloudy Cider, from Gamer's of Somerset, the Anderson is "upgrading your cask cider experience to Thatcher's Heritage Cider (4.9%)"

At the **Scourie Hotel** Westons 1st Quality Cider has been selling so well since it was put on early in the year that landlord Patrick Price will soon be adding another cider to his portfolio; probably Old Rosie, as this is the one that some of his customers have been asking for.

Pints Pub - Real Ale in Denver, Colorado

Dear Ed, I just found this place. They have two cask conditioned ales (Dark Star and Lancer IPA) pulled from hand pumps and some others out of nitro taps. They also have more than 150 Single Malts, including some from now defunct but great distilleries like Mortlach. I don't know whether or not you want to give them a mention in your CAMRA newsletter but this is probably as close to a Clachnaharrie as we were going to get. The owner's name is Scott if you're interested (Tel 303-534-7543). I didn't see an email address but if you want to contact him let me know and I'll see if their website (www.pintspub.com) can receive mail. Paul.

Paul spent a holiday in the Highlands a few years ago and was very much taken with the Clachnaharry Inn. Ed.



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(Continued from page 4)

warmth in one hand and a pint in the other. We had to guess what our first beer was. I thought a mixture of Young Pretender and Blaven, Gareth thought Young Pretender and Cuillin Beast. Angus put us all right however. It was Leann Failte – his Welcome Ale.

We should have known! We had to guess the second ale and Angus (the devil) had made it difficult for us. We were told that this was not made up with his regular brews, and I thought it was a mix of Misty Isle and Two Rings.

Angus took most of the

party on a tour of the brewery. Mike, Gareth and myself, having done the brewery tour last year, decided to visit the **Pub on the Pier**. Here they had Isle of Skye US Ale and Grand Ale. It was at the Pub on the Pier that we decided, correction, Gareth decided that the second ale Angus and Pam had prepared for us was a mix of US Ale and Grand Ale.

It was Walter's birthday and, unbeknown to him, his wife Jenny had arranged through Steve at the Benleva Hotel and Angus for a gift to be presented to him. We all sang Happy Birthday and tucked into the wonderful food laid on by Angus and Pam, and cooked by Pam's brother: master barbecue chef John Jones. Our heartfelt thanks from all of us on tour that day go to Angus, Pam, John, and everyone at the Isle of Skye Brewery for a wonderful afternoon.

Next on the agenda was the **Stein Inn** on the Waternish peninsular. The Stein Inn is the oldest pub on the Isle of Skye and is located in a wonderful waterfront location. The bar was full of walkers, holiday-makers and locals.

No-one tried the Eagle Ale (one pint was enough earlier on). There were only a few pints of Harviestoun's Bitter and Twisted left (3.8% ABV, Score 3), which went down very well, and Deuchars IPA (3).

Our next stop was the **Old Inn** at Carbost. Here there were two ales on handpump. IoS Grand Ale (ABV 4.3%). and Cuillin Brewery Skye Ale. No time to try the Skye Ale, but the Grand Ale was in good form - a nice golden colour, with a good balance of hops and malt. We were now running out of time and had to head for home. Time only for a ten minute comfort break at the **Cluanie Inn**, and a last pint of Grand Ale – again in excellent condition. We were dropped off back in Drumnadrochit, where most decided to round the evening off at the Benleva.



CW and minders outside the Stein Inn

Many thanks to Davy, our driver of the day, for once again taking us to Skye and getting us home safely but in a somewhat 'mellow' state. I had to get home where I knew the cat would be waiting at the back door, bursting to get out and relieve himself. That would make two of us then!! CW, Drumnadrochit.

The Cuillin Hills Hotel in Portree, subject of the 'Weekend Pass' review in the 10th December Scotland on Sunday Spectrum supplement, was not part of the annual Isle of Skye trip itinerary, as real ale is not served there.

Anyone travelling with writer Angela Dewar to Portree however, would probably be looking for a stiffer drink than real ale after making a "30 minute drive from the bridge connecting Skye to the mainland".



'Weekend Pass' is a regular weekly half-page in the Travel section which spotlights mainly Scottish destinations.

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Festival Ales - Reports from Members

This year I attended two music festivals in the Highlands and, whilst expecting great bands, I had not expected that the bars would have been up to much. In fact I had thought that the only beer available would have been very gassy and very expensive. I couldn't have been more wrong.

Back in August, the Black Isle Brewery, very efficiently, ran the main bars at the Bel-ladrum **Tartan Heart Festival**, near Beaully. They had Red Kite and Blonde, both selling for £3 via a voucher system.

More recently was the **Loopallu Festival** at Ullapool. It was great to discover that the An Teallach Brewery had a bar there, with 5 different ales on throughout most of the weekend. This was complete with a proper wooden bar to lean against inside a small marquee. The price here was a very reasonable £2.50 per pint with real money.

At least two of the headlining bands were into cask ale too. Hayseed Dixie, who apply a Hillbilly style to AC/DC numbers, were seen lubricating the vocal chords prior to going on stage. Their tour poster shows them trying to look menacing, brandishing bottles of Old Peculiar. Also the Family Mahone, a Pogues Tribute band, were drinking at the An Teallach bar after their stint.

The photo shows the bar at Loopallu. PC.



At the end of October as part of the Highland food festival, the **Cairngorm Hotel** in Aviemore held a mini beer festival. The day started wet and miserable and not too many people had ventured onto the Cairngorm Hotel's car park where a range of tents supplying local foods had been assembled. After a few tasters and investing in some cheese we decided the beer tent would be the next stop. The first beer tried was Cairngorm Blessed Thistle. This turned out to be the best beer of the festival and was rated 4. The next was Cairngorm Sheepshaggers, this was only rated 3 and just didn't taste right (might have been first pint out of the pump). The third beer tried from the tent was Inveralmond Ossian ale from Perth, this was only rated a 3 as I found this beer too cold. All the beers from the tent were served in plastic glasses which I feel spoilt the beers and kept them all a bit too cold!!

After a break for a walk we went to the **Old Bridge Inn** for a pint of Isle Of Skye Red Cuillin; this was very nice and rated 4, also on the bar were Caledonian Deuchers and Caledonian 80/-, it was good to see all three handpumps in operation!!

