

What's Yours Then?

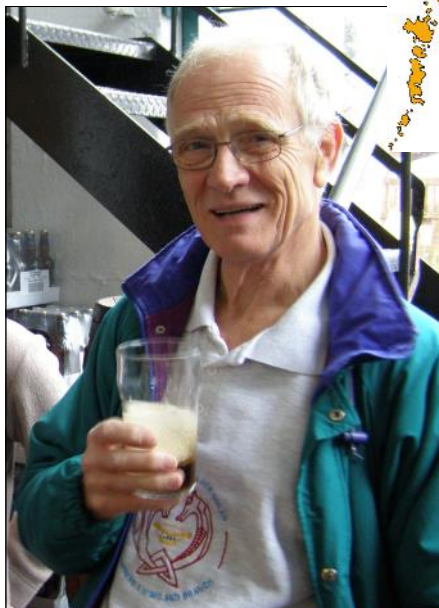
Highlands & Western Isles CAMRA

Free Newsletter

Contains Full List of Highlands & Western Isles Real Ale Outlets



**Chairman Bill steps down
after 14 years
at the helm**



**Pubs & Beers
of-the-Year
Time to vote**



**CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE**

Winter 2007

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

- > Revised Pub-of-the-Year
- > Revised Beer-of-the-Year
- > Focus on - Angus MacRuary
- > 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 edition **deadline** is 25th February, with publication in time for Easter.

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.

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.

Another Year..

Despite being able to boast a bigger local membership than ever before, the turnout for our AGM in November was disappointing. It was a miserable night, Spooks was on the box, and the Old Firm were still in Europe!

Those who braved the weather enjoyed the hospitality of the Clachnaharry Inn (thanks again Veronica) and reflected upon another successful year. The Branch has been more active than ever, with well-supported outings to most parts of our massive geographical area. The number of real ale outlets continues to grow and, happily, high quality local ales can regularly be found throughout the region.

The local membership continues to grow, and the Branch has a sound financial footing which is used to promote local pubs and breweries.

We had expected little change to committee but Bill Tring has decided to stand down after chairing the Branch since its formation.

Foot soldiers are hard enough to find but true leaders such as Chairman Bill cross our paths all too rarely. All involved in or concerned about the future of real ale, be it as brewer, publican or drinker, have lost a genuine real ale ambassador. In addition to his seemingly tireless contribution within the local Branch area, Bill Tring has represented CAMRA at both Scottish and national forums, including working at GBBF, and judging on a multitude of champion beer selection panels.

Bill intends to chair the Tasting Panel for the foreseeable future, and has no intention of being anything less than an active CAMRA member. We will all look forward to enjoying his company on a less than formal basis.

Eric Mills is our new chair, and Gareth Hardman takes over from Eric as Secretary.

We are looking for a local CAMRA member with good IT skills, and a little time to spare, who could take our website from its current functional state to a more exciting level.

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4 Go Wild on the Great Glen Way

On a cool Saturday morning I boarded the bus from Drumnadrochit and there met up with my fellow CAMRA friends. The weather promised rain for some of the day, and we were suitably prepared for walking from Glenmoriston back to Drum, a section of the Great Glen Way. This, according to young Eric, was a mere ramble, just enough to work up a thirst for our visit to the annual Benleva Beer Festival.

We began our walk, and after 300 yards uphill I was already beginning to wonder what I had let myself in for; and the other three were not even out of breath! Pride kicked in and besides, it was ages before the next bus back.

As we continued our walk we were met by a motor cyclist (although how he rode over this rough terrain was anyone's guess). He told us to expect at least 70 cyclists heading in our direction and riding at top speed! The cyclists were taking part in the Three Glens Challenge, which also happened to be the same race that our Chairman Bill had entered – his excuse for not joining our walk! We were not to be disappointed. Over the next few miles we ended up in several ditches to avoid the mass of wheels and bodies hurtling towards us.

Along the way we glimpsed some beautiful scenery and glimpses of the loch but this was mostly a woodland walk. It started to rain and we became suitably soaked. My boots were starting to nip and I started to sound like a broken record, "How many more miles then Eric?"

We almost missed the highlight of our walk. A speeding bike adorned by our Chairman Bill, clad in padded Lycra, almost collided with us. He said he was having a great time and that he had not fallen off (yet) as he had done the previous year. For a retired man he is very fit! After a quick photo call (see picture opposite) he sped off.

We eventually arrived back in Drumnadrochit, some 14 miles later, and via my house for a warming casserole which we washed down with a few beers and ciders. Much refreshed we headed on down to the Benleva.



We were greeted by a varied selection 10 ales on the handpump, and by poor Gareth who had expected us some hours earlier. (Sorry Gareth!). Ales on offer were:

Cairngorm	- Nessie Monster Mash (4.4% ABV)
Inveralmond	- Lia Fail (4% ABV)
Highland Brewery Co.	- Scapa Special (4.2% ABV)
Fyne Ales	- Vital Spark (4.4% ABV)
An Teallach	- Brewhouse Special (4.4% ABV) & Kildonan (4.4% ABV)
Fullers	- ESB (5.5% ABV)
Isle of Skye	- Black Cuillin (4.5% ABV) & Blaven (from the wood) (5% ABV)
Westons	- Traditional Scrumpy (6% ABV)

Benleva (festival organizer and) co-owner Steve had again included a couple of ales from south of the border this year. I first sampled Scapa Special, hoppy and with a slight sulphurous taste, a delicious session beer (CAMRA NBSS Score 4). I had a few of these but needed to try another beer in the name of research! Next came Isle of Skye's Blaven from the wood, one of my favourites. It had a more woody taste than I remembered, quite fruity with a nice mix of roast and hops with an astringent aftertaste (3). Next up was Fyne Ales Vital Spark; a dark, reddish brown ale, with a nice nutty roast and bitter aftertaste, it reminded me of Robinsons Old Tom - but without the malt (4).

(Continued on page 8)

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ATLAS
BREWERY

Branch Diary (Meetings start at 7.30 pm)

Tue 8 th Jan	Committee Meeting	Blackfriars, Inverness
Tue 29 th Jan	Tasting Panel Meet	Kings Highway, Inverness
Tue 5 th Feb	Committee Meeting	Clachnaharry Inn, Inverness
Fri 8 th Feb - Sat 1 st Mar	* February Fest	Clachaig Inn, Glencoe
Tue 26 th Feb	Tasting Panel Meet	Heathmount Hotel, Inverness
Tue 4 th Mar	Branch Meeting	Glen Mhor Hotel, Inverness
Fri 7 th - Sun 9 th Mar	* Aviemore Beer Festival	Old Bridge Inn, Aviemore

Sat 8th March



Social/Outing (by train) to Aviemore Beer Festival (meet @ midday)

Tue 25th Mar

Tasting Panel Meet

Benleva Hotel, Drumadrochit

Tue 1st April

Committee Meeting

Plough Inn, Rosemarkie

Sat 19th April



Social/Outing to Cairngorm Brewery and Speyside Real Ale Hostelries

Tue 29th April

Tasting Panel Meet

The Anderson, Fortrose

Tue 6th May

Committee Meeting

Suie Hotel Kinraig

Tue 27th May

Tasting Panel Meet

Black Isle Brewery

Tue 3rd June

Branch Meeting

Lewiston Arms, Lewiston

Tue 24th June

Tasting Panel Meet

Cawdor Tavern

Sat 28th June



Social/Outing to Plockton Brewery and local Real Ale Hostelries

Tue 1st July

Committee Meeting

Bandstand Bar, Nairn

Tue 29th July

Tasting Panel Meet

Cairn Hotel, Carrbridge

Tue 5th Aug

Branch Meeting

The Glen, Newtonmore

Sat 9th Aug

Marymas Fair Real Ale Bar

To be confirmed

* 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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Eric Mills - 01309 675837

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Apparently we had missed Red Cuillin, Young Pretender, Orkney IPA, Banks & Taylor Golden Fox and Cairngorm Sheepshaggers; this was only half way through the second day!

