

# What's Yours Then?

## Highlands & Western Isles CAMRA **Free** Newsletter



*Contains Full List of Highlands & Western Isles Real Ale Outlets*



*Another blow from the Chancellor's axe!  
For a 4.2% ABV cask of beer:*

The shadow continues to loom over the drinks industry

**Reduction in VAT = £1.50**  
**Increase in Duty = £2.00**  
**Net Increase = 50 pence**

*On approximate trade price*

*Hardly fiscally-neutral!  
Not exactly helping small businesses!  
Inevitably the publican must pass the increase on to the consumer -  
**You!***



# Winter 2008



**CAMPAIGN  
FOR  
REAL ALE**

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

- > Pubs-of-the-Year - *Time to Vote!*
- > Champion Beers - *Time to Vote!*
- > Socials & Outings - Reports
- > Updated Branch Diary
- > Focus on - Andy Ribben
- > Your Letters and E-mails
- > 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 Spring edition **deadline** is 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2009, with publication in time for Easter.

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

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

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

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

**3,500+ 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.

## AGM Matters

A small turnout of local members enjoyed the generous hospitality on offer at the Castle Tavern for our AGM in November.

Reports from the Chairman and Secretary highlighted the hard work carried out by our small committee in representing and supporting outlets and breweries during a difficult year for the licensed trade. A huge rise in excise duty, fuel, hops, grains and other raw materials, followed by a recession, threatens to push brewers and publicans to the wire.

Branch accounts are in good order, thanks to a successful Real Ale Bar at the Marymas Fayre and newsletter advertising revenue. We have used funds to increase our newsletter circulation and to subsidise outings.

We have enjoyed a very full social calendar, with outings to Cairngorm, Plockton and the Isle of Skye Breweries; and to the Ullapool Beer Festival. We have also visited the Loch Ness, Aviemore, and Inverness Beer Festivals. Brewery outings included as many visits to real ale outlets along the way as time would allow, and we also managed to fit in a hill walk en route to the Loch Ness festival.

We have continued to visit as many real ale pubs as possible for our committee, branch, and tasting panel meetings.

Tasting panel meetings, on the last Tuesday of each month, have been well attended and have resulted in a steady flow of tasting cards.

The local membership has continued to grow, as the national membership edges ever closer to the magic 100,000 mark.

The outgoing committee was returned to office; the only exception being membership secretary John Holloway who has stood down due to family commitments. Seamus McArdle has taken over this key post.

*Our small committee needs your help and support! A little time only, now and then, to help support our publicans and brewers. Ed.*

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

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### 2008 SPECIALS



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Apr/May



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Available  
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Available  
Sept



Available  
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[www.cairngormbrewery.com](http://www.cairngormbrewery.com)

## A Day Trip to the Misty Isle

A record turnout meant a bigger bus, and an early nine o'clock departure from Inverness Town House. After pick-ups at Abriachan, Drumnadrochit and Sligachan a total of 24 passengers alighted outside the Old Inn in Carbost. Close to the Talisker Distillery the Old Inn is in a wonderful position on the seashore, with a patio area overlooking Loch Harport and the Cuillins. This friendly bar offered two beers; unfortunately Glamaig, a new 5% brew from the Cuillin Brewery, was very vinegary and was taken off; Inn Ale, again brewed by Cuillin, was a 4.6% brown ale, (most awarded it a CAMRA NBSS score of 4).

Our journey continued northwards in the mist and drizzle as the island lived up to its name. Low cloud hid the hilltops, leaving little of note in the reflections on the still water of the sea lochs. We took the single track road out along the Waternish peninsular to the very popular 18<sup>th</sup> century Stein Inn, which nestles on the pretty Loch Bay waterfront. As usual there was a choice of three real ales on tap today: Deuchars IPA (4), Cuillin's Skye Ale (3) and Isle of Skye's Hebridean Gold (4).

Landlord Angus McGhie was on hand in the bar to welcome us, and we were delighted that he was able to spend time on a busy Saturday to chat with our party. Chairman Eric Mills presented him with the North Skye and Hebrides Pub-of-the-Year Certificate, a well deserved award for Angus and Theresa and their hard-working team. This is always a popular stop and while some were happy just to soak up the ambience in the bar, and enjoy a couple of beers, others took the opportunity to try the famed fresh crab sandwiches, or to spend some time outside enjoying the views.

We could have stayed all day, but we were mindful of our very tight schedule.

Next to Uig, and to the Isle of Skye Brewery where owner Angus MacRuary and his team welcomed our mixed party of regular visitors and real ale enthusiasts making a first trip to the Misty Isle. With introductions over, and glasses filled, Angus stood to one side to allow one of the unsung brewery heroes, Tony Ord, to accept Beer-of-the-Year certificates from Eric, now clearly warming to the ceremonial

duties associated with the Branch Chairman post he has recently undertaken.



Congratulations to all at Isle of Skye Brewery for having two beers in the top three: 2<sup>nd</sup> was Cuillin Beast, 1<sup>st</sup> was Hebridean Gold.