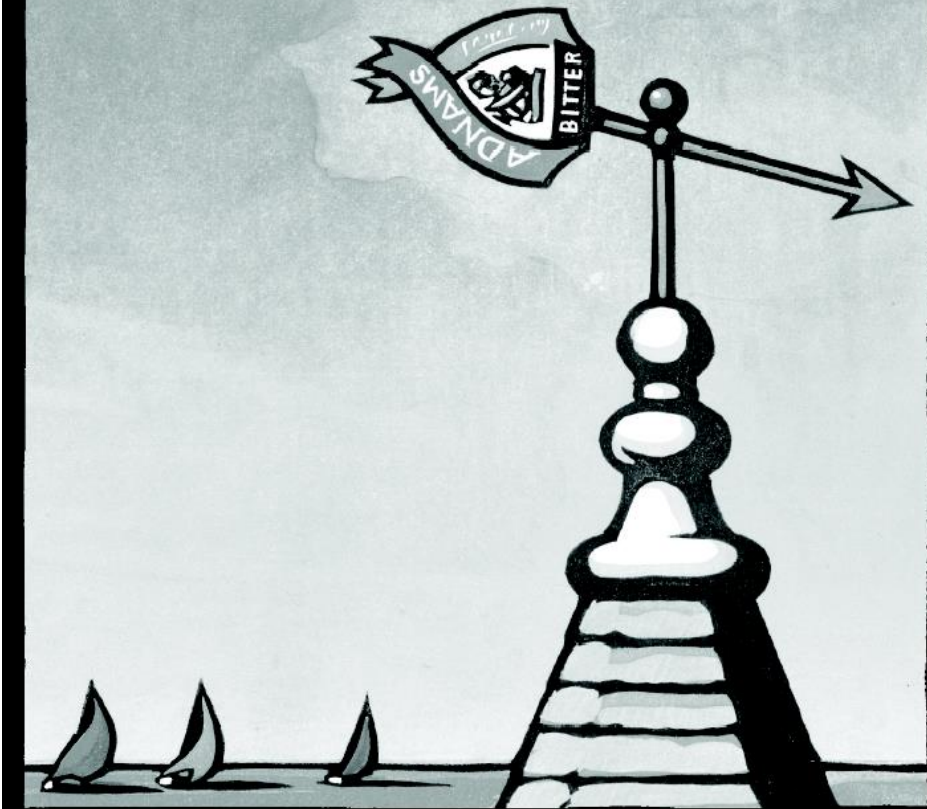
We headed back to the Cairngorm Hotel for a pint of Cairngorm Stag from the main bar, this was given a 3+. The only beer we didn't try at the festival was Greene King IPA. This was due to us boycotting this brewery due to their buying and closing smaller breweries (not too dissimilar to what Whitbread were doing in the 70's!!). Overall a good day was had and even the weather eventually improved!!!

We would also like to mention our three (local) pubs in Badenoch, the **Glen Hotel** in Newtonmore is still well worth the 7 mile return walk for a few beers, the **Suie Hotel** at Kinraig also serves a wonderful pint but due to the lack of public transport we are limited or we would be in there all night!!! In Kingussie the **Tipsy Laird** has recently installed a second handpump and is a welcome real ale addition to the area.

That's about all from us for now, **The Badenoch Two**!!!!!!

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Tasting Panel Update

Our tasting panel meetings have continued to go from strength to strength, with a regular turnout of trained tasters, following the CAM-RA tasting course we held earlier in the year. Meetings are held on the last Tuesday of most months (all are welcome, not just tasting experts, please check on-line diary for venues), and we are making every effort to visit as many local real ale hostelrys as possible.

In the Autumn we held tasting panel meetings at Clachnaharry Inn, at Benleva Hotel, and at King's Highway. The first two are both regular GBG entries and award winning pubs, and we eagerly looked forward to our tasting dates.

Our hosts looked after us well, and thanks are due to George MacLean at Clachnaharry Inn for the snacks provided to sustain us, and to Stephen Crossland at Benleva Hotel for a first tasting provided on the house.

As is the norm, a good range of local brewery beers were available for tasting at the Clachnaharry Inn; a very useful, educational and confidence building evening was enjoyed by all present. (Isle of Skye Brewery) Red Cuillin was tasted first and generally agreed to be in top form. Although it did have a slight haze, the bitter sweet, well balanced malt and hop flavours were apparent with only a hint of any yeast notes. (Orkney) Dark Island was a little disappointing, with some samples being on the warm side. Nevertheless, the beer was still considered not to be the best example of the brew, being somewhat thin and lacking the dry roast kick that it often has. This brew can be considered a stout or an old ale, and it was nearer the latter at this tasting. Caley Deuchar's IPA came as a pleasant change after the first two malty beers; introducing a refreshing hoppy fruitiness to the evening and scoring a high eight from all the tasters.

The best came last and Inveralmond Lia Fail was generally agreed to be the 'Beer of the Session', warranting a repeat order. It's rich summer fruitiness was not overpowering, and balanced well by strong malt and hop flavours.

At Benleva Hotel two Skye beers were tasted along with the well advertised Hobgoblin from Wychwood. All beers were served in perfect

condition. The (Isle of Skye) Young Pretender was found to be very drinkable, with plenty of hops, especially in the taste. Again rather too much caramel notes for it to score highly. Isle of Skye Lord of the Ales, a variation of the special Two Rings wedding brew, went down well though it was also spoilt by the caramel phenolic notes. The beer of this evening was Hobgoblin, a wonderfully chewy, malty, sweet, full-bodied old ale. Blackcurrant and chocolate were prominent in this very tasty brew: just what the Lager boys are warned about!

At Kings Highway our evening started badly with Red Cuillin having been on too long and having a vinegar nose. At least we learnt something about 'off' tastes. The staff were happy (why shouldn't they be?) to replace with beer from a new cask. This tasted fine, scoring an average seven. Caramel was rather overpowering in the nose, but hard to pick out in the well balanced malt, fruit and hops in the taste. Very strong bitterness and with a good sweet balance produced a very quaffable ale.

The Caley 80/- was a very poor example of this beer, and not the fault of the pub. It had a cheesy, meaty nose which carried on into the taste. Some bitterness, and a trace of malt, but basically lacking in beer flavours.

Sadly poor cellarmanship meant that the Isle of Skye Black Cuillin could not be tasted. The replacement cask had only just been racked evidently, and had not been on stillage. We retired to Blackfriars. Here we had the delight of two Cairngorm Brewery beers to taste.

