

What's Yours Then?

Highlands & Western Isles CAMRA
Free Newsletter

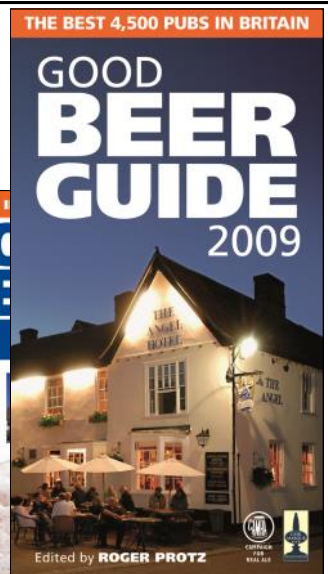


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**CAMPAIGN
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REAL ALE**

Autumn 2008

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

- > Good Beer Guide Launch
- > Socials & Outings - Reports
- > Updated Branch Diary
- > Focus on - Andy Will
- > Champion Beers - Update
- > 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.

The Winter edition **deadline** is 1st December, with publication in time for Christmas.

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
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There is a discount on placement of a fourth consecutive advert. Adverts are accepted on condition that inclusion does not necessarily imply an endorsement or approval of content.

We much prefer to receive artwork as a PDF or JPEG file, or Word document. We can help in preparing your advert if you wish.

3,500+ 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.

Good Beer Guide 2009

CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, has just launched the 36th edition of its annual Good Beer Guide featuring the best 4,500 real ale pubs in Britain according to the CAMRA membership.

The 2009 edition includes 1227 new pub entries (88 in Scotland) and 73 (1) new breweries. There are now 668 breweries brewing real ale in Britain. All are featured in the 2009 Good Beer Guide.

At the launch of GBG 2009 CAMRA is calling on the Government to introduce measures to prevent supermarkets selling alcohol as a loss leader. In response to the announcement that 36 pubs are closing every week, with a gloomy outlook for many more British pubs, CAMRA is urging the Government to introduce minimum pricing to reduce the gap between supermarket and pub prices.

Arran Brewery Saved

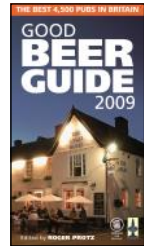
In our Summer edition we noted "that the award-winning Arran Brewery Company has called in the administrators after running into cashflow problems." We are now happy to report that, shortly after we went to press, it was announced that Marketing Management Services International (MMSI), headed by Scottish marketing guru Gerald Michalu, had bought the brewery for an undisclosed sum.

Thank-you..

To all who have contributed to the past twenty editions of this quarterly newsletter, and who have made it, for the most part, an enjoyable five years in the editorial hot seat.

I hope you will continue to send in your pub and brewery reports, and your tales of visits to the Highlands & Islands. Please continue to give our committee the support their hard work merits.

Thanks especially to our advertisers, and to all who help by distributing to the far corners of our massive Branch area. Yours, Ed (outgoing).



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A Trip West

A full minibus of local real ale enthusiasts left Inverness at the scheduled hour. There was low cloud and mist over the hills and a hint of sunshine, for our two-hour ride through the beautiful countryside to our first stop, a chicken shed in Plockton! Happily the chicken shed has been converted by Andy Will into the Plockton Brewery.



After retiring from the Navy and returning home Andy looked at turning his hobby into a business, and he applied to set up a 5-barrel plant - but was turned down by Scottish Water on the grounds that there was not enough water (in Plockton, would you believe?!!) for new businesses. Eventually Andy was able to start brewing with a one-barrel plant in April 2007, and he officially opened in June of that year. This is a very compact operation and our group was squeezed into two small rooms as Andy gave a talk and showed us how he brews. Despite the less than welcome interference of chancellor Alistair Darling in

the brewing industry, Andy is still very enthusiastic and hopes to brew the best beers he can. Beers are Crag's Ale (4.3%), Starboard IPA, (5.1% - summer only), and Dall Winter Sunshine (4.8% - winter). He delivers locally: Plockton Hotel and Plockton Inn serve his beers regularly, and the nearby Strathcarron Hotel offer his brews as a guest ale. He has just started bottling and his first batch was waiting for labels. Take-aways were bought by many of the group.

After our visit to the brewery we had time for a walkabout, and to have a drink and something to eat in this popular coastal village which is famed for the Hamish Macbeth TV series, palm trees, and highland cattle roaming freely around the streets. The Plockton Inn, busy with both drinkers and diners, had Deuchars IPA (3) and London Pride (4) available (Plockton Brewery Starboard went on sale on Thursday and was so popular that it finished the same evening).

Along the waterfront at the Plockton Hotel, again busy with drinkers and diners, we found Deuchars IPA (not sampled) and Starboard IPA (a slight haze but easily worth a CAMRA NBSS score of 4). Hops and fruit, especially grapefruit, dominate this strong 5.1% beer, but which could easily be mistaken for a 3.8% session ale. Local Highlands & Western Isles CAMRA Branch Chairman Eric Mills presented owner Tom Pearson and manager Andrew MacDonald with their South Skye & Lochalsh Pub-of-the-Year 2008 certificate.

Well done to all at the Plockton Hotel.



The rain started to fall as we boarded the minibus for the return journey along the A82. At Dornie we found that the Clachan Bar did not open until 5pm, so we carried on to the Kintail Lodge, which is in a spectacular location overlooking Loch Duich. We enjoyed an excellent pint of Isle of Skye Brewery Red Cuillin (4) which, although served on handpump, the cellar being a long distance from the bar there is a rare 'gas assist' pump connected. This allows the beer to be pulled through more easily and is no different than any other real ale (the gas does not mix with the beer). Time now for Sandy, our driver, to test his alpine driving skills (I hoped the brakes would work) as we turned off the main A82 at Shiel Bridge and headed over the Mam Ratagan pass for Glenelg. The Glenelg Inn is situated in a beautiful shoreline position with views over sea, hills and Skye. Two Isle of Skye Brewery beers were on tap, Young Pretender (4) and Black Cuillin (2, coming to end of cask). We headed back over the pass, and continued our journey along the A82, but not without a quick stop to allow the photographers in our party to take pictures of the Five Sisters, Loch Duich and Glen Shiel.

(Continued on page 16)



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Branch Diary (Meetings start at 7.30 pm)

19th - 27th Sept * 7th Loch Ness Beer Festival Benleva Hotel

Sat 20th Sept Hill Walk, Social, and Beer Festival Tasting Benleva Hotel

Meall Fuar-mhonaidh - described on walking.visitscotland.com as a relatively straightforward hill. A short day out, or even a pleasant way to spend a lovely summer evening; taking in fields, a beautiful birch wood and easy moorland walking, with terrific views. Distance: 8 kilometres, Height Gain: 420 metres.

26th - 28th Sept * Beer Festival Highlander Inn, Craiggellachie

26th - 28th Sept * 5th Inverness Beer Festival Castle Tavern

4pm, Fri 26th Sept Social & Tasting at Castle Tavern (Inverness Beer Festival)

1st Oct - 31st Mar CAMRA Members Offer The Anderson, Fortrose

Tue 7th Oct Committee Meeting The Anderson, Fortrose

16th - 19th Oct * 4th Ullapool Beer Festival Morefield Motel, Ullapool

Sat 18th Oct  Social/Outing/Tasting to the 4th Ullapool Beer Festival

(Depart Inverness Town House at 10:00 am, leaving Ullapool for return journey @ 18:00)

24th Oct - 1st Nov * OctoberFest Clachaig Inn, Glencoe

Tues 4th Nov **AGM** Castle Tavern, Inverness



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FOR
REAL ALE**

CAMRA Needs YOU!

Protect your pleasure!

Become actively involved with your local branch.

