

# What's Yours Then?

Highlands & Western Isles CAMRA  
**Free** Newsletter



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**Beer-of-the-Year**  
**Pub-of-the-Year**



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**Spring 2008**

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

- > Revised Pub-of-the-Year - **Winners**
- > Revised Beer-of-the-Year - **Winners**
- > Focus on - George MacLean
- > 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 Bill, Eric, Gareth, and Caroline, 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. Summer edition **deadline** is 6<sup>th</sup> June, with publication in time for Summer visitors.

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.*

**Thank-you** to all those who voted in our two competitions -

**Pub-of-the-Year, and Beers-of-the-Year**

A revision in classification of local areas meant for 2008 we asked you to vote for up to eight of your favourite hosteleries.

The number of pubs and hotels serving real ales (and ciders) continues to grow, and the large number attracting votes is surely an indication that we have some very fine real ale hosteleries in the Highlands and Western Isles.

Please turn the page for full roll of honour. Sadly only one pub can go forward to the Scottish and then British Pub-of-the-Year judging, and the unenviable task of selection falls upon the committee. CAMRA judging guidelines were strictly followed and scores were awarded according to the following: Quality of Beer/Cider/Perry, Atmosphere/Style/Décor, Service/Welcome, Clientele Mix, Sympathy with CAMRA aims, and Good Value.

Scoring, not surprisingly, was very close. After carefully checking scores we are delighted to announce that **The Anderson** in Fortrose is the overall Highlands & Western Isles CAMRA Pub-of-the-Year. Congratulations to Jim and Anne Anderson and their team on winning this prestigious award. Congratulations also not just to the eight winners but to all who are helping to make the Highlands & Western Isles a real ale haven. Changed days indeed!

Changes also to Beer-of-the-Year. As detailed in our Winter edition, there is a new eighteen month selection process which will ultimately lead to the Champion Beer of Britain 2009.

Members were asked to vote for favourite beers in nine categories. The list of eligible beers included brews from all over Scotland, and so it was great to see Highlands & Islands beers feature so prominently. Congratulations to **Isle of Skye Brewery** on **Hebridean Gold** being voted our Beer-of-the-Year.

Full list of winning beers on page 12.

**Trading Standards Office:** Contact details for issues such as no price lists or consistent short measures - 0845 600 4 222

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## **Highlands & Western Isles Pubs-of-the-Year for 2008**

Votes were received for a total of 36 Highlands and Islands real ale pubs, which again goes to show that there is no shortage of great real ale hostelrys in this one-time real ale desert.

Although there are once again some familiar names, only a couple of pubs won by a landslide, and some of the regular suspects only narrowly held on to their prestigious awards.

Congratulations to publicans and their teams at -

### **Inverness & District North - The Anderson, Fortrose**

On the southern coast of the Black Isle, by the red sandstone ruins of 1250 A.D. Fortrose Cathedral, this charming hostelry is well worth seeking out. In addition to real ales and ciders, there is a choice of 200+ single malt whiskies and 80+ Belgian beers. A "borderless" approach results in a changing menu of global cuisine that lends a cosmopolitan air.

### **Inverness & District South - Castle Tavern, Inverness**

A buzzing city centre pub, at the top of Castle Street, with all the friendliness of a village local. Bar meals are served all day. Overlooking the River Ness at the end of the Great Glen Way. A Victorian-style canopy covers the large beer patio. Four handpumps dispense an Isle of Skye house beer plus changing guests mostly from Scottish independents.

### **Aviemore & the Cairngorms - Glen Hotel, Newtonmore**

In the heart of the BBC's 'Monarch of the Glen' country, and close to the Monalldliath and Cairngorm Mountains, this elegant Edwardian hotel has a busy local trade and is popular with outdoor enthusiasts. Mainly Scottish beers are served, often from local breweries, and the Glen-Bogle Ale is from the Isle of Skye Brewery. There is an extensive bar menu.

### **Wester Ross - Applecross Inn**

Family-run inn in a spectacular location on the shoreline of the Applecross Peninsula, with views to the Isles of Skye and Raasay. It is reached by a single track road over the highest vehicular ascent in Britain, or by a longer scenic route. Two handpumps dispense beer from the Isle of Skye Brewery, bar meals are served all day, and local shellfish is a speciality.

### **South Skye & Lochalsh - Plockton Hotel**

Set amongst a row of traditional waterfront buildings in the heart of the beautiful village of Plockton, with spectacular views over Loch Carron. Locally caught fish and shellfish take pride of place on the award-winning menu. An ideal base for exploring the Isle of Skye and the mountains of Torridon, the village is a regular haunt for outdoor enthusiasts.

### **North Skye & Hebrides - Stein Inn, Waternish, Isle of Skye**

A traditional family-run inn, the oldest on the Isle of Skye, located in a delightful shore-side setting on the beautiful Loch Bay. Three real ales regularly on tap in this Highland bar, an open fire in Winter, and the seafood on the menu will have been freshly landed at the near-by jetty. Shower facilities are available for seafarers who tie up in the bay.

### **Fort William & Lochaber - Ben Nevis Inn, near Fort William**

Popular with walkers, climbers and locals alike, the Ben Nevis Inn is in a unique location at the very foot of Ben Nevis. The 200 year old building, warmed by a wood burning stove, is famous for its informal and friendly atmosphere. Regular live music. An innovative menu offers a mix of fresh local produce and international dishes. Three local real ales on tap.

### **Caithness & Sutherland - Scourie Hotel**

Converted 17<sup>th</sup> century coaching inn, overlooking the white sands of Scourie Bay, popular with anglers (25,000 acres of loch, river and hill loch fishing held for guests), hill-walkers (rooms with views of Ben Stack, Foinaven and Arkle), and bird watchers (Handa Island is nearby). Three real ales, mostly from Scottish breweries, and one real cider.