Trade Winds was up to its usual standard. This elderflower scented, massively fruity and hoppy bitter sweet speciality ale, with grapefruit and passion fruit in the nose and taste. Wildcat was somewhat unusual in that it seemed much sweeter than normal, cloying in fact: has the recipe changed? It was definitely a poor example of this usually excellent beer.

CAMRA is promoting Stouts and Porters in February and March. For our February tasting meeting, to be held at the Clachnaharry Inn, we are holding a "Tutored Tasting" at which we hope to be able to taste three Stout/Porter type beers from local Highlands & Islands breweries. Please do come along and join us.

The Old Inn

Gairloch, Ross-shire, IV21 2BD

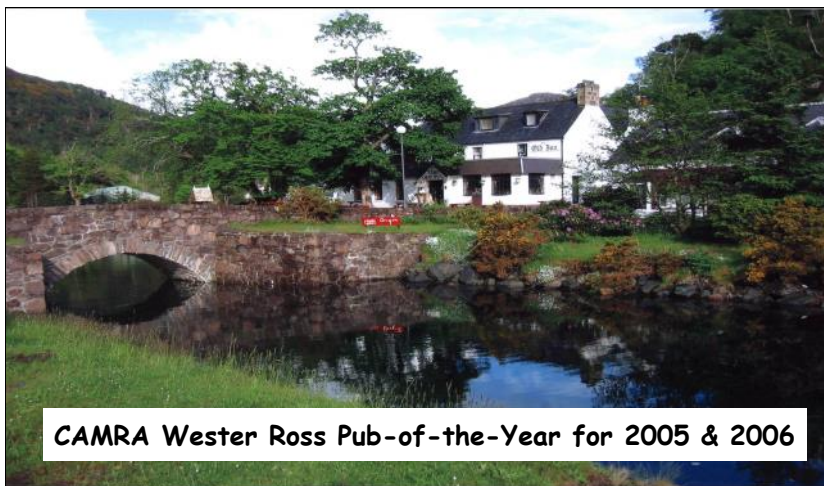
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Tel/FAX: 01854 633 306 E-Mail: anteallachale@dundonnell.freeseerve.co.uk

Focus on Chris Goodhill

Chris is the co-owner of the Glen Hotel in Newtonmore, along with his wife Kim. The Glen has undergone some radical changes in just under four years since they took over. All this and neither Chris nor his wife had any previous experience in running a hotel, let alone keeping and serving real ale.

Q. Where are you originally from?

I was born in 1959, in a flat opposite the famous Headingley Test Cricket ground in Leeds. I lived in Leeds until I joined the Army, having gained a place at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, to train as an officer in the Royal Artillery. On leaving the Army I moved to Otley, a small market town north of Leeds. I lived in and around Otley until we moved to Newtonmore in 2003.

Q. Why and when did you get involved with real ale?

Obviously coming from Yorkshire I was raised on real ale! In fact until I left Leeds to join the Army I didn't realise there was anything

else! My father was a great sportsman and a great Yorkshire man and had friends in the likes of Freddy Trueman and Geoff Boycott. I spent many weekends watching him play cricket or rugby and as a young boy I would get treated afterwards in the Clubhouse to a 'bitter shandy' made with Tetley's, Webster's, Sam Smiths. or similar. This progressed to a sly 'mild' and finally to some fantastic Yorkshire bitters!

The pubs I started to visit once of legal age (or maybe not!!) were 'true' Yorkshire pubs as I remember with 'snug' bars, lounge bars and games rooms. Some, I recall, in the very early days still had bars that were 'men only' and I even remember one or two that had a 'lager' on for the ladies! – What went wrong!!

Q. Why move to Newtonmore?

My wife, Kim and I had worked in the Bus & Coach Industry for many years including over 8 years running our own business. If you think running a hotel or bar is hard you should try the bus business!! It was time for a change whilst we were still young enough.

We had originally thought that a caravan site was a good idea but this soon changed to looking for a hotel.

We looked all over the North of England, the Borders and Scotland, but finally settled on the Glen Hotel in the village of Newtonmore. The hotel and the area offered close to what we were looking for in terms of a potential business in an outstanding area. We have two boys aged 15 and 11 and the schooling in the area is excellent combined with a safe environment for them to play.

The village is situated in a busy tourist area but, and perhaps more important, there is a large, thriving local community to provide business all year round. The potential attraction of business through 'Monarch of The Glen' also had an effect on the decision.



Q. What are your favourite real ales/ beer styles?

Since being here in Scotland my tastes have changed and I now prefer a good, light session ale. Beers like Deuchars IPA, Edinburgh Pale Ale and Atlas Latitude are all excellent, and, although stronger, I think that Cairngorm Trade Winds is surely one of the best I've ever tried – surely this should be Champion Beer of Great Britain? When I get the opportunity to return to Yorkshire I have now found that 'Copper Dragon Ales' (Skipton Brewery) have almost taken over the North Yorkshire area. If you get a chance, try their 'Golden Pippin' which is a passable like for Trade Winds, or their Scotts 1816 bitter – you won't be disappointed!



Having said all that, at this time of year you can't beat a good pint of Theakston's Old Peculier - what winter nights were made for!

Q. How has non-smoking affected your business?

Despite the pre-ban doom and gloom I believe that it has helped improve our trade at 'The Glen'. It is undoubtedly a more pleasant place to work but we have seen our food trade grow with new faces appearing on a regular basis. A lot of our customers are stopping longer and visiting more regularly.

The result is more sales!

We had put up a fabulous awning outside for use by smokers, and this proved extremely popular during the summer months with smokers and non-smokers alike but, despite having applied for planning permission, the Cairngorms National Park Authority wanted it removing! I now have to re-apply with plans for a permanent structure!

Q. How do you relax, do you have any hobbies/interests?

In the little time that we get off for relaxing we like to spend time with our two boys aged 15 and 11. We are still spending a lot of time exploring the area and walking if we can, but we enjoy a trip to the cinema to see the latest blockbuster. Again, if I get a chance I enjoy clay pigeon shooting.

Q. Is there life after Glenbog?

We saw a lot of business from 'Monarch of The Glen' as we were the chosen local for most of the cast and crew.

They had a substantial proportion of their numbers that enjoyed a good pint of real ale including the likes of Tom Baker who loved strong ales. Being from Kent he loved 'Bishops Finger' and 'Spitfire' but would always try our guest ales. He was particularly fond of Isle of Skye 'Cuillin Beast'.