We need your help! Not a massive time commitment, just an hour or two will help our small committee in supporting the local publicans and brewers who together provide us with such a wonderful range of real ales to enjoy. See you at the AGM?

Tues 25th Nov Tasting Panel Meet Castle Tavern, Inverness

Tues 2nd Dec Committee Meeting Blackfriars, Inverness

Tues 16th Dec Annual Inverness Walkabout & Social (7pm meet at Blackfriars)

* 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

Contact

Gareth Hardman (Secretary & Branch Contact) - 01463 238462

Details

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



Eric Mills - Phone No. pending
chair@highlandcamra.org.uk

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How Green is Your Pint?

Some extracts from an article written for the Scotland on Sunday Spectrum magazine by Louisa Pearson, published on 6th July:

It was the recent introduction of the UK's first carbon-neutral beer that got me wondering about how green the average pint is. Adnams' East Green Bitter is produced using locally grown, high-yield barley and Boadicea hops which are aphid-resistant, limiting the use of pesticides. Recycled steam saves energy in the brewing process and the resulting 1p per bottle CO₂ burden is being offset by the company. But there's the first word that environmentally minded beer-lovers should be wary of: 'bottle'. According to a 2006 report by Defra, the production and transportation of packaging materials contribute one-third of the environmental impact of beer. Glass bottles are worse than cans, thanks to the energy required to make them (although if we got into the swing of returnable bottles like they do in Denmark and Finland, this would help). The greener option is to drink draught beer that has come from a

reusable barrel. But what about all those lovely bottled beers from Scottish microbreweries? Well, the fact that they're locally made and have fewer 'beer miles' does negate the CO₂ footprint, particularly if you recycle the bottles. And who can resist names like 'Skullsplitter' and 'Bitter & Twisted'?

So how much beer do you think the average Briton drinks? The answer would give you a hangover just thinking about it: 179 and a half pints per person, per annum. And so, on to the beer-making process. It takes six pints of water to create a pint of beer, and the barley and hops come with a chemical load unless you buy organic.

If these statistics are giving you a thirst, then a 'real', cask-conditioned ale should be the eco-drinker's first choice. It doesn't require pasteurising and chilling as keg beers do, plus if it's served at 'cellar' temperature, that's a saving on refrigeration costs (visit www.camra.org.uk for more).

Keg beers do get green points for coming in a barrel, but the energy bill for chilling, filtering and pasteurising, plus adding CO₂ to make it fizzy, detracts somewhat.

Lager scores even fewer points (a shame, seeing as its sales overtook those of beer in the early 1990s), because it requires more refrigeration. As for bottled lager imported from overseas, you and I should be weaning ourselves off it if we want to be green (although it might be worth checking the label as plenty of these exotic-sounding beers are brewed under licence in the UK).

So now its official - Real Ale drinkers are eco-warriors! As if our pleasure needed any such re-assurance! In our Summer 2008 edition we argued that "Cask ale is an environmentally-friendly product, mainly produced by local brewers, with fewer "food miles" than the multi-national brewers, and served in public houses and hotels which are at the heart of our communities. Enough said! Ed.

The Lade Inn at Kilmahog recently hosted the 2nd Trossachs Beer Festival, called 'The Green One'. Interesting to note their use of biodegradable & compostable glasses, which take 64 days to return to raw materials of nature!

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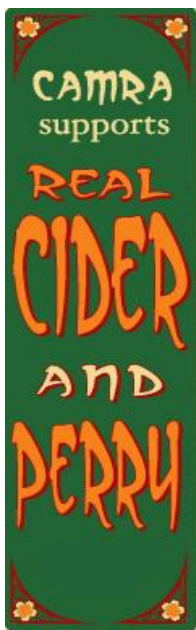


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Traditional Cider Matters

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 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

Dundonell Hotel - Westons Cider or Perry can usually be found here.

Badachro Inn - Westons Cider is served here

Altnacealgach Inn, nr Ledmore Junction - Mike & Kate are giving some thought to serving a real cider. Tel: 01854 666260

Argyll Hotel, Ullapool - New landlord Franner recently had 2 ciders on draught as part of their cider week! Tel: 01854 612422 or www.theargyllullapool.com

Clachig Inn, Glencoe - Thatchers Heritage Cider was found here in August.

Marymas Medieval Fair

In early August we ran a Real Ale bar at the Marymas Medieval Fair, an annual Inverness event which is organised by the charity Crossroads (Inverness) Care. The Fair began with a medieval dress parade from the Town House to the Northern Meeting Park, where the newly crowned Marymas Queen and her attendants were paraded around the ground. Gates were opened to the public at 11.00 and the morning drizzle soon cleared to give a fine, sunny afternoon.

Activities at the fair this year included carriage rides, paintball, archery, birds of prey, medieval encampment, fire engines, giant slide, bouncy castle, face painting, greasy pole, various craft marquees (woodturning, spinners, quilters, jewellery, lace, beekeepers, ceramics, paintings, etc.), BBQ, home baking and our Real Ale beer tent. Entertainment on the field was provided by country and Highland dancers, puppets, fiddlers, piping, falconry, jugglers, belly dancers, the Trybe (a drum and pipe group), and Battlescar medieval battle re-enactments.

The Real Ale tent is run by local CAMRA volunteers, mainly from the Committee, to promote CAMRA, the local Branch, and real ales brewed in the Highlands & Western Isles. Beers on offer this year were: Isle of Skye Hebridean Gold, which you voted Branch Beer of the Year (voting forms for 2009 will be in the Winter newsletter); Cairngorm Black Gold, which was first to be finished; Orkney Red MacGregor; Highland Scapa Special, CAMRA Champion Beer of Scotland; and Plockton Starboard IPA, first time in Inverness for a beer from this new Brewery.

It was good to see some familiar faces, but also some new ones enjoying the excellent beers on tap. By the close at 17.00 we had nearly run out of beer, which meant the day was a great success for us. Make a note in your diaries for next year's Marymas Fair, a super family day out, usually held on the nearest Saturday to the feast day of Mary (August 15th 2009).

Thanks to all who supported us and helped to make this another successful Marymas Fair.



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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.

Western Highlands

Hello, I am a regular reader of What's Yours Then? from afar, and I thought you might be interested in a few observations from a recent trip up your way.

Despite (or perhaps because of) being a native of Leicester, I am a huge fan of, and regular visitor to your part of the world.

Clearly the Western Highlands has improved beyond all recognition as regards real ale, especially in comparison to how it was 20 years ago when I first struggled up in a knackered (but not *that* old) Opel Manta GTE. I remember having to plan my trips with military precision in order to get a decent post hill drink. This usually meant the Clachaig Inn on the way up, and the Sligachan Hotel as the week's main watering hole.

Nothing wrong with that, but recent years have seen us able to also sample the delights of Glen Nevis, the Cairngorms & the Arrochar area (sometimes via the sleeper – terrific fun). This year we were able to revisit my old stamping ground of the Black Cuillin.

My observations in chronological order: -

Loch Fyne Brewery shop, Nr Inverary: Only dropped in due to the A82 being closed around Loch Lomond. Turned out to be a silver lining as we were able to purchase a mini-keg of the delicious Vital Spark close to its use by date for half price (£7.50 – Bargain !). A friendly bunch too – we shall make that detour again.

The Corran Inn & Four Seasons, Onich: We thought we'd have a change from the usual Clachaig for our stop off point and regretted it enormously. The Four Seasons was fine and I wish we had stayed there instead, but the Corran? Don't get me wrong - it's a lovely spot and the ale was in superb condition - I just thought that their policy of not giving residents any priority whatsoever as regards an evening meal stank. They were so busy we ended up going to bed hungry and irritable. The owner's grudging faux-apology the next morning made it even

worse. No matter, one votes with one's feet as they say.....