>> *All Selected by Highlands & Western Isles Branch of CAMRA Members <<*

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## Branch Diary (Meetings start at 7.30 pm)

- Sat 19<sup>th</sup> April  Social/Outing to Cairngorm Brewery and Speyside Real Ale Hostelrys
- Tue 29<sup>th</sup> April Tasting Panel Meet The Anderson, Fortrose
- Tue 6<sup>th</sup> May Committee Meeting Suie Hotel, Kincaig
- Tue 27<sup>th</sup> May Tasting Panel Meet Black Isle Brewery
- Tue 3<sup>rd</sup> June Branch Meeting Loch Ness Inn, Lewiston
- Thurs 5<sup>th</sup> - Sat 6<sup>th</sup> June Great Grampian Beer Festival in Aberdeen
- Thurs 19<sup>th</sup> - Sat 21<sup>st</sup> June Scottish Real Ale Festival in Edinburgh
- Tue 24<sup>th</sup> June Tasting Panel Meet Cawdor Tavern
- Sat 28<sup>th</sup> June  Social/Outing to Plockton Brewery and local Real Ale Hostelrys
- Tue 1<sup>st</sup> July Committee Meeting Bandstand Bar, Nairn
- Tue 29<sup>th</sup> July Tasting Panel Meet Cairn Hotel, Carrbridge
- Tue 5<sup>th</sup> Aug Branch Meeting The Glen, Newtonmore
- Sat 9<sup>th</sup> Aug Marymas Fair Real Ale Bar *To be confirmed*
- Tues 26<sup>th</sup> Aug Tasting Panel Meet Havelock House Hotel, Nairn
- Tues 2<sup>nd</sup> Sept Committee Meeting Old Bridge Inn, Aviemore
- Sat 13<sup>th</sup> Sept  Social/Outing to Isle of Skye Brewery, and Skye & Lochalsh Real Ale Hostelrys
- 19<sup>th</sup> - 27<sup>th</sup> Sept \* 7<sup>th</sup> Loch Ness Beer Festival Benleva Hotel
- Sat 20<sup>th</sup> Sept Hill Walk, Social & Tasting Benleva Hotel
- End Sept (TBA) \* 5<sup>th</sup> Inverness Beer Festival Clachnaharry Inn/Castle Tavern
- Tue 7<sup>th</sup> Oct Committee Meeting The Anderson, Fortrose
- 16<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup> Oct \* 4<sup>th</sup> Ullapool Beer Festival Morefield Motel, Ullapool

\* 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](http://www.highlandcamra.org.uk)

**Contact** Gareth Hardman (Secretary & Branch Contact) - 01463 238462

**Details** 18, Scorguie Gardens, Inverness, IV 3 8 5S.

contact@highlandcamra.org.uk or secretary@highlandcamra.org.uk



Eric Mills - Phone No. pending  
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## Inverness Walkabout 2007

It was a cool but dry Winter's evening when ten local members met in the classic island bar of the Phoenix for our annual December tour of Inverness city centre pubs. Not enough left in the cask of Orkney Dark Island (average score 3) for all, and that left only Caledonian Deuchars (3) to sample. Over the road next to the GBG listed Blackfriars, quieter in the early evening than the Phoenix had been, but where there was a good selection of real ales on tap. Most went for Highland Scapa Special (4), and some for Bateman's Rosie Nosey (2). Deuchars IPA, Caley 80/-, An Teallach Ale and Old Speckled Hen were not tried on this visit. Round the corner to the Kings Highway where it was very busy but not too much of a queue for drinks on this occasion. Caley 80/- (3), Highgate Throbbin Robin (2, one thought 4), Everards Sleigh Bell (2), and Deuchars IPA (not tried). Another very short stroll to Hoot-ananny where a number of our party were impressed with the Black Isle Brewery Hibernator (3), but very disappointed with their Red Kite (1). This pub was busy with diners. Next

down to the river and a visit to Johnny Foxes which was also popular with diners. Old Speckled Hen on top pressure (3) was available at £3.10 a pint. The recently opened Caledonian, opposite the town house, had six handpumps on the bar, but no real ale. Deuchars IPA can occasionally be found here we understand. Up the hill to Number 27 where we found a very good Cairngorm Red Mountain Porter (4) and Red Kite (not tried).

A little further up the hill now to the Castle Tavern, another new city centre hostelry to open since our December 2006 walkabout.

Unlike The Caledonian however, there was no shortage of real ale here! Highland Christmas Light (4), Cairngorm Winter Flurry (3), Isle of Skye Bill's Special (5) and An Teallach Crofters Pale Ale (3) presented a fine selection of ales from local Highlands & Islands breweries.

Bill Tring, our recently retired Chairman, was enjoying his evening out and it took him a while to notice his picture on the 'Bill's Special' pump clip. Looking around he was surprised to see a number of familiar faces in the bar, including his wife Barbara (who he thought

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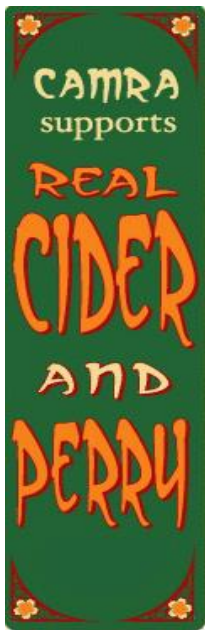


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## Traditional Cider Matters

**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 1<sup>st</sup> Quality Cider

**Benleva Hotel, Drumnadrochit** - Westons 1<sup>st</sup> Quality Cider

**Scourie Hotel** - Westons 1<sup>st</sup> 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

**Dundonell Hotel** - Westons Perry was found here in September.

**Old Bridge Inn, Aviemore**, served Thatchers Heritage Cider at both their March 2007 and 2008 Beer Festivals. We understand that it was very popular, and we hope they will consider making it a regular offering.

Real ciders are regularly on tap at the **Clachnaharry Inn**, during their Highland Feast events.

*(Continued from page 8)*

was having a quiet night at home!), who had turned out for a retirement celebration. With the help of George MacLean and Angus MacRuary, owners of the Castle Tavern and Isle of Skye Brewery respectively, we had planned a surprise farewell presentation for Bill. Our new Chair, Eric Mills, presented Bill with an engraved Quaich on behalf of the branch, and some bottled Bill's Special Ale (brewed by the Isle of Skye Brewery) to enjoy over the festive period, and a bouquet of flowers to Barbara.

Further presentations followed: an engraved Isle of Skye Brewery tankard from Angus, and a bottle of 'The Glenrothes' Select Reserve Single Malt from George; these in recognition of Bill's long term commitment to real ale, and for his help

and support for both brewery and pubs. Branch secretary Gareth, one of Bill's tasting panel colleagues, rounded off the ceremonies with the gift of a liquid thermometer for Bill to

use in his monitoring of the temperature of beers (not needed at the Castle Tavern we hasten to add). We then enjoyed an excellent buffet, washed down with more of the fine beers on tap.

A very good night was had by all, especially by Bill we are happy to report. A massive thank-you to Angus, George and Veronica for all their help in organising Chairman Bill's surprise farewell presentation, and for making the end of our annual December walkabout so very enjoyable.

*And a rare opportunity to enjoy the hospitality and*

*craic on offer when George and Veronica are working in tandem behind the bar! Ed.*





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**Champion Beers**

It will be some time before the new system yields the Champion Beer of Britain, but we are very hopeful that Scottish beers, especially those brewed in the Highlands and Western Isles, will make it all the way through the various Tasting Panel recommendations, area voting, and judging to the grand final itself.