Chairman Bill and his wife Barbara joined us later, Bill anxious to quench the thirst he had built up on his long cycle ride! I was suitably mellow enough to accept their offer of a lift back to chez CW.

Will I be joining the walkers next year? I will let you know once the blisters have gone! CW
For next year it is the intention of the Beer Festival Walking Club to work up a festival thirst by tackling Muall Fuar-Mhonaid. Ed.

A Wet Day on Skye

As our minibus left Inverness on a grey and rainy September day we could see the smoke still pouring out of the beautiful ex-hospital, Craig Dunain, after a fire started in the early hours. We stopped only to pick up trippers at Drumnadrochit and Dornie, on the way to our first stop of the day at the **Cuillin Brewery**, based at the **Sligachan Hotel** on the Isle of Skye. The hotel/brewery is in an spectacular location at the base of the Cuillin hills. We

were met by Steve Bailey, one of the brewers, and while one half the group enjoyed bacon and egg rolls, the other was given a guided tour of the brewery. This brewery has been going for three years now and supplies cask ales to a few outlets on the island, plus bottled beers. They brew to capacity from May to August, normally closing in winter, but may do a Christmas special this year. Three of their brews on tap: 4.7% ABV Pinnacle, 4.1% ABV Skye Ale, and their new trial brew – the 3.8% ABV Ptarmigan (not to be confused with the 4.5% ABV Harviestoun's 80/- ale of the same name). They also had Houston's Tartan Terror (4.5% ABV) on tap, but it was very poor.

As the rain poured down we moved on to a new GBG entry, the **Old Inn at Carbost**. A slight de-tour off the A87, close to the Talisker Distillery (not the Carbost on the map in GBG 2008, the pub description gives right place). Our Chairman gave Spencer Smith, one of the owners, his GBG pack and we sampled the beers on offer. Cuillin Ptarmigan (average 3), Cuillin Pinnacle (3) and Isle of Skye Black Cuillin (1 - probably put on a bit too early, we thought). A busy, popular inn, set in a remote

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but picturesque situation, overlooking Loch Harport with views to the Cuillins.

The rain continued, but with a rainbow now, as we headed to the **Isle of Skye Brewery** at Uig. Angus and Pam MacRuary welcomed us to the brewery and served pints of Leann Failte Ale, a blend of their beers, for all to try. It is the custom for visitors to be asked to guess the blend, but this year only Gareth and Eric guessed that it was equal parts Cuillin Beast and Young Pretender (5.1% ABV). It was a very good pint, and glasses were topped so that we could toast all at the brewery for their success in our Branch Beer of the Year awards, and Chairman Bill presented Angus and Pam with Gold, Silver, and Bronze certificates. (See picture opposite).

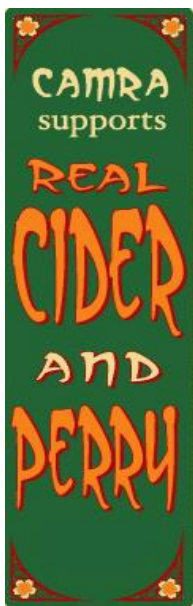
Angus showed us their new pump clips and bottle labels and Pam gave a brewery tour. Set up at the back of the bottling plant was Norrie's soup and burger bar. The delicious butternut soup was followed by a very tasty selection of burgers and hot dogs, washed down with Red and Black Cuillin. Just before we left Angus organised a raffle in which the

prizes included anything from a choc bar to a brewery T-shirt, to a bottle of whisky.

(A quick visit next door to the lively **Pub at the Pier** by one hard working member found four Isle of Skye beers on offer: Blaven(3), Lord of the Ales, Black and Red Cuillin).



Still no let up in the rain, and the streams and waterfalls ran spectacularly along our return journey southwards. Kyleakin now has two real ale outlets: **Saucy Mary's Lodge** with it's bar, pool area and separate restaurant



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 from the box

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, Drumnadrochit - 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

Old Bridge Inn, Aviemore, served Thatchers Heritage Cider at their March 2007 Beer Festival. We understand that it was very popular, and we hope they will again be offering cider at their next festival (see page 30).

We have heard that cider has been selling so well at the **Scourie Hotel**

that they hope to keep Weston's First Quality on throughout the winter. Several real ciders were dispensed from handpump, at the **Clachnaharry Inn**, during their Highland Feast event.

(Continued from page 9)

(daily special menus had the staff names and indicated which local ale was available). A very good Isle of Skye Young Pretender(4) was sampled before crossing the road to the **King Haakan Bar**, which has a waterfront location on Loch Alsh and views of the Skye Bridge.

The large bar was very busy with footballers after a match was cancelled. Isle of Skye Haakan's Ale (2) and Black Cuillin (2) on tap.

As we left Skye the rain stopped, the sun came out and the mist cleared... OK, I lie, it was still raining, but we could hope. Next stop was the **Clachan Bar** in Dornie, near the famous Eilean Donan Castle. A busy little bar serving Isle of Skye Young Pretender (3) and an Eilean Donan house ale (1, very tired, but better the night before we were told).

Our last stop of the day was at the **Cluanie Inn**, located at the base of the Five Sisters of Kintail in the remote and beautiful valley of Glen Shiel, and now back in the GBG. Isle of Skye Red Cuillin (2) was on tap and some took the opportunity to enjoy hot soup and a roll.

The rain did ease and had stopped by the time

we reached Inverness. We would like to say a massive thank-you to staff at all the pubs, and the two breweries visited, for their hospitality; and to our driver Sandy from Fraser's Coaches of Munlochry for looking after us so well.

E-Ale

Dear Ed, After a bit of a lapse due to being away, I had lunch with friends yesterday at the **Whitebridge Hotel** where they proudly showed us their new entry in the 2008 GBG, and thanked us for our support. They are over the moon about this and rightly so. If you go back four or five years this was the last place on earth I'd have dreamed would end up in the GBG. It just goes to show what new, committed owners can achieve, so a big WELL DONE to both the Whitebridge, and to your committee for putting them forward.

And the Red Cuillin was very acceptable too, as you would expect! Regards, BH.

Well done also to BH for making sure the Whitebridge Hotel was on our radar. If YOU find a pub on our patch which you think merits GBG entry, please let us know! Ed.



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• Have just visited two real ale pubs in Nairn: **Havelock House Bar & Restaurant** - Red Cuillin (4), and a second handpump went in today with Atlas Nimbus (not tasted). The Red Cuillin has been going well apparently.

Bandstand Bar & Restaurant - Deuchars IPA (4), Charlie Wells Bombardier (not tasted), Cairngorm Trade Winds (ran out last night and the next is in the cellar settling, they hope to put it on tonight). They are surprised at the amount of real ale they are selling. They had been thinking of going down to two beers this month (September) but have kept three going. Both pubs were full with B&B. EM.

• Just back from a week (14th-21st October) in and around Assynt. Our daily trips out tried to include a pub for food at lunchtime. Given that dates coincided with the local "tattie" break, and the English half-term holiday, it was disappointing to find that so many pubs were either closed or working non-seasonal hours: Kylesku Hotel - closed for winter; Drumbeg Hotel - closed Monday; Inchdampn Hotel - closed, in winter opens at 17:00; Scourie Hotel - closed at lunchtime - winter opening. SU.

• Hi, the **Silver Fjord** has changed owners today; we will let you know about the real ale. The **Tipsy Laird** still has two Cairngorm beers on after their take over. Cheers, B3.

Highland Pubs in mid-November

Ed, last week a mate and I took advantage of an exceptional offer from GNER and bought return tickets from York to Inverness for £10. We arrived in Inverness at 20.07 on Tuesday and left at 07.55 on Thursday. In spite of the short stay, we managed some interesting pub visits and I thought that I would let you have a few notes for information.

On Tuesday night we walked over to the Clachnaharry Inn, where we had Atlas Three Sisters (3) and Elgoods Black Shuck (3). We also picked up a copy of "What's Yours Then?" and were delighted to see the comprehensive list of pubs inside it. We returned to the city centre via Huntly Street (the pub with an illuminated "W" on this street had a handpump visible, but we didn't have time to investigate). It doesn't seem to be on your comprehensive list. We then visited the Castle Tavern. It was my first visit here and I was very impressed.