Cluanie Inn: Only one ale on when we visited (IoS Red Cuillin), but it was in good nick and they do a lovely latte as well (both taken Alfresco with that staggering view). Long may it last. Old Inn, Carlost: not as rough and ready as it was in the past certainly. Perhaps gone a little bit too much the other way. Not to say this isn't a remarkable little boozier, ale was excellent (Cuillin Pinnacle, IoS Black & Red Cuillin) and the food delicious if a wee bit poncey and pricey. Pub on the Pier and IoS Brewery shop, Uig: can't comment as they were both shut (at 3.50pm on a Monday). That's Monday for you I suppose.

Taigh Ailean Hotel, Portnalong: I didn't spot that you guys had recently removed it from your lists until we had already walked up there and found it dead and apparently ale free. It didn't look a particularly enticing little place anyway. An opportunity going spare there I fear – the Old Inn could certainly do with some competition !

Stein Inn: This place is always a pleasure and did not disappoint. What a spot, the only reason the Old Inn's beer garden isn't the best on Skye is because the Stein Inn's is! Cuillin Pinnacle and Deuchars IPA were spot on and the Loch Dunvegan crab sandwiches were sensational.

Sligachan Hotel: I was worried about my old favourite after reading some poor reports in this very newsletter. I needn't have worried – three of their own brews were on and they were all excellent (Skye Ale, Black Face and the now familiar Pinnacle). Even the décor has improved (notably the toilets). It brought back many happy memories of hours whiled away in this strangely relaxing big shed as the rain lashed outside. So impressed were we with the Pinnacle that I asked if they did mini-kegs but they do not as yet – something I hope that they are now considering.

All in all, we had a terrific week and are looking forward to our next visit, but where? These days the choice is pleasingly vast! *Liam and Jackie O'Driscoll. Leicester.*



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Good Beer Guide 2009

This year we have nominated a total of 34 Highlands & Western Isles pubs, our full GBG allocation, including ten new entries -

Bandstand Bar, Nairn - Family run hotel in a village green style setting overlooking the Moray Firth. A mixture of Scottish (typically from the Orkney breweries) and English ales are served. Their award-winning chef uses local ingredients to create a blend of imaginative dishes featuring seafood and traditional Scottish dishes.

Ben Nevis Inn - Traditional Scottish inn at the start of the Ben Nevis footpath, popular with walkers. The characterful 200 year old building, warmed by a wood burning stove, is an ideal setting for the regular live music. A daily changing and interesting menu offers exciting dishes to accompany the choice of three real ales from local breweries.

Bosville Hotel, Portree - Always a relaxing and friendly atmosphere in this tastefully decorated bar, which is close to the bus station and picturesque harbour. Two handpumps dispense beers from the local Isle of Skye and Cuillin Breweries. Tasty lunches are served in the bar, and evening meals in the adjoining award-winning restaurant.

Bothy Bar, Fort Augustus - In a busy tourist village beside the Caledonian Canal towpath and Great Glen Way, this attractive stone building has a varied history, including being used as a canal pay office, waiting room and exhibition centre. An Isle of Skye ale and the popular Deuchar's IPA are regularly on tap. Enjoy the cosy, friendly bar or large sunny conservatory.

Cairn Hotel, Carrbridge - An ideal base for exploring the Cairngorms National Park, or a welcome detour from the busy A9 trunk road, you will always be made welcome at this busy Highland hostelry. Popular with locals and visitors, particularly walkers and cyclists, who slake their thirst with local ales and enjoy the tasty bar meals which are served throughout the day.

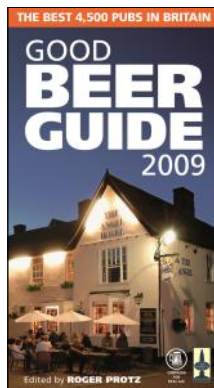
Castle Tavern, Inverness - Next to Inverness Castle and overlooking the River Ness at the end of the Great Glen Way, this busy city centre pub whas all the friendliness of a village local. Four handpumps dispense an Isle of Skye house beer, and guests are mostly from Scottish independents. Bar meals are served all day, and the first floor restaurant can seat 36 diners.

No 27, Inverness - Popular city centre bar/restaurant sporting two handpumps, usually with at least one beer from a Scottish micro. Busy at lunchtimes serving food from sandwiches to lighter bites, the comprehensive evening menu turns to more traditional main courses serving locally sourced ingredients including venison and steaks. Free Wi-Fi access.

Central Hotel, Thurso - Lively town centre hotel, offering something for the whole family: a downstairs sports bar (adults only), and a large upstairs bar and restaurant which caters for all the family, with a soft play area and bouncy castle. A choice of 3 real ales, and an inviting all day selection of home-cooked food (including a children's menu). Accommodation is available.

Dalfaber Country Club, Aviemore - A lively, friendly and informal atmosphere is guaranteed at this leisure club, where families are made most welcome. The popular Trade Winds, plus a second ale from the local Caringorm Brewery, are served in the lounge bar. Live entertainment most evenings, and a Sunday night pub quiz. Full leisure club facilities are available.

Plockton Hotel - Set amongst a row of traditional waterfront buildings in the heart of the beautiful village of Plockton, and boasting spectacular views over Loch Carron. Locally caught fish and shellfish take pride of place on the award-winning menu. Close to the Eilean Donan Castle, the Isle of Skye, and the mountains of Torridon, makes this an ideal base for exploring.



Congratulations to all, not just new entries, but also to the great pubs which continue to feature on the pages of this indispensable guide. Publicans should note that if you are listed in the *Good Beer Guide* you may use GBG artwork in adverts and on your website.

The Old Inn

Gairloch, Ross-shire, IV21 2BD

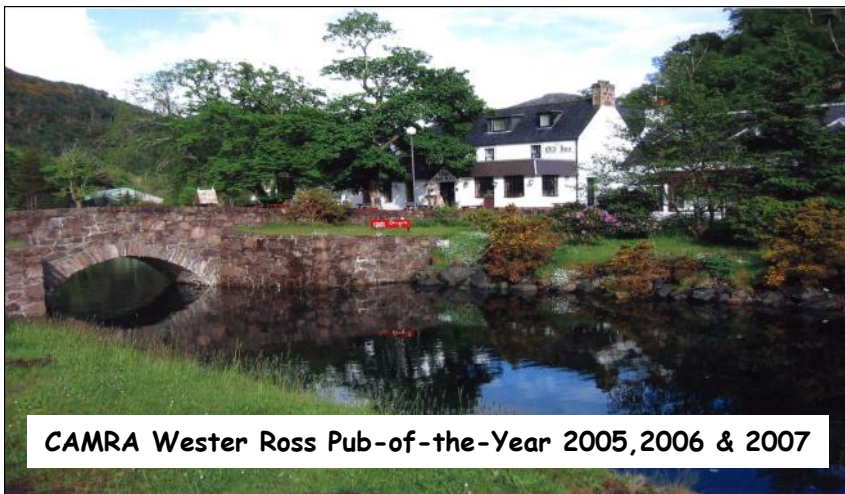
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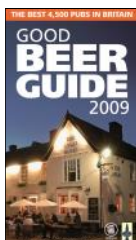
Abbot Ale Perfect Pub for Scotland 2005/06

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E-mail: enquiries@theoldinn.net



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

(Continued from page 4) Next stop was at the Cluanie Inn, in a wonderful position at the head of Glen Shiel, under two mountain ranges with 21 "Munros" (mountains exceeding 3,000 feet). One real ale on offer, Skyclight (4), a new Summer brew from the Isle of Skye Brewery.