For now we are able to announce that the following beers brewed by in the Highlands & Western Isles polled most votes and have been declared our -

**Highlands & Western Isles Beers-of-the-Year**

Gold: Isle of Skye Hebridean Gold

Silver: Isle of Skye Cuillin Beast

Bronze: Cairngorm Black Gold

Well done again to award-winning brewers Pam MacRuary (Isle of Skye) and Sean Tomlinson (Cairngorm), and their teams.

Our Beer-of-the-Year to be on tap at our Marymas Fair real ale bar in August, one of the choice of locally brewed beers on offer.

**Tasting Notes**

**Hebridean Gold** - 4.3% - Oats are used to produce this delicious speciality beer. Very nicely balanced, it has a refreshingly soft, fruity, bitter flavour. Thirst quenching and very drinkable.

**Cuillin Beast** - 7% - Sweet and fruity, much more drinkable than the strength would suggest. Plenty of caramel throughout with a variety of fruit on the nose. A really good winter warmer.

**Black Gold** - 4.4% - Roast malt dominates but the liquorice and blackcurrant in the taste and nose give it a background sweetness. Very long, dry, bitter finish.

The full list of winners in each of the nine (CAMRA) real ale categories, from the list of eligible beers, as determined by votes from members:

Dark & Light Milds	Highland Dark Munro (Orkney)
Bitters (Perth)	Inveralmond Independence
Best Bitters (tied vote)	Highland Scapa Special (Orkney)
Strong Bitters	Isle of Skye Red Cuillin
Golden Ales	Inveralmond Lia Fail (Perth)
Speciality Ales	Highland Orkney Best (Orkney)
Old Ales & Strong Milds (tied vote)	Isle of Skye Hebridean Gold
Stouts & Porters	Orkney Dark Island (Orkney)
	Isle of Skye Black Cuillin
	Cairngorm Black Gold

These results will be combined with those from other Scottish Branches and from Tasting Panels in the quest to find the Champion Scottish Beers and Champion Beers of Britain for each style of beer and then, in the final judging, the overall Champion Beer of Britain (CBoB).

In the meantime we will set out on the long road to CBoB 2010! *See you on the way!*



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WT - 380kg

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## Real Ale in a Bottle (RAIB)

Although Real Ale in a Bottle is judged separately from real ales in the Champion Beer of Britain competition, we also asked you to vote for your favourite Real Ale in a Bottle, and **Black Isle Brewery Hibernator III**, Silver award winner in the Champion Bottle Beer of Scotland recently, topped the vote.



## Supreme CAMRA Champion Winter Beer of Britain 2008

**Wickwar Station Porter** from Gloucestershire was named as the Supreme CAMRA Champion Winter Beer of Britain 2008 by a panel of judges at the National Winter Ales Festival, held in Manchester in January.

The 6.1% ABV porter is described in CAMRA's 2008 Good Beer Guide as "A rich, smooth, dark ruby-brown ale. Starts with a roast malt; coffee, chocolate and dark fruit then develops a complex, spicy, bittersweet taste and a long roast finish." Full roll of honour -

### SUPREME CHAMPION

- Gold - Wickwar Station Porter
- Silver - Robinson's Old Tom
- Bronze - Hop Back Entire Stout

### CATEGORY WINNERS

#### Old Ales & Strong Mild Category

- Gold - Dark Side of the Moose
- Silver - Maggs Magnificent Mild
- Bronze - Highland Dark Munro

#### Stouts

- Gold - Hop Back Entire Stout
- Silver - Old Wavertonian
- Bronze - Sgt. Pepper Stout

#### Porters

- Gold - Wickwar Station Porter
- Silver - E&S Elland 1872 Porter
- Bronze - Acorn Old Moor Porter

#### Barley Wines

- Gold - Robinson's Old Tom
- Silver - Durham Benedictus
- Bronze - Mighty Oak Saxon Song

A disappointing result for Scottish brewers, but congratulations to Orkney brewer Rob Hill on his Highland Brewery **Dark Munro** taking bronze in the Old Ales & Strong Mild Category, the only ranking this year for an ale from

north of the border. Much better news when the SIBA National Beer Competition results (see page 27) were announced in March.



Norman Sinclair (left) with Keith Bott (SIBA President) at the SIBA awards ceremony in York

## Scottish Hotels of the Year 2008 Awards

*The awards were presented at event hosted by BBC's Sally Magnusson at Prestonfield House in Edinburgh on 24<sup>th</sup> February.*

Great to spot some of our Highland real ale hostelries appearing on the list of honours:

### Best Bar Food Award 2008

Winner: Applecross Inn

### Romantic Hotel of the Year 2008

Winner: The Torridon

### Award for Friendly Service 2008

Winner: Heathmount Hotel

## An Invitation to talk about Real Ale

Secretary Gareth Hardman's enthusiasm for real ale knows few bounds, and so when the Branch was asked if we could find someone to give a talk to members of the Highland Group of the Humanist Society Scotland Gareth was more than happy to oblige!

He spoke to an attentive audience for about 20 minutes on brewing Real Ale, the history of CAMRA, our Branch, and our roles and aims. The talk, at the Kingsmills Hotel in Inverness, was followed by a question & answer session, and the discussion surrounding the drinking culture of today could have carried on for longer had time permitted. All in all it was an enjoyable and interesting session.

# The Old Inn

Gairloch, Ross-shire, IV21 2BD

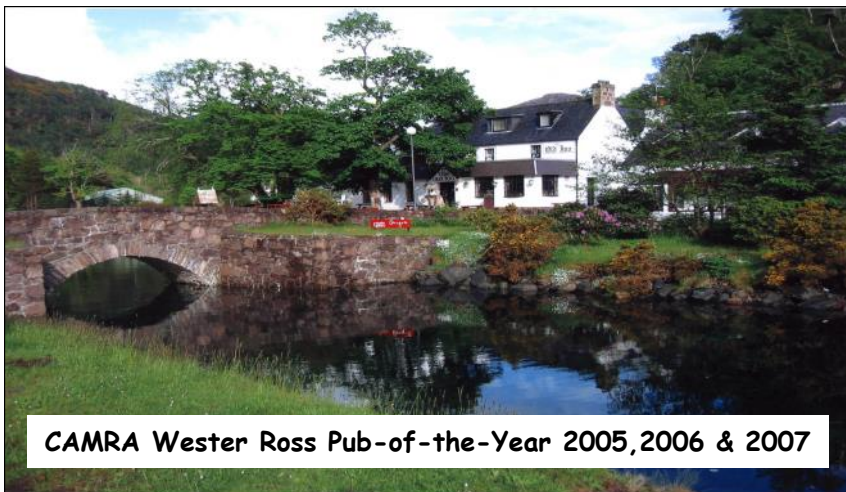
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**Inverness & Highland CAMRA Country Pub-of-the-Year for 2004**

## Focus on George MacLean

George lives in Inverness and has been running pubs in the Inverness area for nearly 40 years. He was one of the first to introduce real ale to the area and presently runs The Clachnaharry Inn and the Castle Tavern.