All good things come to an end and filming

(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
Kings Highway (*Wetherspoons*)
Masonic Club
Number 27
Palace Hotel
Phoenix Bar
Snowgoose

There are rumours of a new Real Ale pub opening in Inverness early in the new year. More (hopefully) in our Spring edition, but keep an eye on our website.

Inverness District

Benleva Hotel, Drumnadrochit
Loch Ness Lodge, Drumnadrochit (S)
Clansman Hotel
Slaters Arms, Cannich (S)
Bothy Bar, Fort Augustus
Caledonian Hotel, Fort Augustus (S)
Lock Inn, Fort Augustus
Whitebridge Hotel, Loch Ness South
Dores Inn
Glenmoriston Arms, Invermoriston
North Kessock Hotel
Culbokie Inn
Royal Hotel, Cromarty (S)
Cromarty Arms (TP)
The Anderson, Fortrose
Plough Inn, Rosemarkie
Crofters Café Bar, Rosemarkie (TP)
Munlochy Hotel (TP)
Old North Inn, Inchmorie
National Hotel, Dingwall
Richmond Hotel, Strathpeffer
Ben Wyvis Hotel, Strathpeffer

Inchbae Lodge Hotel, Garve
Castle Hotel, Portmahomack
Edderton Inn, Edderton
Star Inn, Tain
Cawdor Tavern, Cawdor
Classroom Bistro Bar, Nairn (TP)
Invernairne Hotel, Nairn (TP)(S)
Tomatin Inn, Tomatin (S)

(TP - Dispensed using Top Pressure)

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 Damph 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
Old Station Restaurant, Spean Bridge
Spean Bridge Hotel (S)
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
(Formerly the Nether Lochaber Hotel)
 Inn at Ardgour
 Ice Factor, Kinlochleven
 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
 Typsy Laird, Kingussie

* Strictly the following five 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
 Mash Tun, Charlestown of Aberlour
 Highlander Inn, Craigellachie
 Croft Inn, Glenlivet
 Glen Avon Hotel, Tomintoul

Caithness & Sutherland

Scourie Hotel, Scourie
 Inchnadampn Hotel
 Burghfield House Hotel, Dornoch
 Castle Hotel, Dornoch
 Sutherland Arms Hotel, Golspie (S)
 Sutherland Arms Hotel, Brora
 Tongue Hotel

A Fine Day for a Great Ale?



A Great Day for A Fyne Ale!

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
 Ardvasar Hotel
 Isle Ornsay Hotel
 Claymore, Broadford
 Dunollie Hotel, Broadford
 Hebridean Hotel, Broadford
 Old Inn, Carbost
 Sconser Lodge Hotel
 Sligachan Hotel (S)
 Taigh Ailean Hotel, Portnalong
 Dunvegan Hotel
 Stein Inn, Waternish
 Edinbane Hotel

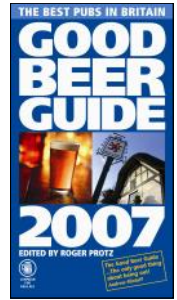
The Lodge at Edinbane
Ferry Inn, Uig
Uig Hotel, Uig
Pub at the Pier, Uig
Duntulm Hotel
Greshornish Lodge
Bosville Hotel, Portree
Isles Inn, Portree
Royal Hotel, Portree

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 (S)
Tigh Dearg Hotel, Lochmaddy, North Uist
Carinish Inn, North Uist (S)

Langass Lodge, North Uist (S)
Westford Inn, North Uist
Dark Island Hotel, Benbecula (S)
Isle of Benbecula House Hotel (S)
Borrodale Hotel, South Uist (S)
Orasay Inn, South Uist (S)
Lochboisdale Hotel, South Uist (S)
Polachar Inn, South Uist (S)
Shawbost Inn, Isle of Lewis
Clachan Bar, Stornoway
Cladh Inn, Stornoway
Royal British Legion, Stornoway
Whalers Rest, Stornoway
Harris Inn, 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.

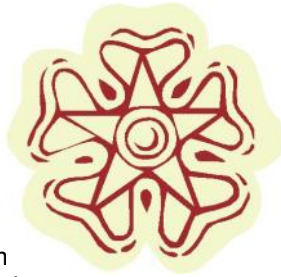
Good Beer Guide 2007
Full details on page 36



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finished over a year ago.

We have lost the business of cast and crew but we are still busy with tourists coming to Monarch Country and are now booked for several outside bars at Adverkie House (the location for Monarch of The Glen) as they are now licensed for weddings.

As far as future developments go, we intend to consolidate our position that we have achieved over the last four years and, in the longer term, hope to expand with an enlarged eating area and a 'public' bar.

Q. Have you seen any changes in drinking habits during your time at The Glen?

One striking change – Cider!

Regenerated by the sales and marketing of Magners the cider market has boomed over the last two years. I cannot believe how much bottled cider we now sell (more than beer/lager), most of this (like it or loathe it) is Magners. Our draught sales of Strongbow have trebled and, perhaps most relevant, we now stock and sell a reasonable quantity of proper scrumpy. We stock Westons 'First Quality' and 'Old Rosie', the latter at 7.2% is the most popular.

Our cask ale sales have increased dramatically in the four years that we have been here. There was only one pump on when we took over, this has now increased to four. I can't always justify the four on during the winter but there are an increasing number of the smaller local breweries that are able to supply in 'pins'. This helps us to offer more during the quieter periods.

Pubs-of-the-Year: Please Vote

Our annual competition brings much publicity to the Branch and allows us to choose the pub to represent the Branch in the Scottish POTY competition. It also means a great deal to the individual winners and I know from first hand just how treasured these awards are.

The Highlands and Islands are a little off the beaten track, it seems, and our top hostleries do not always receive the accolades they deserve. If you want the best pubs to receive a little recognition then please vote now. Bill. (Full details on page 30).

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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, Eagle and Pinnacle 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.

Glenfinnan Brewery - The first beer, A' Chiad Fhear, was brewed in their 4-barrel plant in October 2006 - a limited edition of 1,000 bottles plus one barrel.

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.



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.

Three Wins For Isle of Skye Brewery

October was a good month for Angus MacRuary and the Isle of Skye Brewery. Their recycled Cornelius containers won CAMRA's Dan Kane Award, the SIBA Award for Innovation, and a Highlands and Islands Food and Drink Award in the Innovation Category.