Last stop of the day was at the popular Benleva Hotel in Drumnadrochit. Welcoming bowls of chips were provided, which were a much appreciated accompaniment for their excellent selection of beers: Fyne Ales Maverick (3) finished and was replaced with their Highlander (4); Deuchars IPA (not tasted); Atlas Latitude (4); Cairngorm Black Gold (4). Weston's Scrumpy was also available on handpump. Time was getting on and unfortunately we had buses to catch. Thanks to driver Sandy (from Fraser's Coaches of Munloch) for delivering us back safely in Inverness at various convenient places, after another very good day out.

Focus on Andy Will

Andy is the brewer, cleaner, bottler, orderer, deliverer, taster and owner of the Plockton Brewery, which is based in the west coast village of Plockton. Andy converted a chicken shed at the bottom of his garden into the brewery at the beginning of 2007. Andy's Plockton Starboard IPA was on tap in our beer tent at the Marymas Fair in August.



Q. Where are you originally from?

A. I was born in Dunfermline, but lived in Rosyth. My father worked in the Naval Dockyard there.

Q. Why did you settle in Plockton?

A. I first came to Plockton in the early 1980s when I was involved in torpedo trials for the Royal Navy. I was astonished by the beauty and the wonderful social life of the village and had always looked forward to returning. This was made easier when I married a Plockton girl!

Q. How were you introduced to real ale?

A. I was a student at the Royal Naval Engi-

neering College in Plymouth in the early 1970s when someone arranged for a cask of Wadworth's 6X to be sold in the Wardroom bar. I couldn't believe how tasty, and how unlike McEwan's Export, it was! I joined CAMRA immediately and have never visited the dark side of brewing since.

Q. What is your brewing background?

A. I had been a Home Brewer in the 1960s, shortly after the legislation permitting such hobbies was introduced, but used only kits at that time. I did move up to extract brewing, but subsequent life in the Royal Navy did not lend itself to carting "galvy" buckets and plastic fermenters around the world. The exception to this was a period in Saudi Arabia where alcohol was banned and I did dabble in home wine making.

Despite the alcohol ban, supermarkets very kindly placed bottles of grape juice, yeast, sugar and even Camden tablets in the same area. Some did not go to such lengths to get their alcohol fix – I knew of one ex-pat who bought bottles of alcohol-free beer, added yeast and sugar, re-sealed the bottles, and sometimes waited up to a day before opening them again and enjoying his pint of "beer"!

Q. Which/when - your first commercial brew?

A. I started brewing commercially in April 2007. My first beer was "Craggs Ale", a best bitter style beer.

Q. What is the best part of your work?

A. It would be wrong of me to deny that putting cheques into the bank is very satisfying, a view supported by my Bank Manager. However, equally satisfying is to see someone drinking my beer and





Blackfriars Highland Pub Great Beer

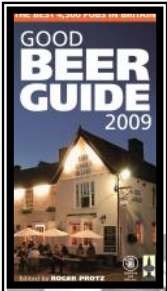


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hear them comment, "That's a nice pint". I also enjoy showing people around the brewery, but not at critical times in the brewing process!

Q. What is the worst part of your work?

A. Putting a cheque in the post to that nice Mr Darling every month

Q. Favourite real ales/beer styles?

A. I have always been fond of Best Bitter, probably because my formative drinking years were spent in England. However, I now enjoy IPA as well.

Q. What are your hobbies/interests?

A. I find brewing pretty all consuming and, as a consequence, my small boat, garden and wife have all been neglected over the past couple of years. I still maintain an interest in traditional music and play the fiddle in "The Ale Is Dear", a combo which plays in the Skye & Lochalsh area. The name is taken from a tune of the same name and has nothing to do with Beer Duty!

Q. The future for the Plockton Brewery?

A. I have been looking to increase the size of

my plant, but only in order to reduce the number of brewing days required to meet my current market. As the whole thing is a one man operation, if I can save a day in the brewhouse every week I can dedicate that time towards the boat, garden or wife (see above).

The Plockton Brewery was never intended to be a big business, though I had hoped (and so had Mrs Will) that I would have made more money than I have thus far. However, I have been very fortunate that Kenny Golan in the Plockton Inn and Tom Pearson in the Plockton Hotel have been so supportive, even though some minor glitches with deliveries have caused them some headaches. I would like to ensure in the future that such glitches do not recur.

Finally, I have started bottling my beer, only to discover that space requirements for bottling are far greater than I had ever anticipated. I therefore have plans to increase storage space in order to bottle more regularly, and in particular, in the winter.



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
Brockie's Lodge, Kiltarlity (S)
Benleva Hotel, Drumadrochit
Loch Ness Inn, Lewiston
Steading Bar & Restaurant, Kilmartin (TP)
Munlochy Hotel (TP)
The Anderson, Fortrose
Union Tavern, Fortrose
Plough Inn, Rosemarkie
Cromarty Arms (TP)
Royal Hotel, Cromarty (TP)
Culbokie Inn
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 (S)
Castle Hotel, Portmahomack
Edderton Inn, Edderton

TP - Served using top pressure

Inverness & District South

Blackfriars, Inverness
The Caledonian, Inverness
Castle Tavern, Inverness
The Corner Grill, Inverness
Nico's Bar, Glen Mhor Hotel, Inverness
Heathmount Hotel, Inverness
Hootananny, Inverness
Johnny Foxes, Inverness (TP)
Kings Highway, Inverness (*Wetherspoons*)
Masonic Club, Inverness

“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**

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Number 27, Inverness
 Phoenix Bar, Inverness
 Snowgoose, Inverness
 Tomatin Country Inn (S)
 Dores Inn
 Whitebridge Hotel, Loch Ness South
 Bothy, Fort Augustus
 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) (TP)
 Old Mill Inn, Brodie (A&NI)

Suie Hotel, Kinraig
 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)

Fort William & Lochaber

Jacobite Steam Train (S)
 Grog & Gruel, Fort William
 Ben Nevis Bar, Fort William
 Ben Nevis Hotel, Fort William
 Ben Nevis Inn, Fort William
 Cobbs at Nevisport, Fort William
 West End Hotel, 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

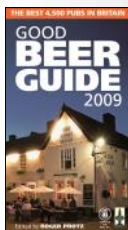
Aviemore & Cairngorms

Cairn Hotel, Carrbridge
 Muckrach Lodge Hotel, Dulnain Bridge
 Cairngorm Hotel, Aviemore
 Dalfaber Country Club, Aviemore
 Glenmore Lodge, Nr Aviemore
 Old Bridge Inn, Aviemore
 Winking Owl, Aviemore

Stein Inn

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Angus & Teresa McGhie,

Stein Inn, Waternish,

Isle of Skye, IV55 8GA

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angus.teresa@steininn.co.uk

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)
 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
 Argyll Hotel, Ullapool
 Ferry Boat Inn, Ullapool
 Morefield Motel, Ullapool
 Seaforth Bar & Restaurant, Ullapool

Caithness & Sutherland

Inchnadamph Hotel
 The Caberfeidh, Lochinver
 Scourie Hotel, Scourie
 Altnacealgach Inn, nr Ledmore Junction
 Burghfield House Hotel, Dornoch

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



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

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
 Dornie Hotel
 Loch Duich Hotel, Dornie
 Balmacara Hotel
 Haven Hotel, Plockton
 Plockton Hotel, Plockton
 Plockton Inn, Plockton
 Tingle Creek Hotel, Erbusaig



Kyle Hotel, Kyle of Lochalsh
 King Haakon Bar, Kyleakin
 Saucy Mary's Lodge, Kyleakin (S)
 Duisdale Hotel (S)
 Isle Ornsay Hotel
 Ardvasar Hotel
 Stables Restaurant, Armadale
 Broadford Hotel
 Claymore, Broadford
 Dunollie Hotel, Broadford
 Hebridean Hotel, Broadford
 Sconser Lodge Hotel
 Sligachan Hotel (S)
 Old Inn, Carbost