Q. Where were you originally from?

A. Latheronwheel in Caithness.

Q. How were you introduced to real ale?

A. My first experience of real ale was when Alice Brewery was about to open in Inverness and I was selling the Clachnaharry Inn for the first time, as I owned it from 1975 until 1980. Oliver Griffen, a partner with Moray Firth Maltings, who had sold out to Scottish Brewers, eventually convinced me that the road to go down was to keep Ale 'Real'. Which also reminded me of one other profound remark and that was, and because I also at one time played in Bands, was to keep music 'Live'. To this day I believe that if you are to run a Real Ale Pub and have entertainment you must have Live Entertainment. The ambience of a real un-amplified jam session, a Malt Whisky selection, and food always available during opening hours surely is not complete without Real Ales on tap.

Q. Why sell real ale?

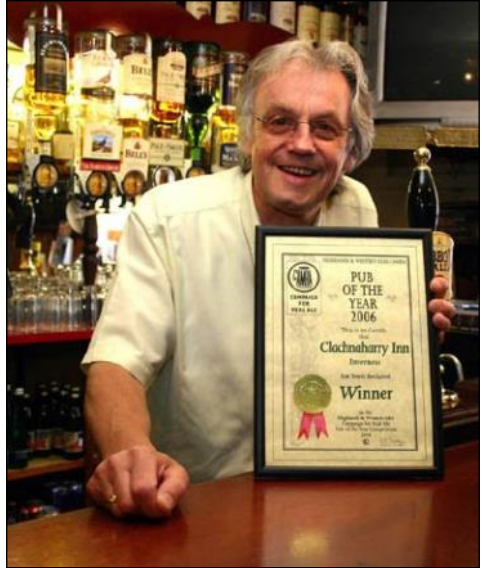
A. I think I may have answered some of this question above but one important factor of providing Real Ale in my pub is that it attracts a very interesting cross section of clientele and also I am very passionate of the product. Many in the trade shy away from handling Real Ales for a variety of reasons but unfortunately all too many are profit driven at the expense of the customer whilst forgetting that the trade they have made their career is a craft and not a licence to print money.

Q. What is the worst part of your work?

A. A customer who arrives and expects to get served whilst they have already had enough is the worst. Not only is it an offence to serve that kind of person but their presence in the bar spoils it for others, so over the years I have learned to adopt the zero tolerance principle.

Q. What is the best part of your work?

A. Meeting people for the first time who are not only strangers to your premises but to the area as a whole and making sure that you have left them in the knowledge that they will be back. Being an ambassador for your business is also a fly-the-flag job for your city. This trade is about meeting people and very interesting people at that.



George proudly displays his Clachnaharry Inn Pub-of-the-Year certificate in 2006

Q. What real ale/beer styles do you like?

A. This may surprise you but I do not drink real ales these days but I do not think it affects my knowledge on the product. It probably affected it more when I drank the stuff. Thanks to my good customer base I am still able to tell what is a good pint as opposed to a not so good pint. Many years ago we took a boat on the Norfolk Broads and almost in every pub on the water had Ruddles County and for years if I was ever in a pub in England I always asked for that beer. Today it's no stranger to see it on counters in some of Scotland's pubs, that tells you something.

Q. What type of pubs do you like?

A. Quite simply, the ones I run.







## 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](http://www.corraninn.co.uk)

You can phone us on 01855 821 235

You can email us at [info@corraninn.co.uk](mailto:info@corraninn.co.uk)



# Real Ale in the Real Highlands

## Morefield Motel, North Road, Ullapool

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**Children  
and  
Families  
Welcome**



**Home  
to the  
Annual  
Ullapool  
Beer  
Festival  
16<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup>  
October  
2008**

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E-mail: [stay@morefieldmotel.co.uk](mailto:stay@morefieldmotel.co.uk)

Q. What is your daily routine?

A. Up in the morning quite early, don't need a lot of sleep these days and straight into a routine with a cup of tea, the morning paper (through the door at 7am) and sit at my front window overlooking the Beaully Firth and the Caledonian Canal. After this tranquillity you do not mind how hard you work because it is so good to get up to this panoramic view. As I am very often involved in the day to day running of both places so you are always providing cover and with days off never a priority the routine may vary but for one exception, Saturday afternoon. That is reserved for the Caledonian Thistle home games and for the odd trip through to Ross County on away fixtures so that I am always back in one of the pubs shortly after 5pm.

Q. How has real ale changed in this area over the years in the area?

A. Over the last 10 years a great portfolio of ales, due to many micro breweries springing up and also it's fair to say that with a population explosion in the area brings

with it many real ale drinkers.

Q. What are your hobbies/interests?

A. Would love to do more but a bit of a workaholic. Football as mentioned every Saturday, used to cycle a lot and seriously considered taking it up again along with an odd round of golf. Could say politics, music, and reading but that comes with my chosen career so you could say that all my hobbies and interests are rolled into one, work.

Q. What are your plans for the future?

A. I have been in this business now for almost 40 years and yes, I would like to have more time to do other things but I think I will always be involved in the trade and in the Castle Tavern I see a healthy future as I would like to take it a step further. As for another project. Well, never say never!



## **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, Drumnadrochit  
Loch Ness Inn, Lewiston - **Open end-April**  
Loch Ness Lodge, Drumnadrochit (S)  
Steading Bar & Restaurant, Kilmartin  
North Kessock Hotel  
Munlochry Hotel (TP)  
The Anderson, Fortrose  
Union Tavern, Fortrose  
Crofters Café Bar, Rosemarkie (TP)  
Plough Inn, Rosemarkie  
Culbokie Inn  
Cromarty Arms (TP)  
Slaters Arms, Cannich (S)  
Conon Bridge Hotel  
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  
The Caledonian, Inverness  
Castle Tavern, Inverness  
Nico's Bar, Glen Mhor Hotel, Inverness  
Heathmount Hotel, Inverness  
Hootananny, Inverness  
Johnny Foxes, Inverness (TP)  
Kings Highway, Inverness (*Wetherspoons*)

**“a beer drinker’s  
mecca”**  
**Good Beer Guide 2005-2007**



real ale  
80 Belgians

real cider  
200 malts

**Highlands & Western Isles  
Pub of the Year 2008**

the  
**ANDERSON**  
restaurant • bar • accommodation

**Fortrose, by Inverness**

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[www.theanderson.co.uk](http://www.theanderson.co.uk)

Masonic Club, Inverness  
 Number 27, Inverness  
 Phoenix Bar, Inverness  
 Snowgoose, Inverness  
 Tomatin Country Inn (S)  
 Does 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  
 Claymore Hotel, Nairn  
 Havelock House Hotel, Nairn  
 Invernairne Hotel, Nairn (S)  
 Seaforth Club, Nairn (Members only)  
 Old Mill, Brodie (A&NI)