The Cornelius containers (Corns) were originally used to dispense soft drinks through 'guns' on bar counters. When 'bag in the box' syrups took over, these Corns became obsolete. After much trial and error, Angus has converted the Corns to dispense cask ale. One of the benefits of these 4.5 gallon Corns is that they are small and easy to handle. They have helped the Isle of Skye Brewery to introduce real ale to new areas, and to keep real ale flowing during the quieter times of the year.

This is the second year that the Highlands and Islands Food and Drink Awards have taken place. There are ten awards recognising the contribution that local businesses make to the food and drink industry, and they were presented at a gala dinner on 5th October.

The Small Independent Brewers' Association (SIBA) was founded in 1980 to represent the interests of the growing numbers of independent breweries in the UK. In 1995 the name changed to the Society of Independent Brewers but retained the original "SIBA" acronym. SIBA members seek to preserve traditional brewing styles and methods, whilst at the same time demonstrating the skill of their craft through creativity, invention and innovation.

The Dan Kane Award was instigated in 1993 as a memorial to the former Scottish Regional Director and National Executive member Dan Kane, who tragically died in 1992. This CAMRA award is for technical innovation in the brewing and pub industry that has a positive impact on beer quality. The first winner was Peter Fox, a biomedical student who analysed proteins in beers and showed the breakdown of protein as beer ages. Other winners include the Charles Wells Brewery for their Bombardier mini cask system; Paul Bayley of Marstons Brewery for retaining and enlarging the Burton Union Sets; and Wye College for its pioneering work on dwarf hop varieties.

Angus MacRuary said "How pleased we are to have received these awards – particularly so the Dan Kane and SIBA awards since it is recognition from those involved in the brewing industry at the importance of our achievement. We were very surprised to be recognised in such a prestigious way as we are only a small brewery; it shows that it is not only the large breweries who can progress innovation – it is open to all. The Highlands and Islands Food and Drink Award was also a surprise, and we are very grateful to the judges, who may not necessarily be industry-specific experts, for recognising what we have done."

Fusion Innovation Award

An attempt to meet consumer demand for cod without depleting wild fish stocks has won an award for innovation and entrepreneurship in the Highlands and Islands. Johnson Sustainable Seafoods has won Fusion's annual Innovation Award. The 2006 award, which is sponsored by Microsoft, was presented at the Aviemore Highland Resort in November, in front of the 129 delegates present at Fusion's annual conference.

There were two contenders from the brewing sector - the Institute of Agronomy at Orkney College UHI had teamed up with **Valhalla Brewery** to create a beer from bere barley, an old variety particularly suited to the low input agricultural systems favoured by many growers in the Highlands and Islands; and the **Isle of Skye Brewery** had significantly increased the market for their products by creating a half-size cask for their ales, thereby overcoming the wastage caused by ale with a short shelf life only being available in full-sized casks.

Fusion is a membership organisation that brings Highland and Island entrepreneurs together to explore ways of creating and sustaining competitive advantage.

Great to see Highlands and Islands brewers winning more awards. Ed.



Blackfriars



Great Beer

Great Service

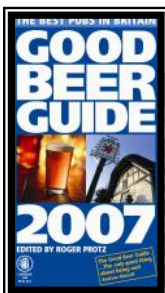
Live Entertainment

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9th - 31st December
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Ullapool Beer Festival

It was a dull and damp day in Inverness as we boarded our minibus, but it brightened up a little and we were able to enjoy some glorious Autumn colour on our way to Ullapool. After a week of very heavy rain there were some spectacular waterfalls along our route. We were dropped at the door of the Ferry Boat Inn where we started the day with Brewhouse Special (4.4% ABV) from the local An Teallach Brewery. A little hazy, but a very tasty pint. A short walk along the Ullapool waterfront took us to the Seaforth Bar where Isle Of Skye Red Cuillin was in very good nick. At the nearby Caley Inn the font clip suggested Isle of Skye Hebridean Gold, but clearly changing the clip is not necessarily co-ordinated with a new cask! Some thought it was Red Cuillin again, others were not so sure. We all agreed that it was certainly not Hebridean Gold, but that it was a very good pint nonetheless!

Another short walk to the Argyll Bar which, surprisingly considering the number of tourists about, is now not open at lunchtime. Not long ago this was a very busy pub, serving three real ales, with a terrific menu, and a possible GBG candidate at that time.

Any disappointment at missing out on a pint at the Argyll quickly disappeared once we saw the festival real ale and food menus at the Morefield Motel. There was very good range of Highlands & Islands brews, including a "Guess Ale", and all were in tip-top condition. Landlord Tony Oulton had done exceptionally well to wedge so many casks into his small cellar! The Saturday afternoon "Guess Ale" was White Wife, from Shetland's Valhalla Brewery, which was only spotted by one of our party.

The Morefield Motel is well-known for the Mariners Restaurant, but there was also a very good selection of tasty bar meals which were served all day. The Beer-of-the-festival was Rob Hill's Scapa Special - no surprise there! Morefield Motel is at the north side of Ullapool. Take the A835 north, turn left after crossing the river (about 1/2 mile from seafront).

Dates for next year are 19th - 21st October, and this festival has quickly become a not-to-be-missed event in our real ale calendar.

The Old Bridge Inn ~ Aviemore



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

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www.oldbridgeinn.co.uk

As we went to press yet another Beer Festival was starting, this time at **Blackfriars**. The festival will run until 31st December, and will feature mainly Christmas and Winter ales.

Look out for new Christmas beers from An Teallach and Kelburn, and a special festival beer, 'Twinkle Toes', from Shepherd Neame.

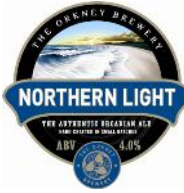
In March 2007 there will be a first **Aviemore Beer Festival** at the Old bridge Inn. Full details at www.aviemorebeerfestival.co.uk.

We include dates of all beer festival and real events in the diary page of this (quarterly) newsletter. For the most up-to-date list of real ale events please check our website.

Not all festivals are necessarily organised by CAMRA, but we are always keen to support and promote events which raise the profile of Highlands and Islands breweries.

In 2006 there was at least one local festival in nine out of twelve months. 2007 promises to be as good. Make sure you do not miss out!