Flodigarry Hotel
 Duntulm Castle Hotel
 Greshornish Lodge
 Bosville Hotel, Portree
 Isles Inn, Portree
 Royal Hotel, Portree
 An Lanntair, Stornoway
 Clachan Bar, Stornoway
 Caladh Inn, Stornoway
 Carlton Tavern, Stornoway
 Harris Inn, Tarbert (S)
 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)
 Castlebar Bar, Isle of Barra



North Skye & Hebrides

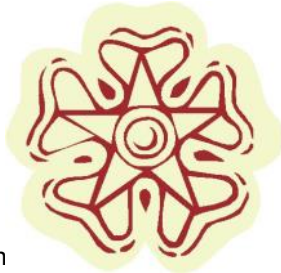
Isle of Raasay Hotel
 JJ's Bistro at Struan
 Dunvegan Hotel
 Stein Inn, Waternish
 Edinbane Hotel
 The Lodge at Edinbane
 Ferry Inn, Uig
 Uig Hotel, Uig
 Pub at the Pier, Uig

A total of 34 of the pubs listed here are in the *Good Beer Guide*. We are not allowed to indicate GBG entries, you will have to 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 2008

Orkney Brewery - Brewing commenced in March 1988, at the old schoolhouse in Sandwick on Orkney Mainland.

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.

Isle of Arran Brewery - Located close to Brodick Castle. Opened in late March 2000. Ales include Blonde, Dark, and Sunset.



Fyne Ales Brewery - Based in Argyll, at the head of Loch Fyne, brewing started on St Andrew's Day 2001. Ales include Piper's Gold and Maverick.



Cairngorm Brewery Company - Set up in late 2001 to market the beers of the Tomintoul & Aviemore breweries, which they own. Ales include Trade Winds, Wildcat, Stag, Highland IPA, and Black Gold. Seasonal ales are regularly brewed.

Hebridean Brewing Company - Based at Stornoway in the Outer Hebrides. Brewing since January 2002. Beers include Islander Strong Ale, Berserker Export Pale Ale, and Clansman Ale (first ale ever brewed in Stornoway),



Atlas Brewery - Has been brewing in one of the old Aluminium Smelter buildings at Kinlochleven since February 2002.

An Teallach Brewery - Moved to the family's croft, near Dundonnell, in March 2003. Ales include An Teallach Ale, and Crofter's Pale Ale.



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 - Located in the old Swannay cheese factory at Birsay, on Orkney Mainland. Ales include Scapa Special, Orkney Blast, Dark Munro.

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.

Sinclair Breweries Ltd - Set up in 2006 by restaurateur Norman Sinclair, who purchased the Orkney Brewery and Atlas Brewery in Kinlochleven. Ales regularly brewed include Three Sisters, Latitude, and Nimbus from Atlas; plus Dark



Island, Red MacGregor, Raven Ale, and Skull Splitter from Orkney.


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 - The first brew was produced on 1st April 2007. Crags Ale and Starboard IPA may usually be found in Plockton, and at other local outlets.

All 668 British breweries (43 in Scotland) are featured in the 2009 Good Beer Guide.

Not all of the breweries listed are in our branch area & Orkney are all in the Aberdeen, Northern Grampian & Isles area; Brewery Ayrshire & Islay Ales, Breweries Glasgow & Similarly for Highlands & Islands pubs listed in the GBG, pubs in Orkney and Shetland are submitted by the Aberdeen, Grampian & Northern Isles Branch.



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

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

Urban Myths of the Health Lobby

When it comes to discovering urban myths relating to alcohol, you don't have to look far these days. Close on the heels of the tabloid favourite: "24 Hour Opening", comes the equally hot number: "Binge Drinking". It has been shown that "24 Hour Opening" does not exist. The policy of 'flexible opening hours', which is what the new law is all about, has even been favoured by a number of Police Chiefs. Now the latest catchphrase used by the media to demonise alcohol is "Binge Drinking".

If you look up the word 'binge' in the dictionary you find such definitions as: a spree, a banquet, feast, a bout of indulgence. All sounding rather pleasant, and reminding me of many great occasions in my life such as weddings, family get-togethers, re-unions, parties, fairs, conferences, holidays and many nights out with friends.

I also read an article in the press recently that set out what was meant by "Binge Drinking". It seems that to some so-called 'health experts' it means a session of drinking in excess of three pints of beer or two glasses of wine. My eyebrows shot up as I gasped in incredulity! The actual listed levels of units defining 'binge drinking' are, according to another newspaper article, for men, more than eleven units, and seven units for women.

According to organisations such as Alcohol Concern, whoever they may be, myself and many of my friends, acquaintances and family have spent many, many occasions in our adult lives doing something called "binge drinking". And as for all those employed in heavy industry, quenching their thirsts at the end of a day spent working with raw materials, they must be "massive binge drinkers"! I wonder what they would say if you told them? Perhaps someone from Alcohol Concern should pop down and confront some workers outside, say, a steelworks, at about 5pm on a Friday afternoon, before they reach the pub. Better wear some body armour, just in case!

Here are a few statistics which may surprise readers. They are quoted from an excellent article by Ted Bruning, the ex-, but long time excellent, editor of CAMRA's 'What's Brewing'. He had an article published in The Morning Advertiser, a weekly trade paper to the drinks industry, on 3rd April, 2008.

Before you cry "Statistics, damned statistics", I will tell you that I have had some correspondence with Ted Bruning and he tells me that he has used three sources: The British Crime Survey's latest report on the Home Office website; the ONG Household Survey; and a National Statistical survey by a major company. Anyway ... catch these:

- The fall in violent crime of all degrees of severity since 1995: 45%
- The decrease in the number of men regularly drinking more than Government safe limits since 2000: 29% to 23%
- The decrease in the number of women regularly drinking more than the Government safe limits since 2000: 17% to 12%
- The fall in alcohol consumption among young men since 2000: 37%
- The fall in alcohol consumption among young women since 2000: 29%

So there you have a few facts, but, as Ted Bruning says, you can't argue with facts unless you have the moral high ground of the health lobbies.

He says that the concentration of drinking establishments in some city centres, surrounded by police, constantly surveyed by CCTV cameras, often visited by makers of cheap TV clipshows, presents a problem. No-one really knows what went on in the past, or what goes on in more remote places.

Even the general public – probably including you, dear reader – seem to believe that "binge drinking" is a growing problem. All I can say is look again at the statistics. Ted's contention is that we are being brainwashed by the huge health lobby who put pressure after pressure on their one and only provider of income – the Government. The point is that the whole drinks industry is under siege from a disastrous budget, a bad press, 'health experts' telling them what size wine glasses to use, and health lobbyists who tell lies, sorry, twist the truth, to protect their incomes.

Beware these Health Experts, they could be extremely bad for your health, and they are out to wreck our national drinks industry. What a pity that CAMRA seems to be so ineffective when tackling these multi assaults on our pubs, while footling on about full pints. At the rate we're going the only full pint you will see in many places is the one you pour from a bottle in your own house. However, draw the curtains first ... there just might be a 'health expert' peeping through the window.

Geoff Clifford

(Grateful thanks to Ted Bruning and The Morning Advertiser)

*Reproduced in full from the Summer 2008 edition of **Beer on Tap**, Newsletter of the North Oxfordshire Branch of CAMRA, with the kind permission of the author Geoff Clifford, and beer on Tap editor Keith Rigley.*

*Ye Olde Reine Deer Inn in Banbury is a regular Summer haunt - the Stilton ploughman's lunch is a must, washed down with the wonderful Hook Norton ales after a leisurely canal-side walk. The Urban Myths article immediately caught my eye while browsing through a copy of **Beer on Tap** picked up in the bar, and I decided there and then to seek permission to copy in What's Yours Then. Few, if any, have better articulated the flimsy foundations upon which the growing 'Health Lobby' is being built. 'Footling on about full pints' Quite so, we (CAMRA) have spent much energy and gained little ground. Time to regroup.*

Statement of Aims (from CAMRA 2012 - A Strategic Campaigning Framework 2008-2012 - April 2008)

- ◆ Campaign for greater appreciation of traditional beers, ciders and perries and the public house as part of national heritage and culture
- ◆ Support the public house as a focus of community life
- ◆ Promote quality, choice and value for money
- ◆ Protect and improve consumer rights

If that is another way of saying support our independent brewers and our publicans, fight for choice - the right of the licensee to serve the beers of his/her choice - then fine. Hopefully in 2012 we can still find a local hostelry in which to enjoy real ales from near and/or afar. Ed.