Beers available were Highland Dark Munro (3), Houston Spellbinder (not tried, as we had tasted this at the Bury Real Ale Festival the previous week) and Belhaven 90/- (3). The 90/- was good value at £3 for an 8% beer.

On Wednesday we travelled out to Plockton. During our stay of just over an hour we visited the Plockton Inn, where the only beer was Fullers London Pride (3), at only £2.30 a pint (cheaper than you would find it in London). The Plockton beer which the brewery website told us had been delivered the previous week had obviously sold out.

In the Plockton Hotel we were delighted to find Plockton Dall Winter Sunshine (3) and Isle of Skye Hebridean Gold (4). We then had a quick look at the exterior of the Plockton brewery, passing the Haven Hotel on Innes Street. Again, a handpump was glimpsed through the window (possibly Isle of Skye Red Cuillin??), but we didn't have time to visit.

On returning to Inverness, we visited Hootananny (Black Isle Heather Honey Beer (2)) and the Phoenix (Hebridean Islander Strong Premium Ale (2)). We later caught the bus to Rosemarkie, where the Plough was a welcome refuge from the driving rain. We sampled the only beer available on the night - An Teallach Ale (3). We rounded off the night in the Blackfriars. There was only one customer in when we arrived at about 9 p.m., one hopes that they see more trade on the five nights a week when activities are advertised! Beers tried here were An Teallach Beinn Dearg (2) and Caledonian XPA (2).

Overall, we were pleased with the availability of real ale in the area. In our short stay we had beer from six of the Highlands (& Islands) breweries, together with other Scottish and English beers, in a selection of good pubs.

We were impressed with the newsletter and the activities of the local CAMRA branch as detailed therein.

Cheers, GC, Rochdale, Oldham and Bury.

GC and his pal certainly covered the ground during their short stay. The detailed report and positive feedback is very much appreciated. We are pleased that our hard work is not in vain! Ed.



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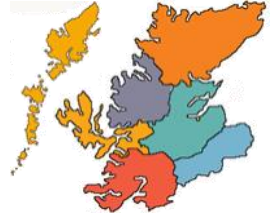
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Highland & Western Isles

Pubs-of-the-Year (POTY)

Time again to support our best local real ale pubs by voting for your Pubs-of-the-Year. In 2005, in recognition of the growing number of real ale pubs in the Branch area, we increased the number of awards to seven. Districts and numbers of pubs at last count as follows -



Inverness City (14), Inverness District (32), Aviemore & Cairngorms (19), Wester Ross (28), Skye, Lochalsh & Hebrides (51), Fort William & Lochaber (28), Caithness & Sutherland (15).

Following a proposal by a local member, who pointed out the imbalance in numbers of pubs in some areas; for example how a pub in Inverness City or Caithness & Sutherland would have a better chance of winning the award for their district than one in Skye, Lochalsh & Hebrides, the committee has given the matter some thought and revised the districts as follows -

Inverness & District North (22), Inverness & District South (24), Aviemore & Cairngorms (19), Wester Ross (28), South Skye & Lochalsh (23), North Skye & Hebrides (28), Fort William & Lochaber (28), Caithness & Sutherland (15).

For Inverness & District we have used the Great Glen as the boundary for North and South, and for Skye we have used the Visit Scotland website to define South and North Skye. It is unlikely that the new boundaries for our Pubs-of-the-Year will please everyone, but certainly the numbers of pubs in each area do have a much better balance.

Please check the pub lists on pages 19-22 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**.

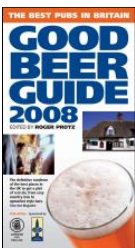
All entries must serve real ale.

All nominated pubs must be within the relevant 'District' boundaries

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 eight 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!*



The Good Beer Guide 2008 - 35th Anniversary Edition

The *Good Beer Guide* is the longest established pub guide, and is beloved by beer enthusiasts. Featuring 4,500 of the UK's top pubs, it contains details of the beers they serve, opening hours and addresses, and additional information on food, amenities for families, and atmosphere.

As well as being a pub guide, the book contains information on all of the country's breweries from the largest company to the smallest microbrewery. Tasting notes for the vast majority of beers brewed in the UK are also included. Indispensable for beer lovers and features a selection of articles on beer, brewing, and pubs.

You can buy the *Good Beer Guide* from bookshops, price is £14.99, or CAMRA members can buy directly from the local Highlands & Western Isles Branch at £11.00 while stocks last.

The Old Inn

Gairloch, Ross-shire, IV21 2BD

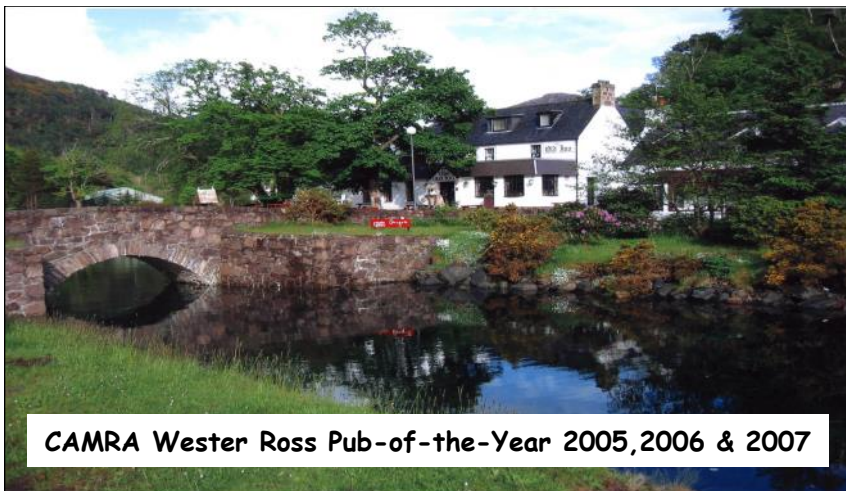
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Accommodation - All rooms en-suite - Families welcome**

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



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Food served all day

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

Focus on Angus MacRuary

Angus MacRuary set up the Isle of Skye Brewery in 1995, now well known for their beers of Red and Black Cuillin, Young Pretender, Cuillin Beast and Blaven. He lives with his wife Pam in Uig on the Isle of Skye.



I'll say was that it produced a potent brew! However, this was short-lived as Mum put the foot down over the constant smell of beer in the kitchen and throughout the house. After that I moved onto winemaking from kits - much less hassle from mother. It also taught me that maybe my talents did not lie in brewing - better to employ others to do that!

Q. Where are you originally from?

A. I was brought up, and went to school and university, in Glasgow until I was 22 when I moved to Aberdeen.

Q. Why did you settle on the Isle of Skye?

A. My father is from Skye and I had always had a desire to live and work here. I spent a lot of my childhood on Skye with relatives at Bornesketaig, which is about five miles north of Uig where the brewery is located. I also worked in a local hotel during my summer holidays. By 1983 I was teaching Business Studies and Economics in Aberdeen when a similar post of Head of Department came up at Portree High School and, as I had no ties to keep me in Aberdeen, I applied for the post, was successful and so took a sideways move.

Q. How were you introduced to real ale?

A. Whilst a student in Glasgow I worked in pubs to supplement my grant. The first one I worked in during the early 1970s served traditional ale and I was fascinated by the genuine love that the cellarman had for it and for making sure that it was served in top condition. When I moved to another pub a couple of miles away all it served was fizzy keg, so I used to go back to the first one as a customer to drink proper beer. Sadly that first pub is no more and the second one still only serves fizzy keg.

Q. What is your brewing background?

A. In my late teens, whilst still living at home, my mother upgraded our clothes-washing "system" from an inbuilt boiler in the kitchen to a super-doooper twin tub. This opportunity was too good to miss and so the boiler became my first mash tun, copper and conditioning tank rolled into one. I would love to be able to say that my early brewing career was a great success - the best

Q. What was your first commercial brew?

A. In November 1995 Isle of Skye Brewery produced its first 10 barrels of "Red Cuillin". However, it turned out to be much more bitter than was planned so some of it was consumed "in-house" (for our research purposes of course) and the remainder, sacrilegiously, was drained.