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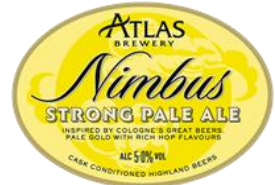
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A warm and friendly welcome from the owners and staff awaits all who visit this fine family-run hotel



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Tel: 01479 872056 Fax: 01479 873537
Website: www.benmhorhotel.com



Pubs-of-the-Year (POTY)

Time to vote for your Pubs-of-the-Year. Since 2005, in recognition of the growing number of real ale pubs in the Branch area, we have increased the number of awards to seven -

Inverness City Inverness District Aviemore & the Cairngorms
Skye, Lochalsh & Hebrides Fort William & Lochaber
Wester Ross Caithness & Sutherland

Please check the pub lists on pages 20-22 if you are unsure in which area a pub is located. Please use the voting form (see page 38) and post to the Branch Contact (see page 6).

Alternatively you can either e-mail your selection to the secretary or use the on-line voting form. Further information at **www.highlandcamra.org.uk**

All Branch members are allowed to vote in all seven categories.

All votes to be returned to the secretary by ***end of February***.

All entries must serve real ale.

All nominated pubs must be within the Branch boundary

In the event of a tie the committee will decide the result by consensus.

The overall Highlands & Western Isles Pub-of-the-Year, who will represent the Branch in the annual Scottish Pub-of-the-Year competition, will be selected by committee (using CAMRA judging guidelines) from the seven area winners.

Please support your favourite pubs by sending in your votes. It really does not matter if you have not managed to visit some of the great real ale pubs in what is a massive geographical area. If you just have one great local, a friendly hostelry where the beer is in the best of nick and the craic is good, then put them on the map! *Yours could be the clinching vote!*

Tesco has the Bottle!

In the Autumn newsletter (Focus on Gareth Hardman) one of the questions I was asked, in my role as stock control manager at Tesco Extra Inverness, was "What input do you have on the range of bottled ales you stock?" My reply was "Not enough", so you can imagine my surprise when I was invited by the Tesco Scottish marketing and merchandising managers, who both remembered my interest in ales and my moans regarding the lack of Scottish lines, to join them at a sampling session at Traditional Scottish Ales' Bridge of Allen brewery in early August.

We were joined by CAMRA Scottish Branches Chair Ken Davie and CAMRA Vice-chair Colin Valentine, plus hosts Graham Coull and Doug Ross from TSA. Ian Brocklebank, CAMRA's Scottish Regional Tasting Co-ordinator, was also invited and he sorted the 60 entrants by style into 3 groups of 20 and gave us all pointers on what to look for with regard to taste, flavours etc.

After much enjoyable sampling (and not much drinking I hasten to add, due to the amount of samples to try) each group selected their top beers based on overall taste and "shelf appeal". All 3 groups presented their chosen beers and the reasons for choosing them. These were then collected for forwarding to the Tesco beer buyer who has the final say, as availability of supply and commercial factors have to be taken into account. Thus ended what I can most definitely say was the most enjoyable "company business" I have attended!

Ten weeks on and at the Tesco Extra Inverness there are now 23 new Scottish bottled ales on the fixture, taking our range of Scottish ales to over 40 in a total range of 80+ bottled beers. It is also great to see Highlands & Western Isles breweries well represented with two beers from Cairngorm, five from Sinclair Breweries, two from Isle of Skye, and two from Black Isle. Overall an excellent result which I hope will just be the start, as with a much wider Scottish distribution in Tesco, with some lines in over 80 stores these quality ales could stand up well against the national brands and pave the way for further range increases. GH, Inverness.

aviemore beer festival

hosted by the old bridge inn



From Friday 2nd to Sunday 4th March 2007

The best of beers - *An excellent range of quality cask conditioned ales, other beers, lager and cider*

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Inns & Things

Sadly we must report that **Inshes Gate** no longer serves cask ale. Inshes Gate was a TP (dispensed using top pressure) outlet, not a method approved by CAMRA (see below), but nonetheless local real ale drinkers found that the ale was usually very drinkable!

Thanks to BP & BM for letting us know. Ed.

Top Pressure - the beer is pumped to the tap, normally by gas pressure from CO₂ canisters. This is known as 'top pressure', because the beer is under constant pressure, which forces the beer up through the pipes and out of the tap when the lever is pulled. The effect of the top pressure often taints the taste of the beer, and can also produce a very 'gassy' beer, which for some is not pleasant to drink nor to deal with its after-effects.

The **Sligachan Hotel** has again shut up shop for the Winter apparently. We received a pub report on 5th November from a member who spotted notices on the doors saying "Shut until March 2007"! *Their very professional website makes no mention of seasonal closure. Ed.*

We have heard that George MacLean has not renewed his lease for the **Duck** at Conon Bridge, and we understand that the pub is currently closed. Lewiston's **Smiddy Bar** has also closed following non-renewal of lease.

Better news from Dingwall where two out of three handpumps in the **National Hotel** are regularly in service. We have heard reports of Marstons Pedigree being served at the **Star Inn** in Tain.

If you are a Winter visitor then please check before going out of your way for a pint. Many of the Highlands & Western Isles hosteleries either do not serve real ale in the Winter months, or serve a reduced range, or have reduced opening hours. Food may only be served at weekends. Do not rely on websites being updated to reflect seasonal changes, although full marks to the **Stein Inn** on Skye and the **Four Seasons** at Onich who provide comprehensive on-line information.

In the Highlands & Islands Food & Drink Awards 2006 **Ben Damp Inn's Lisbeth Broome** was commended for her Individual Contribution - a new category for this year,

sponsored by Baxters Food Group, and one which recognises the contribution made by an individual to the food and drink industry in the Highlands and Islands. Ben Damp Inn ran their first beer festival in August.

In his Winter e-newsletter Jim Anderson notes that December and January will be **Strong Ale Months at The Anderson**: All through December and January we'll have a strong cask ale of 6%+ on at all times, at regular cask ale prices. The first three will be:

- Theakston's Masham Ale 6.5%
- Cairngorm Santa's Sledgehammer 6%
- Orkney SkullSplitter 8.5%

In our Autumn Edition we reported that "In Grantown-on-Spey the **Strathspey Hotel** has ceased trading and is now a bank". We have since learned that the hotel has not been turned into a bank but, sadly, has gone into administration and is in the control of a bank.