#### Aviemore & Cairngorms

Cairn Hotel, Carrbridge  
 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, Kincaig  
 Glen Hotel, Newtonmore  
 Lodge Hotel, Newtonmore  
 Kingussie Golf Club  
 Silver Fjord Hotel, Kingussie  
 Typsy 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)

#### Fort William & Lochaber

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

# Stein Inn

THE OLDEST INN ON SKYE  
 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,  
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 Isle of Skye, IV55 8GA  
 Tel: +44 (0)1470-592362  
[angus.teresa@steininn.co.uk](mailto:angus.teresa@steininn.co.uk)**

Spean Bridge Hotel (S)  
 Stronlossit Hotel, Roy Bridge  
 Tomdoun Sporting Lodge  
 Glenfinnan House Hotel  
 Glenuig Hotel, Lochailort  
 Café Rhu, Arisaig (S)  
 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)

### 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

### Caithness & Sutherland

Inchnadamph Hotel  
 The Caberfeidh, Lochinver

**A Fine Day for a  
Great Ale?**



**A Great Day for  
A Fyne Ale!**

Scourie Hotel, Scourie  
 Altnacealgach Motel, nr Ledmore Junction  
 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

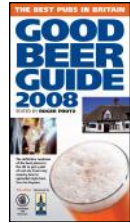
### South Skye & Lochalsh

Cluanie Inn  
 Glenelg Inn  
 Kintail Lodge Hotel  
 Jac-o-bite Restaurant, Kintail  
 Clachan Bar, Dornie  
 Loch Duich Hotel, Dornie  
 Balmacara Hotel  
 Haven Hotel, Plockton  
 Plockton Hotel, Plockton



Plockton Inn, Plockton  
 Tingle Creek Hotel, Erbusaig  
*(by Kyle of Lochalsh)*  
 Kyle Hotel, Kyle of Lochalsh  
 King Haakon Bar, Kyleakin  
 Saucy Mary's Lodge, Kyleakin (S)  
 Duisdale Hotel (S)  
 Isle Ornsay Hotel  
 Ardsasar Hotel  
 Broadford Hotel  
 Claymore, Broadford  
 Dunollie Hotel, Broadford  
 Hebridean Hotel, Broadford  
 Sconser Lodge Hotel  
 Sligachan Hotel (S)  
 Old Inn, Carbost

Pub at the Pier, Uig  
 Flodigaray Hotel  
 Duntulm Castle Hotel  
 Greshornish Lodge  
 Bosville Hotel, Portree  
 Isles Inn, Portree  
 Royal Hotel, Portree  
 Lochmaddy Hotel, North Uist  
 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)  
 Borrodale Hotel, South Uist (S)  
 Orasay Inn, South Uist (S)  
 Shawbost Inn, Isle of Lewis  
 An Lanntair, Stornoway  
 Clachan Bar, Stornoway  
 Cladh Inn, Stornoway  
 Whalers Rest, Stornoway  
 Harris Inn, Tarbert (S)



**North Skye & Hebrides**

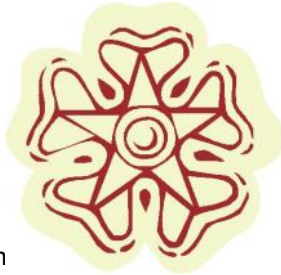
Isle of Raasay Hotel  
 Dunvegan Hotel  
 Stein Inn, Waternish  
 Edinbane Hotel  
 The Lodge at Edinbane  
 Ferry Inn, Uig  
 Uig Hotel, Uig

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.

# Stronlossit Inn

**at Roy Bridge**

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

Stronlossit is a real gem of tradition - a warm, welcoming character. The Lounge Bar has an impressive range of malt whiskies, an open fire and pulled cask beers, making it a popular rendezvous for Inn guests, outdoor enthusiasts and the local regulars alike. All amidst some of the wildest and most captivating scenery in the Scottish Highlands, in "Western Europe's last great wilderness", as Lochaber is known.

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

"The hospitality of the house will compliment the experience"

Your hosts: Maurice and Sandra Valley

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## Highlands & Islands Brewers in 2008

\* **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** - First brews in early 2005. Originally on the Isle of Seil, moved to South Ballachullish in 2007. 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 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007, Craggs 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, while Breweries Oyster Glasgow & similarly for Highlands & 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](http://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

## Inverness & District South Pub-of-the-Year 2008



# 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  
at the start/finish of the Great Glen Way Tel: 01463 718178

### Tasting Panel Matters

January saw our intrepid Tasting Panel on home ground. Three regulars were joined by local CAMRA member Keith Campbell for the first outing of 2008. An inauspicious start at Kings Highway where a row of handpumps labelled 'Sorry Not Available' was interrupted solely by a Deuchars IPA font clip. There was a variety of opinions on the IPA: all agreed that it was somewhat out of condition, and as such had little aroma, but the predominately fruity citrus taste was noted, as was the increasing bitterness and astringency. It scored 5, 6 and 7.

Eager to sample more ales the panel and their guest retired to Hootananny, where both Black Isle beers on tap were found to have a yeasty home-brew nose and flavour. The Red Kite, with an average score of 3, had some fruit and sweetness; the Heather Honey had plenty of sweetness also, with a honey background.

In February three blank taps were found at the Heathmount Hotel, but the arrival of the panel prompted the management to put on a cask of Black Isle Yellowhammer. Pulled directly from a full cask the beer lacked its usually powerful fruity nose, but the burst of passion fruit and hops in the taste when added to the smack of increasing bitterness made for a very drinkable pint, scoring two 8s and a 7.

At the Castle Tavern the 7.5% Berserker Ale was bypassed for the lighter Atlas Wayfarer, sadly just at the end of cask and with a yeast haze. The barman immediately took it off and was more than happy to offer another beer, but it was sampled in order to gain more experience of the yeasty flavours often found in beers at end of cask. Lacking in any malt character, the yeast gave the beer an overpowering astringency, though not too unpleasant to drink. Gareth picked out pink grapefruit in the taste, and all found hops and fruit, scoring two 4s and a 6.

On to Number 27 and the delights of Orkney Red Macgregor. A complex beer, with less spicy fruit than is the norm, but it still scored three 8s. Light sulphur in the nose and taste enhanced

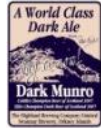
the malt and fruit flavours, often difficult to find if the sulphur is stronger. Interesting also was the high level of roast malt found in the taste and nose. This is unusual in a lighter coloured beer, being more common in stouts and milds.

Full reports from tasting panel meetings may be found on-line @ [www.highlandcamra.org.uk](http://www.highlandcamra.org.uk)  
 Tasting panel scores are used in the selection process for Champion Beers (see page 12), and official tasting panel members will have attended a CAMRA tasting course. Do not let a lack of formal tasting knowledge put you off; tasting evenings are social events open to all. Why not come along and learn about the complex mix of ingredients and flavours found in real ales.