Thankfully, Brew Two was just what was wanted - the "Red Cuillin" you know today.

Q. What is the best part of your work?

A. My brewery role is on the management side and I take responsibility for finance, admin and marketing. However, I do enjoy the very odd occasion when I can get away and get my hands wet (not dirty!), maybe carrying out a cellar installation or delivery duties. On the white collar side I enjoy meeting the challenges that arise on a daily basis just running the business. Also most enjoyable is getting out on promotional/marketing work or attending beer festivals. This year I have been to an EU event in Brussels and to the New England Real Ale Exhibition in Boston, USA. Trips pending are to Duisburg, Germany to speak to the Anglo-German Society there and to visit a new customer in Switzerland. I am very much looking forward to the Aberdeen Festival in November - my favourite. I always say that there is no industry like brewing for mixing business with pleasure!

Q. What is the worst part of your work?

A. During the summer months we are always incredibly busy and run to full capacity. This generates a lot of work for me (and everyone else here), much of it routine and tedious - but it's got to be done!

Q. Your favourite real ales/beer styles?

A. My own preference is for the traditional



Welcome to the Corran Inn

Sitting on the shores of Loch Linnhe, beside the Corran ferry, the Corran Inn is just 10 minutes from Fort William and Ben Nevis and 10 minutes from Glencoe. With 5 comfortable rooms, a traditional bar and relaxing coal fires, the Inn provides the ideal base to explore this beautiful part of the Scottish Highlands. Whether you're walking, climbing, touring by car or just sitting with your feet up watching the world float by on the loch, The Corran Inn will give you a friendly welcome and make you feel at home.

Special Deals Regularly Available - Please Check our Website

We believe in giving our guests what they want! So, we serve full cooked breakfasts from 7am every day. In fact, we serve good food all day, every day until 9:30 in the evening. We also stock an excellent range of real ales and have almost 50 single malt whiskies to help you relax after your meal!

For Hill walkers and climbers, if you let us know in advance, we'll serve cooked breakfasts as early as you like (We've done it at 4am for climbers heading for Tower Ridge on Ben Nevis) and will serve you an evening meal up until 11pm. We'll look after your kit as well! We have a drying and laundry room available to get your gear dry for the next day.

If you're an internet junky, we have wireless broadband available free of charge throughout the inn, including all the bedrooms, so bring your laptop!



We're open all day, every day, from 7am until late, serving breakfast, snacks, meals and coffees.

The Corran Inn

Onich
Fort William
PH33 6SE

www.corraninn.co.uk

You can phone us on 01855 821 235

You can email us at info@corraninn.co.uk



THE AN TEALLACH ALE COMPANY

An Tealla
ABV 4.2 %



ers Pale Ale
ABV 4.2 %

Beinn Dec
ABV 3.8 %

ouse Special
ABV 4.4 %

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

Scottish malty style of beer. Obviously, I get the chance to drink my own beers more than any others and so "Red Cuillin" and "Black Cuillin" are numbers one and two. However, I am partial to Inveralmond "Lia Fail" and I used to like Harviestoun "Bitter and Twisted" before Harviestoun was taken over and it changed out of all recognition. Strangely, despite my preference for malt over hop, one of my favourites is Jennings "Cumberland Ale". This is a pretty hoppy dry beer and I was delighted to find that when I had the chance to drink it last month whilst in Cheshire at a friends' wedding, it was as good as ever, even although Jennings is now part of Wolverhampton and Dudley. It just shows that takeovers are not all bad!

Q. What are your hobbies/interests?

A. Before the brewery started (and when I was a wee bit younger) I used to have time to run, cycle and climb. Today my pursuits are more sedentary - when I get time it's the garden or the odd bit of fishing. I have recently bought a boat and Pam (my wife and Head Brewer) and I look forward to

finding some time to get out on the water and dangle a rod. However, this boat is a standing joke in Uig at the moment - my friend John (Pam's brother) says that it'll shiver and jump straight back out when we eventually try to launch it since it's been sitting in the yard dry for so long!

Q. What does the future hold for the Isle of Skye Brewery?

A. Expansion is never ending. We have plans to add a further building to the site (if we can find the space) to allow us to expand brewing, bottling and storage further. We are moving to a situation where we will be able to brew and bottle all of our beers on site rather than contracting out the brewing for bottling as we have done in the past.

We hope to be in this situation by the end of 2008. We are also installing a mill at the end of this year to cut costs and give greater control over the quality of the grain we use. We have always used live yeast in our brewing instead of dried, as it is far superior, and adding milling our own grain to that would complete the circle.



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 Good Beer Guide inclusion is merited.

We make no claims as to the quality of the beer, and you should note that some of the pubs listed may only stock real ale on a seasonal **(S)** basis:



We have taken the liberty of listing some pubs which fall within adjoining Branch Areas - Glasgow & West of Scotland (G&WS), Aberdeen & Northern Isles (A&NI) - but which are not very far from our "border" and merit a visit.

Inverness & District North

Clachnaharry Inn, Inverness
Palace Hotel, Inverness
Old North Inn, Inchmore
Benleva Hotel, Drumadrochit
Loch Ness Lodge, Drumadrochit (S)
Clansman Hotel, Loch Ness-side
North Kessock Hotel
Munlochy Hotel (TP)
The Anderson, Fortrose
Crofters Café Bar, Rosemarkie (TP)
Plough Inn, Rosemarkie
Culbokie Inn
Cromarty Arms (TP)
Slaters Arms, Cannich (S)
Riverside Tavern, Conon Bridge
National Hotel, Dingwall
Ben Wyvis Hotel, Strathpeffer
Richmond Hotel, Strathpeffer
Inchbae Lodge Hotel, Garve
Star Inn, Tain
Castle Hotel, Portmahomack
Edderton Inn, Edderton

Inverness & District South

Blackfriars, Inverness
Castle Tavern, Inverness
Nico's Bar, Glen Mhor Hotel, Inverness
Heathmount Hotel, Inverness
Hootananny, Inverness
Johnny Foxes, Inverness (TP)
Kings Highway, Inverness (*Wetherspoons*)
Masonic Club, Inverness
Number 27, Inverness
Phoenix Bar, Inverness



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Good Beer Guide 2005-2007



real ale
80 Belgians

real cider
200 malts

**Inverness District
Pub of the Year
2007 (tied vote)**

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Snowgoose, Inverness
The Caledonian, Inverness
Tomatin Country Inn (S)
Dores Inn
Whitebridge Hotel, Loch Ness South
Bothy, Fort Augustus
Caledonian Hotel, Fort Augustus (S)
Lock Inn, Fort Augustus
Cawdor Tavern, Cawdor
George Inn, Ardersier
Bandstand Bar, Braeval Hotel, Nairn
Classroom Bistro Bar, Nairn
Havelock House Hotel, Nairn
Invernairne Hotel, Nairn (S)
Old Mill, Brodie (A & NI)

Wester Ross

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

Kinlochewe Hotel
Loch Torridon Country House Hotel
Torridon Inn (S)
Badachro Inn
Glendale House, South Erradale (S)
Loch Inn, Gairloch
Millcroft Hotel, 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, Shieldag
Arch Inn, Ullapool
Caley Inn Bar, Ullapool
Ferry Boat Inn, Ullapool
Morefield Motel, Ullapool
Seaforth Bar & Restaurant, Ullapool

Fort William & Lochaber

Jacobite Steam Train (S)
Grog & Gruel, Fort William
Ben Nevis Hotel, Fort William
Ben Nevis Inn, Fort William

Stein Inn

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1790

Magical places do exist ... just journey down a narrow winding road that leads to the sea and nestled in a charming hamlet is the very place of your dream: the Stein Inn.



An eighteenth-century inn on the sea shore that will have you yearning to visit again and again to experience the warm Scottish welcome, fine food, superb accommodation and traditional highland bar offering real ales and over 99 malt whiskies.

The finest and freshest seafood and local produce is readily available and is transformed at the Stein Inn into mouth-watering, home-cooked dishes.