Also in Grantown, the **Ben Mhor Hotel** is up for sale. Sandra and Phillipa have turned this hotel into an wonderful real ale hostelry, with the seasonal ale from the nearby Cairngorm Brewery always on tap. We all hope that new owners carry on the good work, and that they continue to sell real ale of the highest quality.

A few miles along the Spey, at Kingussie, the **Silver Fjord Hotel** is also up for sale. Having built up the trade in this small village pub, their introduction to the licensed trade, Barry and James are now looking to advance to a larger business. Luckily for real ale drinkers in the area they are hoping not to have to move too far in this quest. The Branch wish them all the best of luck in their new venture.

Fears that the sale of **Clachnaharry Inn** to Belhaven would lead to beers from smaller local breweries disappearing from the wide selection have so far proved unfounded. Landlord George MacLean promised that "It's a case of change but no change at the Clachnaharry", and throughout the Autumn beers from An Teallach, Fyne Ales, and the Highland Brewing Company have continued to feature strongly alongside those from Isle of Skye, Atlas, Orkney, and Cairngorm breweries. All change again at **Blackfriars** where Bev Alexander has relinquished the lease so that



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Afternoon Teas

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Cask Ales

Beer Garden

Overlooking

Rosemarkie Bay



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she may spend more time with her young family. Bev has no plans to take on another pub in the short term. All associated with the Branch will wish her all the best in her 'time off', and thank her for all the hard work she put into keeping the Blackfriars at the very forefront of real ale pubs in the capital of the Highlands. Hopefully a successor may soon be found who will continue the real ale tradition at this very popular hostelry.

Self-confessed beer geek Jim Anderson and his chef wife, Anne, were featured by Susan Nowak in the December edition of CAMRA's monthly BEER magazine. The full page article chronicled their journey from Philadelphia to the **Anderson** in Fortrose, and highlighted the growing reputation of this Black Isle hostelry for Real Ales, Belgian Beers, Single Malts; and the mix of traditional and world recipes used in the cooking of the best of Scottish produce.

Late News Item: At Class Magazine's Bar Awards 2006 ceremony, held in London on 28th November, the **Anderson** came home with top honours for 'Best Beer Offering' from

among all UK entrants. Jim and Anne were travelling back from the States when they heard the news. Jim observed that the Better Beer message is being heard loud and clear from way up here in the Northern Highlands!

Class is the monthly magazine of Bar Culture.

Logistical Nightmare - Our Autumn edition included a report from a Norfolk couple who "were a bit shocked to see that they were charging £2.80 for a pint and £1.60 for a half of the same" at the Old Forge Inn in Inverie. (Having said that, they did note that both beers tried, Deucher's IPA and Isle of Skye Cuillin Beast, were very good).

It is worth noting that the Old Forge, remotest pub in mainland Britain, is accessible only by boat or via an 18 mile trek across the mountainous Knoydart peninsula. Any beer served at the Old Forge has to travel on two ferries, including a foot passenger mail boat, then be man-handled across two different piers, one non-tidal, and finally by quad bike and trailer!

Their regular GBG listing highlights the fact that all this effort is not in vain. Ed.

Pub Reports –

Hi, I was in Mallaig from Sep 17-19. Rather than send in beer-scoring cards I'm sending my findings by mail. On all three nights of my stay I drank Isle of Skye Black Cuillin in the **Steam Inn** at Mallaig and it was superb on all three occasions - score 4+. That's the good news. While I was there the landlady announced that she had sold the Steam to Punch Taverns. To celebrate she called drinks on the house.

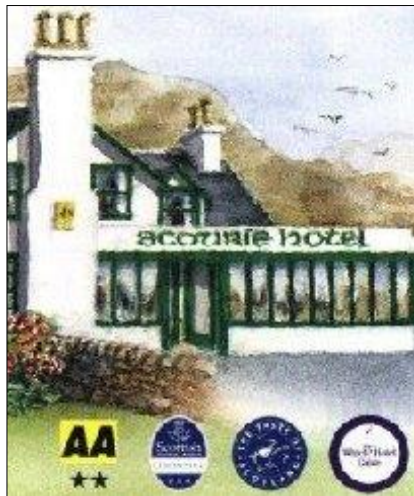
(In my opinion) it's not good news for local drinkers if our experience here in Milton Keynes is anything to go by. The influence of Punch here has been baleful, buying up free houses and ruining them (selling only big breweries' discounted beers like my HATED Greene King beers at usurious prices), turning them into restaurants, or closing them.

JS, ex-chair of Milton Keynes CAMRA.

Hello, I'm a Fife member just back from a holiday in Harris and Skye. Picked up your latest newsletter at either **Cluanie Inn** or pub near ferry at Uig. Both had real ale. Can't remember the name of beer at Cluanie Inn, the Uig ferry port pub (**Pub at the Pier**) had Skye's Black Cuillin only. Harris Hotel had no real ale and bottled Highland ales only. Should we have gone to the Harris Inn? The new improved Rodel Hotel had no real ales or decent bottles.

What has happened to the Sligachan Hotel? Drove past it today to find notices on doors saying it's shut until March 2007! Nil about this on their website or in the 2006 GBG. Very sad. Poor Winter climbers. Went to **Clachan Bar** in Dornie. Good pint of their special beer, brewed for them by the Skye brewery. No lunch though. Glad the pubs in Fife don't become so half-hearted in Winter. What's wrong with investing in a toasted sandwich maker?

Keep up the excellent newsletters. AD, Dunfermline.



Scourie Hotel

Scourie, Sutherland, IV27 4SX

Tel: 01971 502396

FAX: 01971 502423

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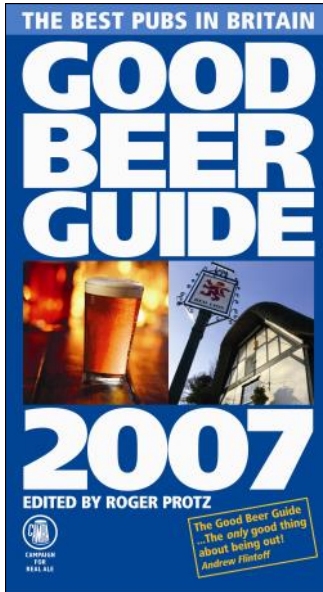
Cask Ales and Real Cider are served

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

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 members can purchase the GBG 2007 from their branch committee for a bargain £10:00, which gives the branch a small profit used to support your local pubs & breweries.