Claddach Kirkibost (A865)
Isle of North Uist
Outer Hebrides
Telephone: 01876 580 653
Isle of Skye ales and beer
Home cooked pub food
Dogs and Hounds welcome

Real Ale in Remote Scotland

Fern and myself have been taking our holidays in Scotland for over 25 years. On our early visits the beer situation was grim, very grim. I reckon that there was no real ale in 90% of the country in the early 1980's. Keg Tenants and McEwen's were the top dogs – hence our affection for cans of Sweetheart Stout – but that's another story.

The real ale situation has improved greatly over the years and there are now many great beers available from the very able Scottish brewers. The Scots are fervent now about their real ale and are prepared to provide it in some very unusual places. We discovered this on our most recent visit (July 2008) when we were fortunate enough to visit Corroul station and spend a day walking in the hills surrounding this remote outpost of the UK rail network.

It is the highest station in the UK, standing at 1,350 feet above sea level. It is accessible only by rail, or by walking in from Rannoch (11 miles) or Tulloch (15 miles). The limited train service enabled us to reach Corroul Halt just before midday. This gave us the prospect of a reasonable day's walking before catching the

early evening train back to Rannoch. We completed our walk to Beinn na Lap, known as the easiest Munro (a Scottish mountain over 3,000 feet – incredibly there are 284 of them) and had fabulous views across to Ben Nevis and the Mamore range of hills.

On our return to the station we called in to the Station Tea Rooms for a well deserved cuppa and piece of cake. We weren't expecting much as we entered the tearoom but we were amazed at how well laid out and comfortable it was. As soon as we walked in we had a good feeling about the place and a further surprise followed when we saw the extensive range of food that was available. We had the venison bolognese which was very good. We were admiring the range of bottled beers available when we were astounded to see that two hand pumps were in operation on the counter! Both beers, Stag and Trade Winds, were from the Cairngorm brewery. I tried the Stag, a darkish brew with plenty of malt flavour to it - it was superb. We could hardly believe it; a first class pint being served in a 'tearoom', in a place that you can only get to by train or by walking a minimum of 11 miles – incredible!

Beth, who runs the establishment with her partner, explained that Cairngorm Brewery had set the handpumps up three weeks earlier and were keen to support her in the sale of real ale. They have also called one of their bottled beers Corroul after this wonderful part of the world. Three cheers for Cairngorm Brewery!!

Being in such a remote place means that the meals are not cheap but the products are, to a great extent, locally sourced and are of a high quality. The beer at £3.00 a pint for a 4.1% beer is not outrageous, bearing in mind the location. Hopefully the passing trade will be enough to keep the cask ale going. It's brave of them to try it and they deserve success because the beer was so well kept and Beth was so enthusiastic about it. They have four bedrooms, there is a bunkhouse close by, and a Youth Hostel half a mile away, both used by walkers and climbers.

If you are in the Fort William area take a day out on the West Highland Line and call in at the Corroul Tea Room. Best to check they are open (usually not Weds) - Tel 01397 732236 or visit their website. Cheers! JR, Rugby CAMRA.



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A Small Taste of the Hudson Valley

This year my wife and I were lucky to arrange a house exchange with a couple who lived in New Paltz, a lively town in the Hudson Valley 90 miles north of New York. This was our third exchange to the States and each time I do meticulous research using a very useful tool called beermapping.com. This great website shows you, with maps, the location of any breweries, pubs or liquor stores in the vicinity when you tap in your post code or zip code. After two quite dry trips, with outlets always a drive away, you can imagine my delight when I found a brewpub within the same zip code as where we were staying, which turned out to be a 10 minute walk away. The Gilded Otter has a seven barrel brew length, with the mash tun and kettle situated behind the bar with fermenting vessels in the pub itself. From the fermenters the beer is cold filtered and sent to serving tanks which supply the taps on the bar. None of the brews are cask-conditioned, and are served under CO₂, but they have never been pasteurised and all were full flavoured and full bodied.

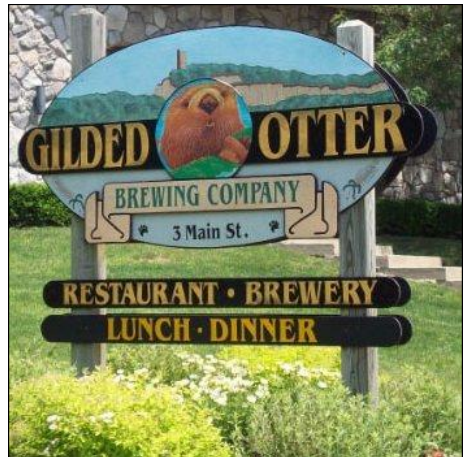
There was also a fantastic range of eight beers on at any one time covering most styles. The weakest was a 3.8% American lager brewed to be similar to Pilsner and matched the style well, being light and refreshing. A 4.2% Crimson lager brewed with caramel malt produced a beer closer to a Scottish 80 shilling. There were two IPAs which, as you would expect in the USA, were very hoppy but the weaker one at 5.2% had more hop flavour than the 5.7% one. My favourite brew was a Dusseldorf Altbier, at 4.2%, beautifully balanced toasted biscuit malt with plenty of hop character and bitterness.

There was also a 5.5% stout, a 3.9% summer lager brewed with blueberries which were also served in the bottom of the glass!! I found this a strange brew, certainly fruity in the aroma but a strange bergamot flavour, a bit like Earl Grey tea. Next a seasonal Belgian Spring Wit at 4.8% brewed very much in the style of a Belgian wheat beer, followed by a German Hefeweizen which had all the ingredients imported from Germany.

The head brewer Darren Currier certainly brews some great tasting beers and, without that harshness that CO₂ gives to the beers, I am sure as cask versions would stand their ground against our own cask beers.

I did find another brewpub at the Hyde Park Brewing Company, close to former president Franklin D Roosevelt's home. This brewpub again had most of the brewing equipment on show and brewed a similar number and range to the Gilded Otter, but with one major difference - they were nowhere near as good. Still full flavoured and full bodied but all slightly out on taste. Their stout was almost sour tasting and their other brews didn't really inspire, the best ones being their Rough Rider Red Lager (similar to the Otter's Crimson) and S.O.B. Special Old Bitter which was brewed to be like a hoppy English Bitter. Both pubs sold a taster serving so you could try each beer in a sample glass.

Around 40 minutes drive away I found Keegan Ales, a 20bbl microbrewery based in Kingston. Head brewer Tommy Keegan was in when I called and very kindly gave me a tour. Although not brewing on the day I visited they would double brew on brewing days as they used 40bbl fermenters and conditioning tanks. Bottling was done on site using an automatic filler, capper and labelling machine. They had 3 main beers, Old Capital which is a light golden ale crisp and refreshing, with fine biscuit malt flavours, Mothers Milk, a smooth and creamy stout with a hint





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of chocolate and Hurricane Kitty, an IPA which is named after Tommy's grandmother and certainly doesn't cheat on the hops!! There had recently been a bar and restaurant added to the brewery, creating it's own brewery tap where the beers go down very well with the locals and at a price which was somewhat cheaper than the brewpubs. I took advantage of this and purchased 2 "growlers" (4 US pint takeouts) of Tommy's excellent ales.