**SIBA (Society of Independent Brewers) Champion Beers**

Highlands & Islands breweries scooped another four trophies when the results of SIBA's 2008 National Beer Competition were announced on 7<sup>th</sup> March at their annual conference in York:

<b>Milds</b>	Gold	Highland Brewing Co - Dark Munro
<b>Best Bitters</b>	Gold	Cairngorm Brewery - Trade Winds
<b>Speciality Beers</b>	Silver	Sinclair Breweries - Atlas Wayfarer
<b>Bottled Beers</b>	Gold	Sinclair Breweries - Atlas Latitude



There were eight classes of beer being judged in all, similar to CAM-RA champion beer competitions, each made up of the winners of SIBA's seven regional competitions staged during the past 12 months.

**Severn Sins**, a dark stout from Severn Vale Brewing Company, which is brewed in a disused milking parlour on a farm in the Cotswolds village of Cam, beat 342 other draught ales, ranging from milds to speciality beers, on its way to being voted SIBA national supreme champion.

**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](mailto:anteallachale@dundonnell.freeserve.co.uk)

## Aviemore Beer Festival 2008

The second Aviemore Beer Festival, held at the Old Bridge Inn in early March, had been an eagerly awaited event and got our social & outings calendar off to a very good start. A good number of the usual suspects made their way, mostly via public transport, to the Old Bridge Inn for the Saturday afternoon of this three day festival. The weather was really awful, with rain at times torrential and accompanied by strong winds, but warm and dry in the cosy bar. We learned that the inn had only just re-opened after being closed for refurbishment. A few weeks earlier the River Spey had burst its banks and flooded the bar. A massive effort by Nigel and his team just to get the pub up and running again, but to have everything ready for the festival must surely be worthy of an award!

A very good selection of ales were on tap:

Bridge of Allan Glencoe Wild Oat Stout;  
Cairngorm Blessed Thistle and White Lady;  
Caledonian 80/- and Deuchars IPA;  
Harviestoun Bitter & Twisted;  
Highland Dark Munro;  
Inveralmond XXX;  
Isle of Skye Black Cuillin;  
Orkney Dark Island and Skull Splitter;  
Strathaven Claverhouse.

Something there for everyone, and all brews served were in very good condition.

Sadly the new Plockton Brewery Craggs Ale, which we have yet to sample, had not settled and so was not on tap. Hopefully we will have an opportunity to try it during our June outing.



Landlord Nigel Reid, again entering fully into the beer festival spirit, had organised tasting notes for the beers, voting slips for beer-of-the-festival, and festival glasses. Bar meals were available all day, and all was served up by the ever jovial and friendly staff.

## *The Old Bridge Inn ~ Aviemore*



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

The varied menus, featuring the very best of Highland produce from river, sea and land, are carefully designed to tempt every palate



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Aviemore, PH 22 1 PU  
Tel: (01479) 811137  
[www.oldbridgeinn.co.uk](http://www.oldbridgeinn.co.uk)

Local Six Nations rugby fans were able to cheer Scotland's Calcutta Cup victory on the large screen, and enjoy Chris Paterson's ever reliable boot making Jonny Wilkinson's record breaking day one to forget.

In mid afternoon the numbers in an already busy bar were swelled by seventeen members of the Ayrshire & Galloway Branch of CAMRA. These hardy souls had journeyed north to the Cairngorm Brewery to present their Beer-of-the-Festival certificate, won by Trade Winds.

All in all another very good festival. Well done and thank-you to Nigel and his team, and we hope it all comes around again in 2009! EM.

**The Anderson**, in Fortrose, from December through until March, ran a Barleywine Festival. A real ale in excess of 6%, from a selection of CAMRA award-winners, was on tap alongside the usual mix of session ales & real cider.

Card carrying CAMRA members were able take full advantage, being able to enjoy a "second night's accommodation free". Strong beer, a warm bed and a first-class fry-up! A winner!



# 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**

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](mailto:sales@hebridean-brewery.co.uk)

[www.hebridean-brewery.co.uk](http://www.hebridean-brewery.co.uk)



Member of the Society of Independent Brewers

## Pub Closures

In the Spring of 2004 we started our *Outing to the Cairngorm Brewery and Speyside Real Ale Hostelries* with a quick pint at the Heatherbrae Hotel in Nethy Bridge. The Heatherbrae Hotel was listed in the Good Beer Guide at that time, but was as popular for the hospitality provided by hosts Jan and Maureen as for the quality of the real ales on offer.

Jan had kindly printed maps of local walks for us, and we enjoyed a circular walk to the 13<sup>th</sup> century Castle Roy before retracing our steps to the bar of the Heatherbrae for a very fine buffet, provided on the house by Jan and Maureen, and washed down with Cairngorm Brewery White Lady and Trade Winds.

Jan and Maureen have retired and although the hotel continued to be a real ale outlet, it ceased trading last October after an attempt to sell the business as a going concern failed. Last July the Strathspey & Badenoch Herald (the 'Strathy') reported that the hotel was up for sale and was being marketed as a house to potential buyers – a change residents claim

would be a 'devastating blow' and at odds with proposals for the future of Cairngorms National Park.

The report noted that "Villagers want to see the Heatherbrae thrive as a hotel, bar and restaurant, and have pledged that new owners looking to continue and develop the current business would have their support."

Music legend Bob Dylan and his brother David purchased the nearby Aultmore House, a 10-bedroomed woodland mansion, earlier in the year and in August the 'Strathy' reported that "The Save the Heatherbrae group have written to the superstar, inviting him to purchase the Heatherbrae Hotel."

The saga continued in December when the application by new owners Brian and Irene Taylor to change the use of the hotel to residential was called in at the latest meeting of the Cairngorms National Park Authority's planning committee.

In February the 'Strathy' reported "PLANNERS are recommending that controversial plans to change one of Nethy Bridge's few hostelries



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Website: [www.benmhorhotel.com](http://www.benmhorhotel.com)



into a house should be given the go-ahead." The report detailed the efforts of locals to save the Heatherbrae Hotel and see it remain as a pub, restaurant and hotel.

In mid February the 'Strathy' continued the story - "A DECISION over controversial plans to turn a popular Nethy Bridge nightspot into a home has been deferred. Members of the Cairngorms National Park Authority's planning board delayed making a decision over the future of the Heatherbrae Hotel and bar, pending an independent survey into the viability of the hotel's future as a business."

Brian Taylor was quoted as saying "When we bought the Heatherbrae it wasn't financially viable". He told the meeting the hotel could have closed in February, 2006, as trade had been that bad. They decided, however, to keep trading for a further 18 months.