**Angus & Teresa McGhie,
Stein Inn, Waternish,
Isle of Skye, IV55 8GA
Tel: +44 (0)1470-592362
angus.teresa@steininn.co.uk**

Nevisport Bar, Fort William
 Invergarry Hotel
 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
 Café Rhu, Arisaig (S)
 Steam Inn, Mallaig
 Loch Shiel Hotel, Acharacle
 Old Forge, Inverie
 Ben View Hotel, Strontian
 Strontian Inn (S)
 Four Seasons, Onich
 Corran Inn, Onich
 Inn at Ardgour
 Ice Factor, Kinlochleven
 Mamore Lodge, Kinlochleven (S)
 Tailrace Inn, Kinlochleven
 Laroch Bar, Ballachulish (G&WS)
 Clachaig Inn, Glencoe (G&WS)
 Kings House Hotel, Glencoe (G&WS)

Aviemore & Cairngorms

Cairn Hotel, Carrbridge
 Heatherbrae Hotel, Nethy Bridge
 Ben Mhor Hotel, Grantown-on-Spey
 Muckrach Lodge Hotel, Dulnain Bridge
 Cairngorm Hotel, Aviemore
 Dalfaber Country Club, Aviemore
 Glenmore Lodge, Nr Aviemore
 Old Bridge Inn, Aviemore
 Winking Owl, Aviemore
 Suie Hotel, Kinncraig
 Glen Hotel, Newtonmore
 Lodge Hotel, Newtonmore
 Kingussie Golf Club
 Silver Fjord Hotel, Kingussie
 Topsy Laird, Kingussie
 Mash Tun, Charlestown of Aberlour (A&NI)
 Highlander Inn, Craigellachie (A&NI)
 Croft Inn, Glenlivet (A&NI)
 Glen Avon Hotel, Tomintoul (A&NI)

Caithness & Sutherland

Inchnadamp Hotel
 The Caberfeidh, Lochinver
 Scourie Hotel, Scourie
 Altnacealgach Motel, nr Ledmore Junction

A Fine Day for a Great Ale?



A Great Day for A Fyne Ale!

Burghfield House Hotel, Dornoch
 Castle Hotel, Dornoch
 Dunroamin Hotel, Bonar Bridge
 Invershin Hotel
 Sutherland Arms Hotel, Golspie (S)
 Sutherland Inn, Brora
 Tongue Hotel
 MacKay's Hotel, Wick
 Alexander Bain, Wick (*Wetherspoons*)
 Central Hotel, Thurso
 Commercial Hotel, Thurso (S)

South Skye & Lochalsh

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

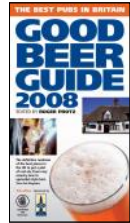


Plockton Inn, Plockton
King Haakon Bar, Kyleakin
Saucy Mary's Lodge, Kyleakin
Duisdale Hotel
Isle Ornsay Hotel
Ardvasar Hotel
Broadford Hotel
Claymore, Broadford
Dunollie Hotel, Broadford
Hebridean Hotel, Broadford
Sconser Lodge Hotel
Sligachan Hotel (S)
Old Inn, Carbost
Taigh Ailean Hotel, Portnalong

North Skye & Hebrides

Isle of Raasay Hotel
Dunvegan Hotel
Stein Inn, Waternish
Edinbane Hotel
The Lodge at Edinbane
Ferry Inn, Uig
Uig Hotel, Uig
Pub at the Pier, Uig
Duntulm Castle Hotel

Greshornish Lodge
Bosville Hotel, Portree
Isles Inn, Portree
Royal Hotel, Portree
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)
Polachar Inn, South Uist (S)
Lochboisdale Hotel, South Uist
Shawbost Inn, Isle of Lewis
Clachan Bar, Stornoway
Cladh Inn, Stornoway
Royal British Legion, Stornoway
Whalers Rest, Stornoway
Harris Inn, Tarbert (S)



A total of 33 of the pubs listed here are in the *Good Beer Guide*. We are not allowed to indicate GBG entries, you will have buy the guide for that, but there is a chance you may find some clues elsewhere in this newsletter.

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Highlands & Islands Brewers in 2007

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

Isle of Skye Brewery - Based at Uig, next to 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 - *Stopped brewing in October 2007*

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 in Stornoway, main town in the Outer Hebrides. Began brewing in January 2002, now producing five regular ales. Beers include Islander Strong Ale, Berserker Export Pale Ale, and Clansman Ale (first ale ever brewed in Stornoway),



* **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 from Lochaber to the family's croft at Camusnagaul, near Dundonnell, during March 2003. Regular 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 in 2004, first brews in early 2005. Ales include Easd' Ale, Red Pearl, and Oyster Gold.

Isle of Mull Brewery - Started in 2005 with a 5 barrel plant in Tobermory. McCaig's

Folly and Galleon Gold ales.

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.

Colonsay Brewery - First brews in March 2007. IPA, 80/- and Lager (all bottled)

Plockton Brewery - First brew, on 1st April 2007, Crags Ale, is available in Plockton.

* The **Atlas** and **Orkney** Breweries were taken out of administration in June 2006 by **Sinclair Breweries Ltd**, a company formed by local hotelier & restaurateur Norman Sinclair, and his wife Christine.

Not all of the breweries listed are in our branch area & Orkney are all in the Aberdeen, Grampian & Northern Isles area; Brewery Arrans in the Ayrshire & Islay Ales, Glasgow & Oyster while Breweries covered by Glasgow & Orkney 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 welcome your 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 NBSS (National Beer Scoring Scheme) to record Beer Quality.

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.



Your regular input will help ensure that pubs consistently serving good quality real ale make it into the next Good Beer Guide. Alternatively you can now submit your scores online at www.beerscoring.org.uk, or our own website, or send us an e-mail. You can get NBSS cards from your local CAMRA branch or download from the members area of the national website.

CAMRA National Beer Scoring Scheme	
Surveyor	_____
Mem.No.	_____ Date of survey _____ / _____
Pub	_____
Location	_____
GBG County/Area	_____ Score 0-5 _____
Beer	_____ (optional)

sample



The Castle Tavern

Taigh-òsda à chaisteil

Open all day, food served all day, a great range of Real Ales
At the top of Castle Street, Inverness, overlooking the River Ness
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Tasting Panel Matters

Our meetings are generally held in or around Inverness as the nights draw in and, during the Autumn, we held tasting panel meetings (in Inverness) at the Castle Tavern and Blackfriars.

The busy local Autumn festival scene also meant that Tasting Panel members were very busy sampling beers to be had at Loch Ness, Inverness, Ullapool, JDW, and Aberdeen beer festivals. Sadly we were unable to take in Clachaig Inn's annual Octoberfest but, now that this wonderful real ale hostelry is likely to be confirmed as falling within our Branch boundary, we really should make every effort to attend the beer tasting night advertised in their February Fest schedule of events (See page 6 for details of this and other tasting events)

During a meeting at Cawdor Tavern the committee was privileged to be able to sample a bottle of **Orkney Dark Island Reserve**. This 10% ABV top quality niche beer, only available in a small number of quality outlets throughout Scotland, is well worth seeking out. After brewing and before bottling the beer is left to mature in hogsheads previously used to mature a fine single malt whisky. It has lip-smacking flavours of smooth roast malt, dark chocolate, figs and dates, combining with vanilla spice and bitter orange flavours from the wood and the whisky.

In September island ales **Red Cuillin** and **Dark Munro**, from the Isle of Skye and Orkney Isles respectively, were the stars of our September evening meeting at the Castle Tavern.

At the end of November, at the final Tasting Panel meet of the year at Blackfriars, our Beer of the Evening: **Beserker Export Pale Ale** (7.5% ABV) from Stornoway's Hebridean Brewery brought our year to a very good end. A true barley wine style winter warmer making you wish for wintry weather to balance its deep warming fruitiness. Drinking every bit of its 7.5% it was packed full of malt, fruit and caramel, with a warming full-bodied richness about it, scoring two nines and an eight. A shame there wasn't a log fire and cold winter evening to compliment it.