I commented on the quality of all the ales I had tried and that they had all been made with good amounts of quality ingredients. Tommy said that the only way brewpubs and micros could make a stand against the brewing giants was by giving beer drinkers quality tasty brews. (*As opposed to the tasteless pap the giants produce - Ed*). He said an astonishing one in every two pints of beer drunk in the US is produced by Anheuser-Busch, brewers of Budweiser, etc., a very sad statistic.

On the up side however, whenever I popped in for a beer, mostly I only found micros on tap and this was coupled with an excellent choice of bottled micro brews. Both brewpubs had popular restaurants but it was encouraging to see that most people were there for the beers.

There were also two free-sheet publications available in the brewpubs I visited. Ale Street News and Yankee Brew News were both packed full of news and facts about the buoyant craft brewing market. Now I know Americans are not too good on irony, but I had to chuckle that the back cover on both publications carried full page ads for Budweiser! What better way could there be to get funds to publish a free newspaper that champions craft brewing!! Inside it even pokes fun at A-B and their brews!

All in all a great two weeks both beer wise and holiday wise. Thanks to Tommy Keegan at Keegan ales for his time & info and Tony at the Gilded Otter for the warm welcome and beer chats and, last but not least, to the wife for allowing me so many happy beer hours - but I'm sure two shopping trips to New York City had something to do with that! Cheers, GNH.



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E-Ale

- Has The Phoenix Risen from the Ashes??

I had long since written off the Phoenix as a pub to enjoy my real ale, gradually reducing my visits from twice a week to once every month or three. Imagine my surprise then last Friday when I called in and enjoyed the best pint of Dark Island ever. I had to give it a 5. So please put this once popular real ale mecca of Inverness back on your visiting list, just to check that this is not just a blip in their recent performance. Cheers, WAT.

- Gareth, a belated thanks for the newsletter, which was interesting and very helpful, especially the Real Ale pub listings. Our tour of Scotland started in the south west at the Isle of Whithorn and Newton Stewart where we tried beers from Sulwath, Houston and Kelburn, which was probably the pick of the bunch. Our next port of call was into Argyll where I tried more Houston, Caledonian and beers from the Oyster Brewery at Easedale. En route to the Highlands we tried Glenfinnan Gold at the Clachaig Inn. We reached

our destination, the Plockton Hotel, where we stayed two nights. Both Isle of Skye beers were excellent. The Plockton Inn had Directors and Youngs Bitter, and a very good atmosphere when the local musicians got together. The pump clip at the Haven was turned round both days we were there, so I presumed there was no ale on offer. Unfortunately there was nothing to be seen from the Plockton Brewery. Our brief trip to Skye was rewarding as the weather was good. I tried Cuillin Ales at the Sligachan Hotel, o.k, but not exceptional, then after a boat trip from Portree where we saw sea eagles, we tried two more Skye beers, Red Cuillin and McNabs at McNabs, both good but a tad expensive. A very good holiday rounded off by beers from Inveralmond and Fyne on the way home. Cheers, Barry.

- I had an overnight stay in the Fort William area mid July and managed to pop in to the Stronlossit Inn at Roy Bridge on the way back to Inverness. This GBG-listed Inn has beautiful, well-kept landscaped gardens. It was good to find out that it wasn't just the gardens that were well-kept, as the three beers from local breweries, Cairngorm IPA, Highland St Magnus and Orkney Dark Island were all in excellent form. A rare treat to see three Highland ales on together.

A rare treat indeed! Ed.

- On Saturday, we drove over to Fort William to meet our daughter who had flown up from Cornwall to do the 3 Peaks Challenge. Naturally, the Grog and Gruel was on the agenda. They were advertising their beer festival: they had seven handpumps on, with every one featuring a Scottish ale - An Teallach, Glenfinnan Gold, Raven, Latitude, Wayfarer, Caley 80/-, and Red Smiddy – the only one we didn't sample was Caley 80/-, but the rest were excellent.

We also paid a visit to the Ben Nevis Inn and were pleasantly surprised to find three Scottish ale on there as well – Northern Light, Wayfarer and Latitude. It was a truly beautiful day and we joined the throngs outside watching those on the busy trail up the mountain. Checked out the Ben Nevis Hotel in the town and it, too, had three

Scottish ales on – Caley 80/-, Deuchar's and one other I can't remember.

Cheers, Ian R.S. CAMRA Aberdeen.

Ian sent us copies of posters from the Grog & Gruel, and a photo of him and his partner enjoying a beer in the sunshine outside the Ben Nevis Inn, which sadly we do not have space to include. Thanks for the report, Ed.

Inns & Things

- Good news - the Taigh Ailean Hotel at Portnalong (Isle of Skye) has been taken over - the previous owner was declared bankrupt last year and it lay empty for a while. It now belongs to Don MacLeod and partner Jan Lewis. Both are keen to re-establish cask ale and so the Isle of Skye Brewery have recently carried out an installation.
- Thanks to John from Manchester (Rochdale, Oldham & Bury Branch) who telephoned in July to say that the Castlebay Bar on the Isle of Barra now stocks real ale, in summer at least. John is a regular visitor to Barra, but had never found real ale there before.

Ales are from the Hebridean Brewery, either Clansman or Seaforth, and John thought a 'good 3' on the CAMRA NBSS was merited.

- Congratulations to Del & Janette at the Blackfriars for passing their first follow up visit by Cask Marque with flying colours. These unannounced visits are used by Cask Marque to check on continued beer quality from Cask Marque holders. The beers are assessed on temperature, appearance, aroma and taste and on this visit scored 97/100 with 3 of the 5 beers getting top marks - Well done to them! Big G.
- Just to let you know that we have been stocking Cairngorm Tradewinds (served using top pressure) for a few weeks now. I am pleased to report that this has been selling well so hopefully we will be able to stock it throughout the year.

I would appreciate if you would be kind enough to include us in your Newsletter in the Inverness & District North section.

It might also be of interest to your readers to know that we have a couple of



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music sessions each month - on the 2nd and last Friday of the month - we normally kick off around 8.30pm and go on until late. Anyone is welcome to come along and play any instrument, sing or recite (regardless of standard!) or just to listen. Many thanks, Neil Campbell, Royal Hotel, Cromarty.

- Dear Ed – I've made it! I am now deeply ensconced in Nairn but far too busy with work! I've had a chance to visit a few more pubs and I've updated the information I sent you on Wheelchair Access to Highland Pubs - *please see our website, Ed.*

I am finding that my most reliable pub is the Bandstand Bar at the Braeval Hotel, Nairn (despite the lack of accessible loo). I was treated to a fantastic Bitter and Twisted in early August – a 4.5 on the CAMRA scale (though if forced to round the number it would definitely be a 5!). I then went to the Claymore House Hotel to eat (and use the loo) and had two pints of Orkney Best – each one a 4. Excellent!

By the way – on my recent three visits to the Havelock all the pumps were off (so I turned around each time and left!). The landlord was very keen to show how he has made the entrance to the door more accessible and assured me that the lack of ale was bad timing on my count. I'm looking forward to my next visit to check.

Good to be back and I hope to meet some of you soon. Seamus McArdle, Nairn

Corrou Halt

I have just returned from a walking trip to Elphin and the Loch Ossian Youth Hostel. I don't intend to give you a beer blow by blow account, but to mention 2 or 3 points. I went to the Inchnadamph Hotel and was saddened to see it a shadow of its former self.