A sad tale, but perhaps one that is a typical reflection of the ever-changing pub/hotel trade. As noted in an earlier edition of this publication, pubs and hotels change hands more and more frequently. Seemingly thriving businesses take an overnight nosedive, while

on the other hand a new owner can bring in fresh ideas and build a rundown opportunity into a very profitable business.

We are told that 56 pubs are closing every month (more at [www.camra.org.uk](http://www.camra.org.uk)), and we have certainly lost a few on our patch - the Royal Hotel in Kingussie, the Kilcoy Arms, the Citadel and Haugh Bar in Inverness; to name but a few. A few new hosteleries have opened, the Caledonian in Inverness for example, and others have re-opened after it appeared all was lost - the Winking Owl in Aviemore was boarded up for a good while, and it is a very long time since anyone pulled a pint at the Lewiston Arms, soon to re-open as the Loch Ness Inn under the stewardship of Judith Fish.

We will continue to follow developments at the Heatherbrae with interest, and hopefully a new owner can be found who can turn things around, and who can repay the faith of the local community.

As with other businesses pubs will no doubt continue to close as our social habits change, but hopefully the community-serving village local will be around for a little while yet.



Morning Coffee and  
Afternoon Teas

Cairngorm Brewery  
Cask Ales

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Overlooking  
Rosemarkie Bay



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## Inns & Things

- At the **Scourie Hotel**, on the far north-west coast of Sutherland, hosts Patrick and Judy Price are offering accommodation & fishing specials during April. Some 25,000 acres of loch, river and hill loch fishing are held for guests at the hotel, with the use of 16 hotel boats. In March last year the GBG listed Scourie Hotel featured in Nick Hancock's Fishing School, shown on Scottish ITV.
- There has been some restructuring in the cellar of the **Glen Hotel** in Newtonmore, which means they can now store more casks of real ale. By summer there should be another handpump on the bar, making four real ales available, plus the one cider.
- The owners of the **Heatherbrae Hotel** at Nethybridge, currently closed (see article on page 30), and the owners of **Auchendean Hotel** at Dulnain Bridge have each applied for planning permission for change of use.
- The regularly changing selection of free snacks on offer at the **Clachnaharry Inn** on a Friday night has ranged from spicy

chicken wings to garlic mushrooms, and from onion bhajis to pizza portions heavy on the chilli! Never one to miss a trick, and with Burns Night falling on a Friday, landlord George Maclean duly served up plates of haggis, neaps and tatties to drinkers.

- The **Loch Ness Inn**, formerly the Lewiston Arms Hotel, was purchased early last year by a partnership which includes Judith Fish, owner of the award-winning Applecross Inn. The once handsome building has lain empty for a considerable time, and had fallen into a very poor state of repair, but in the past year has undergone a massive program of renovation and refurbishment.

We were able to speak to Judith, who told us that the Loch Ness Inn will not be open until the end of April. Carlsberg will be the main supplier, and will supply the cellar equipment, but the inn will be a free house. Judith plans to have two guest real ales (hopefully more at a later date).

There will be eleven bedrooms, all en-suite and all with good views of the surrounding



hills. There will be a seventy seat dining bar, with slate floors, called "The Lewiston", and a small public bar called "The Brewery".

There will also be an outdoor courtyard for eating. Judith is thinking along the 'Gastro-Pub' style of food. She is not looking at the same sort of style as the Applecross Inn, which specialises in seafood, but will try to incorporate as much seafood as possible.

Their website, [www.staylochness.co.uk](http://www.staylochness.co.uk), notes 'Our public bar will be a haven for locals, walkers and visitors alike with the background "music" provided by the sound of conversation and laughter'

*Sounds great and we are looking forward to enjoying a pint there in June when we visit for a Branch meeting. See you there! Ed.*

### News of Brews

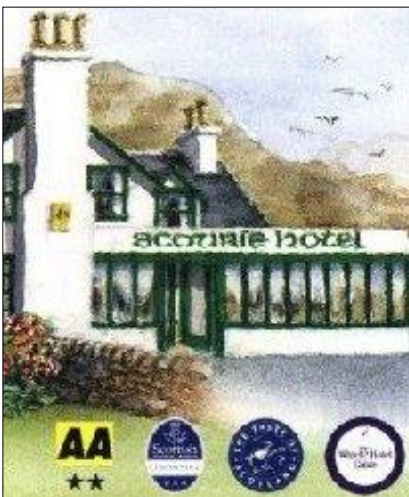
- Peter Martin has advertised his Far North Brewery two barrel plant in *What's Brewing*. Peter has not brewed since the Autumn, when he sold the Melvich Hotel, but the brewery has not closed and we understand he hopes to start brewing again soon.

- **Largest Ever Uplift of Dark Island from Orkney Brewery:** Over 500 casks of the Orkney Brewery's Dark Island were shipped to the Scottish mainland in Early March, the largest ever uplift of the award-winning ale.



The flagship brew was being distributed to J. D. Wetherspoon pubs across the country to feature as the chain's Beer of the Month. Norman Sinclair, managing director of the Orkney Brewery's parent company, Sinclair Breweries Ltd, said: "This is easily the biggest single order we've ever had for any of our beers, so it has been all hands to the pumps to get it ready to go out. Dark Island already has a great reputation, but the Wetherspoon's promotion will do much to help raise its profile even further."

He added: "It's a massive consignment but the fact we're able to supply such a quantity is proof that a brewery of our size can deliver on time for large scale customers. With plans to expand and develop the brewery underway, we look forward to securing more orders of this magnitude in the future."



## Scourie Hotel

Scourie, Sutherland, IV27 4SX  
 Tel: 01971 502396  
 FAX: 01971 502423  
[patrick@scourie-hotel.co.uk](mailto:patrick@scourie-hotel.co.uk)  
[www.scourie-hotel.co.uk](http://www.scourie-hotel.co.uk)



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Close to the historic 1717 packhorse bridge over the River Dulnain, and nestling in the very heart of the Scottish Highlands, the Cairn Hotel is the perfect base for exploring the Cairngorms, the Malt Whisky Trail, Loch Ness and Strathspey.

Walkers and cyclists are welcomed, and cyclists following Sustrans NCN Route 7, which goes past our front door, can take advantage of secure dry storage provided for bikes.

### **Out of Bounds**

The A9 between Inverness and Perth, once a long dry journey, is getting ever shorter. In addition to some fine real ale hostelries at all stops between Tomatin and Kingussie, once over Drumochter Pass, and over the boundary into Perthshire, thirsty non-drivers are also spoilt for (real ale) choice between Blair Atholl and Perth. A recent addition is the **Bankfoot Inn** where new owners Rab and Sue Wallace are serving real ales from the Inveralmond Brewery. The lounge bar is closed for a major refurbishment, but real ale is currently on tap in the small public bar.