Full reports from tasting panel meetings may be found on-line @ www.highlandcamra.org.uk

3rd Ullapool Beer Festival

It was a beautiful summery day in October as we travelled to Ullapool. First stop was at the lively **Arch Inn** where, almost hidden at the end of the bar, we found a handpump with a very good An Teallach Ale on. Next a short walk along the seafront to the **Seaforth Bar & Restaurant** where one of two handpumps was in service, dispensing another very good An Teallach Ale which we drank sitting on the sunlit patio area, overlooking the harbour, watching the world go by. Just around the corner at the **Caley Bar** we again found two handpumps, but no pump clips - so apparently neither in service - and no staff, so no custom! Back to the seafront, and another short stroll in the glorious Autumn sunshine to the GBG listed **Ferry Boat Inn**. An Teallach Ale was also on tap here, but not as good as before, also a poor Black Sheep Bitter, and no one tried the Old Speckled Hen. A pity, perhaps too many beers on tap when there was a beer festival around the corner?

A sign for the Argyll Hotel advertised '*Open all day*', but the doors were locked and all was in darkness. We peered through the window but could see no handpumps.

We followed the large 'Beer Festival' signs to the GBG listed **Morefield Motel**. The Ullapool Beer Festival is in its third year and definitely going from strength to strength. Motel owners and festival organisers Tony and Bev Oulton, along with head barman Neil, had pulled out all the stops with special festival bunting, posters, beer mats, glasses, and all day bar menu, plus great evening entertainment and ten real ales. Their renowned seafood menu was available as usual in the restaurant at lunchtime and evenings. Beers available this afternoon, all in very good condition, were An Teallach Crofters Pale Ale, Cairngorm Nessies Monster Mash, Arran Dark, Harviestoun Bitter & Twisted, Fyne Ales Avalanche, Hebridean Islander, Islay Saligo, Isle of Skye Red Cuillin and Moulin Braveheart. There was a mystery beer, a new house ale, and you were asked to guess the two beer blend and give it a name. We were told neither beer was available at the festival, but the brewery was represented - Sadly not enough clue for our party! Other

beers waiting in the cellar were from Cuillin, Highland, Houston, Inveralmond, Kelburn, Orkney, and Atlas breweries. The festival next year will be extended to four days, 16th - 19th October: make a note in your diary.

As the sun was setting it was time to make our way back to Inverness after a very good day out. Thanks to Sandy from Fraser's Coaches of Munloch for a safe journey.

JDW Autumn Festival

I decided to drop into Wetherspoons (Kings Highway) to try out their real ale festival, and to use the vouchers I picked up at the branch AGM giving me a pint for £1.19. As per my luck when I go to a JDW's festival I seem to hit the fruit ales which are not my favourite, and I had just missed Orkney Red Macgregor. There were four festival ales on offer, Caledonian Golden Promise, normally only available bottled but racked in casks specially for the festival, Wells Banana Bread Beer, Cairns Fine Raisin Beer and (drum roll) Robinson's Old Tom. The first three were part of the 1/3 of a pint tasting promotion where you can try three ales for the price of a festival pint - a great idea. The Old Tom was excluded from this, and sold in half pints only due to its warming 8.5% ABV, but at a very reasonable 99p.

All the ales were in good condition, with the banana and raisin beers doing exactly what is said on the tin, but for my taste buds the banana was too overpowering and whilst the raisin beer was a bit more restrained it is still not really my sort of ale. The Golden Promise was very drinkable, with a rounded sweetish malt flavour and a hint of spicy hops. Old Tom was packed full of fruity malt flavours and with a richness similar to a glass of port, a wonderful warming barley wine. Whilst chatting to the manager he informed me that the beers had been selling well, with most sold within two days, so I decided on another visit a few days later and this time tried a 4% ABV Porter, from Springhead Brewery in Nottingham, which wasn't on the festival beer list but was a very tasty brew packed with roasted malt flavours and served in excellent condition. Finally I tried Clark's Rams Revenge, a 4.6% ABV brew from West Yorkshire which was very good, with good balance of malt and

hops coupled with roasted barley background. If my two visits were anything to go by, it would seem to have been a good festival with a fine selection of ales served in good condition. Well done to JDW's in Inverness. GNH, Inverness.

Two into One Does Go

The 4th Inverness Beer Festival, part of the Autumn Highland Feast 2007 food and drink festival, was for the first time held jointly at two venues - **Clachnaharry Inn** landlord George MacLean having opened the newly refurbished **Castle Tavern** earlier in the year.

The festival started at 5pm on Friday with a piper welcoming the first thirsty drinkers to the Castle Tavern, where some free nibbles were provided. A well thought out temporary bar in the outside patio area provided space for another four hand pumps to go with the regular four in the bar. A small marquee had also squeezed in to provide extra space for drinkers. As you would expect the ales were in excellent condition and a further nine ales plus real cider were available over at the Clachnaharry Inn. A long walk between the venues, but for non-walkers or drinkers in a hurry the Clachnaharry Inn courtesy bus was available throughout the festival to ferry drinkers to and fro between venues.

I had an enjoyable time trying old favourites, and some Scottish brews we don't normally see in Inverness. The beers were in fine form and Red Cuillin from Isle of Skye and Highland Brewery's Dark Munro were, for me, the best I tried during the week. EM.

More Festival News

- Ullapool update - Beer-of-the Festival was **Avalanche**, from Fyne Ales, with Islay's Saligo Ale taking second. The name chosen for the new house ale, a blend of 30% Black Cuillin and 70% Hebridean Gold, from Isle of Skye, is **Haggis in the Skye with Diamonds!** A badge for the ale is in the pipeline.
- Loch Ness update - The 6th festival, held annually at the Benleiva Hotel, was again a big success. **Fyne Ales Avalanche**, "a light pale ale" at 4.5% ABV, narrowly edged out Cart Blanche, Orkney Blast, Scapa Special, and Vital Spark in the Beer-of-the-Festival vote.

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

- Great news from Aviemore, where Nigel and his friendly team at the **Old Bridge Inn** will again be hosting the Aviemore Beer Festival. Make sure to note the 7th, 8th and 9th March 2008 in your diary. It will be a similar format to last year, with around a dozen beers on offer, predominantly from Scottish breweries. The weekend will again feature live music from local bands, special menus for the discerning tippler and, of course, a commemorative festival glass to ease the memory!



Boat Hotel Update

In our Autumn edition we reported that "new owners had decided not to serve real ale and so we had to withdraw the Boat Hotel from the 2007 GBG. The news came only after final proofs had been submitted, and so the Boat also appears in the 2008 GBG."

We received the following response:

"The sale of real ale at the (Boat) hotel has been halted until adequate cellarge facilities can be put in place in order to store and sell a



THE HEBRIDEAN BREWING COMPANY.

taste of the islands

clansman ale 3.9% ABV

Beer of Festival, Aberdeen, Grianian 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

Brewed using traditional methods and based on 19th century recipes. Then matured over a number of weeks to develop a smooth intricate flavour. Brewed with a robust bitterness blended with a sweet smooth aftertaste and a hoppy aroma.

Champion Winter Beer of Scotland 2006

New seaforth ale 4.2% ABV

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

Brewed and bottled entirely in the Outer Hebrides



Hebridean Brewery Company

Stornoway, Isle of Lewis, Western Isles

tel: 01851-700123 fax: 01851-700234 email: sales@hebridean-brewery.co.uk

www.hebridean-brewery.co.uk



Member of the Society of Independent Brewers

quality real ale product. The existing facilities are simply not good enough and lead to excessive wastage and a poor product. This is something we are not prepared to compromise and will look at upgrading and reintroducing real ales in the spring.

We are supporters of the sale of real ale - especially in an outlet such as this - and look forward to providing yourself, members of CAMRA and the general public with a fantastic product next year."

Best Regards - Jon Erasmus.

This is an encouraging response, and we hope that the Boat Hotel may soon re-appear in our Real Ale lists. Even better if we are able to include the Boat in the itinerary April visit to Speyside. Ed.

September Visit to Highlands & Islands I

Dear Ed, here's a quick round-up that you and your local members may find of interest.