News of Brews

Champion Winter Beer of Scotland

Hebridean Brewery's 7.5% Berserker Ale won the first Champion Winter Beer of Scotland competition, held at the Aberdeen and North East Beer Festival. Owner Andy Ribben was amazed and very happy to win after the long and tiring journey just to get his beer to the Festival, which included ferry cancellations, rough seas, and his van breaking down.



Champion Winter Beer judges (above) were Robert Lindsay (owner of the Creel Inn), Rob James (owner of the new Hillside Brewery in Lumphanan), Scott Begbie (entertainment editor of the Evening Express), Steve Kinnaird

(local member and home brewer), and Carol Brown (wine expert and writer).

There was a total of eight beers in the final: Orkney Brewery Skullsplitter, Dragonhead Stout and Dark Island; Houston Warlock Stout, Stewart Brewing's Edinburgh No. 3, Sulwath Black Galloway, Hebridean Berserker, and Cairngorm Black Gold. Second place went to Orkney Skullsplitter, and Cairngorm Black Gold came in third. *Well done to all!* Ed.

Latitude Highland Pilsner (3.9%), from **Atlas Brewery**, was winner of the Standard Lager class in the International Beer Challenge 2006.

More recognition for our local brewers at the Highlands and Islands Food and Drink Awards: In the New Product category which "seeks to recognise those who have brought a new product to market", **Sinclair Breweries** were commended for their bottling of Atlas beers, and **Cairngorm Brewery** were short-listed for their Blessed Thistle Brew.

Glen Gets Its Own Brew

From the Press & Journal, 6th November 2006

Life can be tough at the chalk face - enough, some would say, to drive teachers to drink.

That is the situation for Donald John Robertson who is such a beer buff that he has converted the garage at his Glenfinnan home into a micro-brewery.

But the former Lochaber High School maths teacher decided the fledgling business would be better with back-up. So he recruited two other former secondary school teachers, David Leckie and John Fish, to become partners.

And now the threesome have produced A' Chiad Fhear - The First One - from their Glenfinnan Brewery. It comes in a limited edition of 1,000 bottles - and a barrel with locals seeing it as very much a collectors' item - and an investment. All three have passed a brewing course, with the local Glenfinnan Hotel giving the brew the thumbs-up.

The November 2006 issue of *West Word* reported that "The first pint of ale from the Glenfinnan Brewery was poured in Glenfinnan House Hotel on Friday 20th October! Here's to many more."

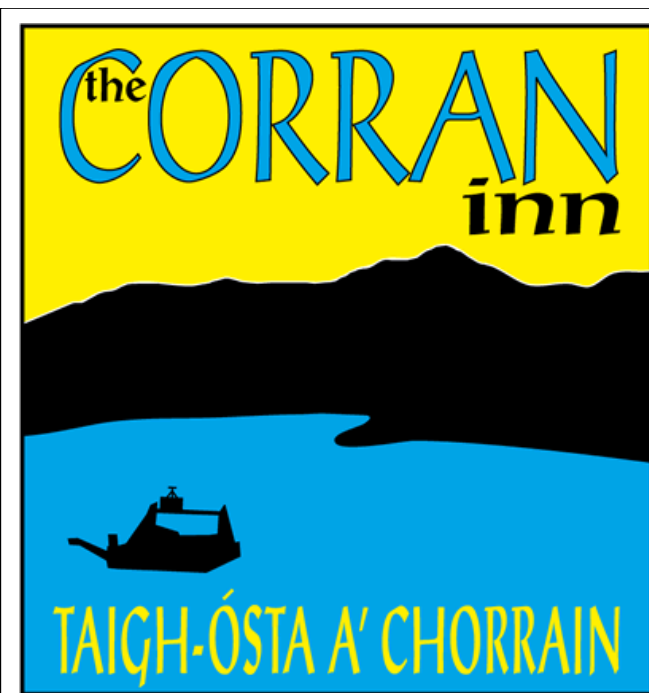
West Word, the local community newspaper, celebrated 12 years with this issue.

Sinclair Breweries have told us that they are delighted to have secured four new listings with Tesco, two more Orkney beers and the first two Atlas beers can now be found on Tesco supermarket shelves along side Dark Island. After a lot of hard work, Dragonhead Stout and Raven Ale have been back in Tesco stores, sporting their newly designed labels, since early December.

Gift Packs of bottled beer (three, four and six packs), and Party Casks are now available; both may be ordered direct from the brewery and delivered locally.

Blizzard by popular demand will be brewed throughout December, January and February at Atlas Brewery, and the traditional White Christmas will be available from Orkney Brewery for the month of December.

Although it has been a difficult year for the staff at Atlas & Orkney Breweries, as the end of the year comes to a close, all are confident that with Norman and Christine at the helm a bright future once again seems imminent, and with many exciting new prospects ahead!



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Single Membership £18.00 per year (£22* from Jan 2007)

Joint Membership £21.00 per year (£27* from Jan 2007)

Under 26 & Over 60s £10.00 per year (£13* from Jan 2007)

* £2 discount on all memberships if paid by Direct Debit)

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



Highlands & Western Isles Branch

**Highlands & Western Isles Branch of CAMRA
2007 Pub of the Year Voting Form**

Inverness City

Inverness District

Aviemore & Cairngorms

Skye, Lochalsh & Hebrides

Fort William & Lochaber

Wester Ross

Caithness & Sutherland

Member's Name/No.

We hope you have enjoyed reading our Winter 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 Spring edition will be out just before Easter. *Cheers, Ed.*





The and restaurant
GLEN Hotel



Ullapool
Beer Festival

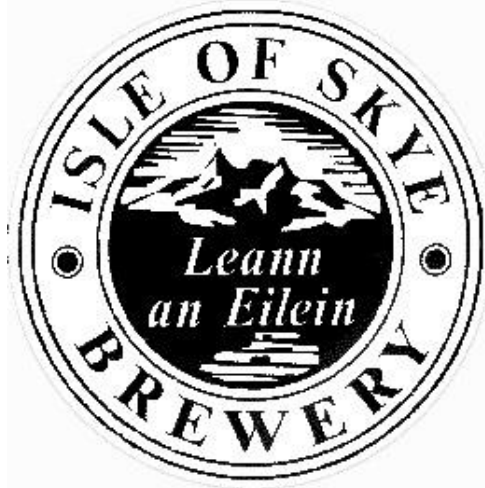


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