*Early one Friday evening after work recently I was party to a conversation which hinged upon the number and names of the rivers crossed on a journey from Inverness to Perth. A fascinating subject - the answer is nine, I'm told, but we are not offering any prizes for naming the rivers. Of much more interest to real ale fans, we are sure, is the number of pubs serving real ale!*



*Answers to: [news@highlandcamra.org.uk](mailto:news@highlandcamra.org.uk)*

*The author of the most comprehensive list of hostelries along the A9 between Inverness and Perth, currently serving real ale, will be able to claim four free pints from the range on offer at our Marymas Fair bar in August.*

*The 'new' A9 has bypassed many towns and villages, and so we will take into account what would once have been (A9) roadside pubs and hotels such as the Glen Hotel in Newtonmore, the Cairngorm Hotel in Aviemore, and so on.*

*We are also happy for you to include real ale hostelries within a stone's throw such as the Old Bridge Inn in Aviemore and the Taybank in Dunkeld. To avoid debate we will put a 1/2 mile maximum on off-route pubs.*



*The start and finish of this real ale trail (Inverness to Perth) should be taken as the Kessock Bridge and Inveralmond roundabouts.*

*Closing date for entries is 1st June. "The judge's decision," as they say, "is final." Ed.*



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## **Six Appeal in Nairn**

Notes from a couple of December trips to the real ale outlets of Nairn:

First stop on our tour was the **Classroom**. The single hand-writted pump clip advertised Clottie Dumpling Ale. Two pints were ordered (£2.95 a pint), but were found to be vinegary and undrinkable. When asked how long the barrel had been on, we were told that it had been put on the week before, in time for Christmas. It would appear that December trade could not support even one real ale (Score zero points).

Next stop was at the **Claymore Hotel**, now under the same ownership as the Braeval Hotel, and Deuchars IPA was the only real ale on tap here. Although I find Deuchars very variable nowadays, three pints were ordered (£2.70 a pint) and all agreed it was good enough to merit a high score (4pts).

Unfortunately the beers have not been as good on subsequent visits.

Onward then to meet another friend at the **Havelock Hotel** where the three beers on tap were all from the Isle of Skye Brewery. A

tasting was had of the Grand and Nollaig Ales (both 3pts), and pints were had (£2 a pint) of the Red Cuillin (again 3pts). James the barman was very helpful. When asked why all the ales were from the same brewery he said that they had first contacted the Black Isle Brewery, in an effort to serve local ales, but they had not been able to provide a supply so far.

Two of our party then went on to the **Seaforth Club**. This is a members club which we had joined previously to ensure access to the two real ales regularly on tap. Firstly we tried the Flowers Bitter (£2.20 a pint). Is this a real ale we wondered, and who brews it nowadays? (Score 3pts). Next was the Old Speckled Hen in the new improved(?) 4.5% strength. This was exquisite and was awarded 5pts. This is the first time I have awarded this score in Nairn.

Our last stop on the tour was the Bandstand bar at the **Braeval Hotel**, meeting back up with the friends we had left behind to go to the Seaforth. Over two visits the beers on offer from the three taps (£2.50 a pint) were Orkney Red MacGregor (3pts), Greene King IPA (3pts), Flowers Bitter (3pts), Timothy Taylor Landlord (2pts - unusually low score but coming to the end of the barrel), Young's Bitter (4pts), and Old Speckled Hen (3pts). I expressed a little concern to Gordon the owner, to please not overdo the Greene King brands.

So that is it. The only outlet not tried was the **Invernairne Hotel**. I am not sure if the ale is seasonal at the Invernairne - there is only one tap - but in previous visits I have only found a cripplingly fruity Cairngorm Trade Winds.

So six hostelries to visit, which is certainly the most that have had real ale in the thirty years I have lived in Nairn. Cheers, and long may it last. DM.

*The 4.3% ABV Clottie Dumpling Ale is a new Winter seasonal offering from Orkney Brewery, described as a rich, nut-brown beer with a soft, sweet palate and hints of fruit and spices. Hopped with Bramling Cross, First Gold and Fuggles, it has been brewed using dried fruits, ginger and cinnamon to enhance the mouth feel and add warming spice notes.*



# *Blackfriars Highland Pub Great Beer*

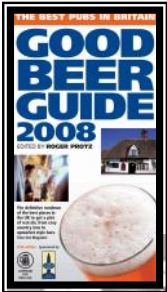


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Highlands & Western Isles Branch

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Thanks & regards,

John Proudfoot, Proprietor.

- We stayed at the **Sutherland Inn** in Brora last Monday night on the way back from Melvich. We were very impressed with the amount of work that has been done by Leon in the fabric of the building and in raising the overall standards. The food was well above average - massive portions - and the beer was in fine form too: Isle of Skye Brewery Red Cuillin and Young Pretender both rating a CAMRA NBSS score of 4. It's good to find an oasis like this so far north and I would recommend it to anyone travelling to/from there. Slainte, AM.

## Riverside Tavern Update

We hear from Scott Maclean that selling real ale using half cask containers is working well, and has enabled him to feature 20 different ales so far. Real ales, quality meals and live music is attracting regular customers.

## Heatherbrae Hotel Update

At the end of a long letter to the Strathspey & Badenoch Herald, published on 27<sup>th</sup> February, co-owner Irene Taylor concluded: Following the inconclusive CNPA meeting we have had to consider our options. The Heatherbrae has been unsuccessful as a hotel and has failed to find a commercial buyer.

As a result we have started the process of refurbishment. It may reopen as a 5\* Guest House (in competition with others B&Bs); it will not reopen with a public bar and restaurant. This falls within current legislation and does require any planning consent.

We hope you have enjoyed reading our Spring 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 Summer edition will be out late June/early July. *Cheers!*

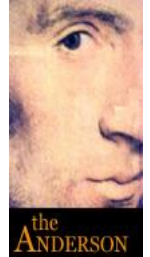




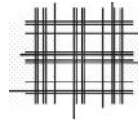
The and restaurant  
**GLEN** Hotel

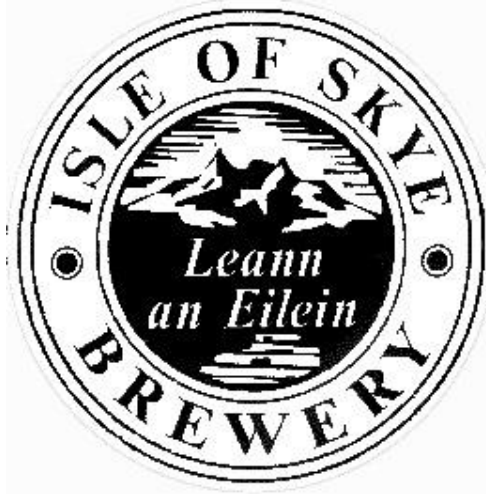


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