Thurs Sep 6th, Visited the Anderson (Fortrose). Country Life's Golden Pig, and Burton Bridge Golden Delicious on. Both in good condition. Over to the Clachnaharry Inn, and they had

Adnams Broadside, GK Abbot, Taylor's Landlord, with the more interesting ones being Isle of Skye Clachnaharry Village Ale & Red Cuillin, plus Orkney Dark Island. All Scottish beers in good nick. Didn't try the 'imports'.

Also popped into the Cromarty Arms in Cromarty, but the only ale on hand pump was Cairngorm Trade Winds, which was well past it's best. One of our party had a sneaking suspicion that it may have been 'gas assisted' but we didn't stop to investigate further.

Next was the Plough at Rosemarkie, excellent Cairngorm In the Shadows and Trade Winds.

We stayed at the Anderson.

Friday Sep 7th, Drove to the Isle of Skye and visited the Cuillin Brewery, plus sampled the beers at the Sligachan Hotel, and we certainly don't think it is good enough (albeit based on just one visit) to be in the GBG. Three of their own beers on tap - Skye Ale, Conqueror and Ptarmigan (should not to be confused with the superior brew by Harviestoun, as this version was only 3.8%). Also a Houston beer plus GK IPA. Their 'Ptarmigan' was the best of a frankly uninspiring bunch. Next to Plockton:

aviemore beer festival

hosted by the old bridge inn



From Friday 7th to Sunday 9th March 2007

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Plockton Inn - disappointed to find no Scottish beer, just Fullers London Pride and GK Abbot. Good quality though. Plockton Hotel had Deuchars IPA and Isle of Skye Young Pretender on, though the Y.P. was hazy, and we suspect being sold a little too early.

The Rockvilla Hotel at Lochcarron was good, with Orkney Red McGregor, Cairngorm Stag, Isle of Skye Young Pretender and Hebridean Gold on sale. All were very good bar the Gold, which was very hazy and lacking something. On returning this to the bar, they very quickly agreed that it wasn't good and exchanged with no fuss for the Orkney. Perhaps 4 beers on at the end of season is too many though.

Back at the Anderson, Harviestoun Ptarmigan was an additional beer now on sale, and very good too, likewise no change to the range at the Plough, and still good tasty beer.

Saturday Sep 8th, Inverness: King's Highway (JDW) - Well what can I say? On entering the pub at 11.30 we were told that only the bank of hand pumps nearest the door was in use. The only unusual beer worth trying was Black Isle Red Kite, which was barely drinkable, and

it should not have even been served if the manager had been doing his job properly.

It was exchanged for some better quality Deuchars IPA. We didn't linger though, and hotfooted it to the Castle - a proper pub, with all beers in good nick. On sale were Isle of Skye Flora McDonald, Cairngorm Wild Cat, Atlas 3 Sisters and An Teallach Ale. Popped in briefly at Hootananny, where Black Isle Red Kite and Heather Honey Ale were sampled, and in good condition too.

Lastly, the Blackfriars had seven beers on, so we didn't have time to try them all - Scottish beers were Hebridean Berserker, An Teallach Brewhouse Special, Harviestoun Ptarmigan, Caley 80/- and Deuchars IPA, as well as Okells IPA, and Old Specked Hen. The Scottish beers were very good.

So an interesting few days, helped by having a non-drinking driver to ferry us around!

We dropped off a few copies of our newsletter 'Pints West' in some of the pubs, so maybe you may find a copy! Cheers, Tim, Bristol. (See Page 36)





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Rosemarkie Bay



Crofters Cafe Bar & Restaurant

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Inns & Things

- We have heard that Timothy Taylor Landlord has replaced Draught Bass at the Good Beer Guide listed **Snowgoose**. Regular real ale fans will no doubt miss the rare opportunity to sample an excellent pint of Draught Bass in the Highlands, but we think Landlord, voted CAMRA's Champion Beer of Britain on numerous occasions, will prove to be equally popular.
- Peter and Wendy Bartlett, at the GBG listed **Rockvilla Hotel** in Lochcarron, were able to serve four real ales for their Summer season. Not bad for a once real ale desert.
- A new Smith & Jones pub, the **Caledonian**, has opened in Inverness. Smith & Jones, part of the Barracuda Group, is described by caterersearch.com as "an upmarket authentic pub brand". Barracuda Group uses five brand names - Smith & Jones, Varsity, Barracuda Bars, Juniper Inns, and Cape - and owns over 200 pubs. The Caledonian boasts three handpumps but, so far, an irregular offering of Deuchars IPA has been spotted on one handpump only!
- **Pub Report from March 2003:** Hello all, I went to the Kilcoy Arms at Tore last night. Red Kite was on and very good, they hope to add Yellowhammer and Porter soon. The food was good, and the traditional music (1st Thurs of every month) very good. *Sadly the Kilcoy Arms closed some time ago.*
- We are able to report that the **Dalfaber Country Club** in Aviemore no longer uses top pressure in dispense.
- Scott MacLean is the new landlord at the **Riverside Tavern** in Conon Bridge. He is determined to serve real ale and he is able to turn round half casks which he has been able to source from various breweries. He is changing the focus of the pub to over 21, no big TV or football colours, and plans to run a quiz night and live music on Sundays.
- John Hume, who owned the pub 19 years ago, has returned to the **Winking Owl**. He has told us that Deuchars IPA is to be a regular beer with guest beers from S&N being rotated on a second handpump.

News of Brews

- Congratulations to the Black Isle Brewery on having their Organic Scotch Ale selected by Marks & Spencer as one of only four bottle-conditioned beers to be sold in their stores. Organic Scotch Ale, made with peat smoked malted barley, whole flower hops and leaves of sweet gale, is now available nationwide.
- Seasonal Black Isle Brewery brews that are now available in bottles, and possibly cask at a few selected outlets, are Hibernator III and Ruby. Both featured at the Aberdeen Beer Festival in November.
- Sinclair Breweries have won the Best Marketing Award at the 2007 Highlands & Islands Business Awards announced in November. Judges were impressed by the re-branding of their bottled ale ranges; the link with the community through sponsorship of Orkney Rugby Football Club; the pitch-side advertising at Tulloch Inverness Caledonian Thistle; and the design of a new trade stand for showcasing their products at events.



- More success for Sinclair Breweries in the International Beer Challenge: Atlas Latitude Pilsner (3.9%) won in the 'Lager up to 4.2% ABV' category for the second year in a row, and Orkney Red MacGregor (4.1%) was the 'Ales up to 4.2% ABV' category winner.
- Look out for Atlas Blizzard, a 4.5% Winter ale, during December to February.
- Orkney Brewery's new Christmas beer will be the 4.3% ABV Cloutie Dumpling, described as a light tawny beer with flavours of dried fruits, citrus fruits, and spices. Brambling Gold, First Gold, and Fuggles hops are used.
- Plockton Brewery's dark Winter Warmer, Dall Winter Sunshine (4.8% ABV), has been on tap in Plockton since early November.
- Robbie Walker has moved on to pastures new, and Samantha Faircliff has returned to Cairngorm as Managing Director.
- Black Isle Brewery Hibernator III was pipped at the post (one point only) by TSA (Bridge of Allan) Ginger Explosion in the judging for Champion Bottle Beer of Scotland.

Full press release @ www.highlandcamra.org



Scourie Hotel

Scourie, Sutherland, IV27 4SX

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Beers-of-the-Year - All Change

Spring is normally the time when we ask you to vote for the "the best locally brewed beer you have sampled during the past twelve months". In an effort to make the nomination procedure for selecting beers for the Champion Beer of Britain (CBOB) and Champion Beer of Scotland (CBOS) competitions more fair and transparent, the competitions from 2009 onwards will use a new system to select the beers: and the **new system starts NOW!**

The new system involves beers being chosen by a roughly 50/50 combination of Tasting Panel recommendations, and by a voting system at CAMRA Branch level.

As before, the Scottish Tasting Panels will produce their three highest scoring beers in each of the nine styles. In addition we are asking CAMRA members to use the voting form to vote for their favourite Scottish beer in each style (mild, Bitter, Stout, etc.). All other Scottish Branches will be carrying out a similar procedure. All the Branch scores will then be totalled to produce the three highest scoring beers in each style. A fourth beer will result from Northern Ireland voting, and the three highest scoring beers from the Tasting panels will then be added to these four to produce a maximum of seven beers in each style.