There were two beers on handpumps - I tried the An Teallach Ale which was virtually undrinkable. I did force it down so I must score it 1, but I suspect from the lack of clientele that a cask goes off before it is drunk. I was also a little disappointed in my favourite pub in the world - Ferry Boat Inn, Ullapool - which seemed to lack atmosphere and customers. Probably due to the credit crunch. All week the only beers were Caley 80/- and Deuchars

IPA. Both 5 but I am used to more variety.

On the other hand the Summer Isles Hotel at Achiltibuie had three beers. One was English I think but the two I tried were Isle of Skye Red Cuillin (5) and Hebridean Gold (5). In my view this is an extremely serious candidate for the Good Beer Guide, especially considering the dearth of entries in this part of your region.

However, my main reason for writing is to ask whether you know that the landlady in the tearoom/guesthouse at Corrou Halt on the Glasgow-Fort William railway keeps Cairngorm Trade Winds and Stag on handpumps?

She arranges with the brewery to drop her casks on the Spean Bridge-Newtonmore road, and she drives 16 miles along estate roads to collect them and 16 miles back. She deserves the utmost publicity via CAMRA locally and nationally. I only discovered all this as I was leaving, so only had a pint of STAG (5).

I suggest you take the train there as a matter of urgency. Chris Newbery, Crosby, Liverpool.

Greetings again from Yorkshire

Our Pub Wombling friends from Yorkshire visited the Highlands in June and sent us a detailed report on their travels. On this visit time was spent outside our Branch area, or exploring castles, and sadly we do not have space for their full story, but comments on their night in Applecross cannot be left out:

We set out again, this time for Applecross in Wester Ross where we were to spend the night. We arrived at around six thirty and after a freshen up went into the Applecross Inn where we had a wonderful pint of Isle of Skye's Red Cuillin. I'd like to give it a five, but will settle for a four plus. With our ale we had a wonderful meal and, considering that the place was packed to the rafters, we were served with grace, charm, politeness, and with speed. What a memorable visit. We stayed close-by on the sands until early morning..

Nothing less than we have come to expect at this GBG listed hostelry!

Our friends suggested we pay a visit to their neck of the woods, to the Fox and Goose Inn at Hebden Bridge where Simon and his team are always ready with a warm welcome.

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Update on Champion Beer of Britain (CBOB) Area Competitions Scotland & Northern Ireland (S&NI).

Please find below a table containing the results of the Area competitions so far and the further competitions scheduled for Beer Festivals in the near future.

The first place beers in each category will go forward to the relevant competition - either Champion Beer of Britain (CBOB)/Real Ale in a Bottle competitions (both at Earl's Court) in 2009, or Champion Winter Beer of Britain (CWBOB) (venue to be confirmed) in 2010.

For queries about either the selection or judging processes:

Contact Ian Brocklebank, SNIB CBOB Area Co-ordinator - Ian.brocklebank@camra.org.uk

Category	Position	Beer	Venue
Mild	Champion =2 =2	Highland Dark Munro Tryst Brockville Dark Hebridean Celtic Black	Scottish Real Ale Festival
Bitter	Champion 2 3	Orkney Raven Inveralmond Independence Skye Skylight	Scottish Real Ale Festival
Best Bitter	Champion 2 3	Orkney Red McGregor Cairngorm Nessies Monster Mash Stewart Copper Cascade	Paisley Beer Festival
Strong Bitter	Champion 2 3	Inveralmond Lia Fail TSA William Wallace Cairngorm Wild Cat	Paisley Ale Festival
Stout/ Porter	Champion 2 3	Sulwath Black Galloway Orkney Dragonhead Stout TSA Glencoe Organic Wild Oats Stout	Scottish Real Ale Festival
Old Ale/ Strong Mild	<i>Competition still to be held</i>		Alloa October Fest
Barley Wine	Champion 2 3	Orkney Skullsplitter Hebridean Berserker Broughton Old Jock	Scottish Real Ale Festival
Golden Ale	<i>Competition still to be held</i>		Troon Beer Festival
Speciality	Champion 2 3	Tryst Zetland Wheatbier Cairngorm Trade Winds Arran Blonde	Aberdeen Beer Festival
Real Ale in a Bottle	<i>Competition still to be held</i>		Troon Beer Festival

Well done to local brewers: I make that 4 out of 7 champions judged to date, 5 out of 7 second places, and 2 out of 7 thirds. In Olympic terms, 11 medals from a possible 21. So far Highlands & Western Isles brewers have picked up more top three places than the rest of Scotland added together! Interesting to note that 8 of these 11 are brewed on an island, including 5 from Orkney! Ed.

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Highlands & Western Isles Branch

Newsletters

Hi there, Picked up a copy of your very informative newsletter whilst spending an hour in the Blackfriars Highland Pub waiting for the 12:40 to Edinburgh, and thence back to Nottingham where I now live. (10 hour epic train journey). How things have changed in Scotland since I was at University in Glasgow in 1968 when you could only get 'heavy', 'export' or 'lager' on a crawl down Byres Road. The current list of brewers and their outlets is refreshing to see (no pun intended). Of these Orkney is occasionally available in the English Midlands, as is Atlas but Deuchars IPA is pretty much a national brand now and is a good seller. I've photographed the two local newsletters hereabouts along with yours for your interest and would be more than happy to send these on to you if you want. Thanks again for a good read. Regards, JW.

An e-mail dialogue with JW followed, as did an exchange of newsletters -

Following my trip to Inverness I had to drive from Glasgow to Harris in the Hebrides a week later to visit my young brother who has abandoned his job 'repping' and bought a croft. On the way I stopped off at the Clachaig in Glencoe for dinner where the following were on tap. Warlock Stout, St Peters Well, Texas, Marylins Delight - all from Houston, and Drifters IPA from Hebridean. Thatchers Heritage cider also on draught. I allowed myself one pint only and had the Marylins Delight (may be also known as Blonde Bombshell perhaps?) which was OK and to my taste. Later on after leaving the car at Uig pier and crossing over on Calmac, my brother and I stopped off at the Harris Inn in Tarbert where Hebridean Clansman was available. This is a very quaffable beer and in top form. Very moreish ! The previous evening I had hoped to get a late drink at the Ferry Inn in Uig, but they were closing up at 1020 !?! . Two handpumps on the bar but didn't get a chance to see what they were. Best wishes, JW.

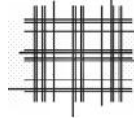
We hope you have enjoyed reading our Autmn newsletter. Unless you intend to keep it for some reason, please **DO NOT** throw it away. Why not pass it on to a friend, or just leave it in a pub somewhere for others to read. Newsletters are often found many miles from source! The Winter edition will be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



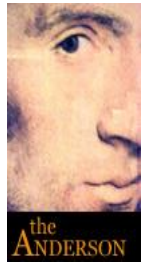
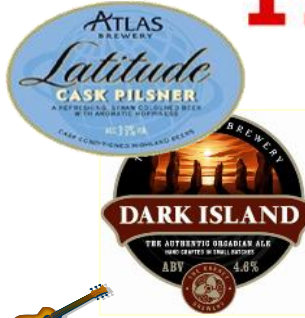
Cheers!



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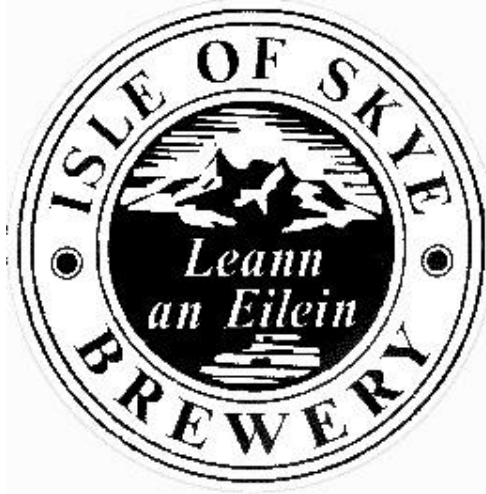


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