These seven beers will then be judged against each other in an individual style competition at one of the beer festivals held in Scotland during 2008. Each festival will have a competition for a particular style; e.g. Best Bitter at Paisley, Stouts & Porters at Alloa, etc. These competitions will produce the best (champion) Scottish/Northern Ireland region beer in each style.

The three winter styles (Old Ales and Strong Milds; Stouts and Porters; Barley Wines) and the six other style winners (Mild, Bitter, Best Bitter, Strong Bitter, Golden Ale, Speciality) will then go forward to the 'Champion Winter Beer of Scotland' and the 'Champion Beer of Scotland' competitions respectively; and finally the winners of these two competitions will join the other National Regional competition winners in the 'Champion Beer of Britain' and the 'Champion Winter Beer of Britain' competitions.

Hopefully the explanation above is reasonably clear? The list of eligible beers may be found on our website (www.highlandcamra.org.uk) and will help you to understand the new system, and enable you to fill in the voting form below found or on-line at www.highlandcamra.org.uk.

Although the new system allows you to vote for all Scottish beers, we will still be able to award our own Beer-of-the-Year to the locally brewed beer scoring most votes in our Branch area!

Highlands & Western Isles Branch of CAMRA 2008 Beer of the Year Voting Form

Old Ale / Strong Mild
Stout / Porter
Barley Wine
Mild
Bitter
Best Bitter
Strong Bitter
Specialty Beer
Member's Name/No.

Closing Date - 28th February



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21st Aberdeen Beer Festival

To my shame, despite living in the Highlands for nearly six years, I had never been to the Aberdeen beer festival. The reason I went this year was because I had been invited to be one of the judges for the CAMRA Champion Winter Beer of Scotland competition. Six winter style ales had made it through to the final judging. The ales were presented to us for blind tasting where points were awarded for appearance, aroma, taste and aftertaste. On completion of the tasting the six judge's scoring sheets were totalled, and the overall winner was declared as Orkney Dark Island from Sinclair Breweries. Cairngorm Black Gold was runner-up, with Isle of Skye Black Cuillin taking third place. Isle of Skye Cuillin Beast, Highland Dark Munro, and Cairngorm Santa's Sledgehammer completed the list of finalists. *Congratulations to all!*

With the arduous task of judging completed it was time to enjoy the festival. Over 65 Scottish ales, supplemented by 17 from south of the border, a selection of real cider and perry, and some bottled lagers, provided a wonderful

selection. The single long bar was split into nine bays which corresponded to the beer menu in the festival guide, making it easy to find your chosen ales. All very well organised! I had heard that previous festivals, held at the McClymont Halls, had been at capacity. The new venue at Pittodrie stadium ensured ample room and extensive toilet facilities - always a relief at beer festivals, sorry, pun intended! I'm not sure how the numbers compared to last year but from what I saw the festival seemed very busy despite suffering late changes to both date and venue. A minor queue for beer vouchers, and food provision had to be located outside the stadium (there was an excellent chippy across the road as well as catering vans), but otherwise Pittodrie seemed an excellent venue and I hope the festival will be held there next year - although the dates may have to change again slightly to fit in with (*Aberdeen home*) football fixtures. Having had such a great time at a wonderful showcase for Scottish ales I will make sure it will be an away fixture I will attend. GNH.

September Visit to Highlands & Islands II

Dear Ed, further to my email a couple of weeks ago, one of the guys on our trip has put together a much more detailed review, using your scoring system, but based on his own tastes. All from the second week of September, so we hope it is of interest/use to you. Cheers, Tim. Hi Tim, please forward this to your Highland colleague. Have used the scoring system that they use in newsletter:

Town - Pub - Beer - Score - Comments

Fortrose - Anderson - Burton Bridge Golden Delicious (2) - Not a great beer
- Harviestoun Ptarmigan (4), Brysons Bitter (3), West Country Golden Pig (2) - Not to my taste
Rosemarkie - Plough - Cairngorm Trade Winds (4), Cairngorm In The Shadows (3) - Great pub
Cromarty - Cromarty Arms - Cairngorm Trade Winds (1) - Poor pint
Sligachan - Hotel - Cuillin Brewery Skye Ale (2) - tourist trap, average beer
Plockton - Inn - London Pride (2) - Pride and Abbott, why? No homebrew
Plockton - Hotel - Isle of Skye Hebridean Gold (1) - Cloudy / poor nick
Lochcarron - Rockvilla - Orkney Red Macgregor (3) - three beers on, one taken back by Tim
Inverness - Clachnaharry Inn - Isle of Skye Red Cuillin (4) - excellent place
Inverness - Kings Highway - Black Isle Red Kite (1) - Cold and very poor, four beers on
Inverness - Castle Tavern (2 visits) - An Teallach Ale (3), Cairngorm Wildcat (4), Highland Brewery Company Orkney Best (4) - Three beers on, changed quickly when run out
Inverness - Hootananny - Black Isle Honey beer (3) - Only beer on
Inverness - Blackfriars - Can't remember! (3) - Superbly gruff landlord / good food
Grantown on Spey - Ben Mhor Hotel - Cairngorm Stag (2) - Only one beer on (Saturday eve)
Dundonnell Hotel - Westons Perry! (3) - No beer on, just Perry, weird!
Gairloch - Old Inn - Orkney Dark Island (4) - Four beers on
Applecross - Inn - Isle of Skye Red Cuillin (4), Isle of Skye Blaven (3) - superb pub, scary road!
Brora - Sutherland Inn - Isle of Skye Red Cuillin (3) - Impressive whisky list
Thurso - Central hotel - Orkney Best (4) - Superb condition, Theakstons Grousebeater also on
Thurso - Commercial Hotel - Red Macgregor (5) - Best pint of week, had four of it! Real Ale permanent not seasonal, usually one from Orkney
Sadly got to Scourie Inn after lunch closure time.
Ullapool - Ferry Boat - An Teallach Ale (3) - Black Sheep Bitter also on
Ullapool - Caley Inn - Isle of Skye Hebridean Gold (0) - Sent back as sour - landlady took sip of my pint, agreed, said "no time to put new on" then when bloke at next table asked "what beers you have?" she included it in the list! Not one for GBG
Ullapool - Morefield Motel - Cairngorm Glen Ample (4), Isle of Skye Red Cuillin (4) - great find, three beers on. Loved the seats reserved for drinkers!
Ullapool - Seaforth Bar & Restaurant - An Teallach Beinn Dearg (3) - great whisky list, drank a toast to end of trip.
The bars I would consider for GBG, other than those in the 2008 book, from the evidence of this whirlwind trip would be:

Commercial Hotel and Central Hotel, Thurso

Castle Tavern, Inverness

I would not be so sure about the Plockton Inn or the Sligachan Hotel.

Hope this is of use. Vince Murray, GBG Co-ordinator, Bristol & District.



Blackfriars Highland Pub Great Beer

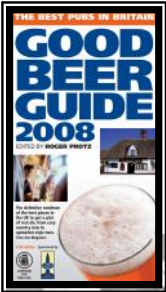


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Highlands & Western Isles Branch

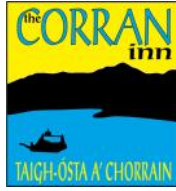
**Highlands & Western Isles Branch of CAMRA
2008 Pub of the Year Voting Form**

- Inverness & District (N)
- Inverness & District (S)
- Aviemore & Cairngorms
- South Skye & Lochalsh
- North Skye & Hebrides
- Fort William & Lochaber
- Wester Ross
- Caithness & Sutherland
- Member's Name/No.

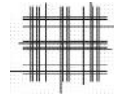
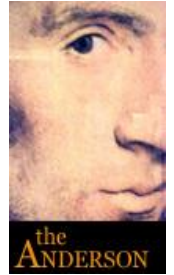
Closing Date - 28th February

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 in time for Easter. *Cheers!*





HOE



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