Brewer Pam MacRuary always prepares a blend of ales for our visit - Leann Failte - and a pack of bottled beer is the prize for all who can guess the blend. It is never easy and only three were successful in spotting the 3:1 mix of Red and Black Cuillin: Walter from Drum, Mike (a first!), and Bill Tring who saved face for the tasting panel members present!

We were treated to a very tasty buffet, washed down with Red and Black Cuillin. A treat for the tasting panel also, as the new 3% ABV, as yet unnamed, bottled brew was ready for sampling. Well fed and watered, it was now time for fun and games: a rarely seen relay race where teams are asked to make best use of a pair of tights, a potato, and a cucumber (pictures were censored). Cucumber in a tight leg, dangled between legs, hands on hips; the object was to use the cucumber as a paddle of sorts to move the potato along the track to your team member, and then hand over the baton (cucumber) for the next leg.

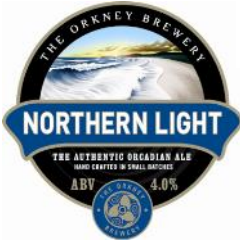
Anyway, you should have been there to see it, possibly a unique opportunity to witness this event! No Olympic medals, but bottles of Black Cuillin were a well-earned reward for Brian and his winning team. More hospitality in the form of a tombola meant that nobody boarded the bus empty-handed.

Mindful of their CAMRA duties, committee members took time to pop out to the Pub at the Pier, (worth arriving *(Continued on page 38)*



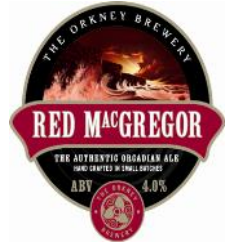
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## **Branch Diary** (Meetings start at 7.30 pm)

\* Not all events listed are necessarily organised by CAMRA.

This diary is as much about the local Real Ale scene as about Branch activities.

Tue 6<sup>th</sup> January      Committee Meeting      Glen Mhor Hotel, Inverness

Tue 27<sup>th</sup> January      Tasting Panel      Kings Highway, Inverness

### **>>> Promoting Stouts & Porters in February and March <<<**

Tue 3<sup>rd</sup> February      Committee Meeting      Clachnaharry Inn, Inverness

Tue 24<sup>th</sup> February      Tasting Panel      The Anderson, Fortrose

Tue 3<sup>rd</sup> March      Branch Meeting      Castle Tavern, Inverness

20<sup>th</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup> March      \* **Beer Festival**      Bandstand Bar, Nairn

## **Tasting Panel Refresher Course**

At the Benleva Hotel in Drumnadrochit

Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> March (Date & Time to be confirmed)

All are welcome - experienced tasters or novices - anyone with an interest in real ale who would like to learn more about their tittle.

15 places - Please contact Gareth Hardman to book your place.



6<sup>th</sup> - 13<sup>th</sup> April      >>> **National Cask Ale Week** <<<

Tue 7<sup>th</sup> April      Committee Meeting      Benleva Hotel, Drumnadrochit

Sat 25<sup>th</sup> April            Social/Outing/Tasting to the Atlas Brewery & Lochaber

Tue 28<sup>th</sup> April      Tasting Panel      Blackfriars, Inverness

### **>>> May is Mild Month <<<**

Tue 5<sup>th</sup> May      Committee Meeting      Bandstand Bar, Nairn

Tue 26<sup>th</sup> May      Tasting Panel      TBA

Tue 9<sup>th</sup> June      Branch Meeting      Cawdor Tavern

Sat 20<sup>th</sup> June            Social/Outing/Tasting to Caithness & Sutherland

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](mailto:contact@highlandcamra.org.uk) or [secretary@highlandcamra.org.uk](mailto:secretary@highlandcamra.org.uk)



Eric Mills - Phone No. pending  
[chair@highlandcamra.org.uk](mailto:chair@highlandcamra.org.uk)

Mike Whittall - 01463 831259  
[news@highlandcamra.org.uk](mailto:news@highlandcamra.org.uk)



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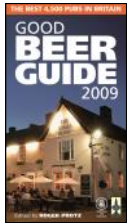


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### **JDW Autumn Festival**

I was a little late in calling into Wetherspoon's latest (international) real ale festival at The Kings Highway in Inverness. There were still five days to go and I was disappointed to see only one festival ale, the 4.5% abv St Austell Proper Job. It made it rather difficult to take them up on their "try 3 festival ales for a price of a pint" using their one third pint glasses, although to be fair I was offered the same deal had I wanted to try the regular ales.

I chose not to try the regular Abbot or Caley 80/- (why were they still on?) and settled for a pint of Proper Job at an excellent £1.39. The beer was in very good condition although I found the taste differed from the tasting notes in the festival news programme. This handy free guide listed all the beers being offered by JDW over the course of their festival, together with tasting notes and other info. It described Proper Job as a powerfully hopped IPA style beer, but the pint I had, although pleasant enough, did not have the strong hop flavours that you normally associate with an IPA.

I called in again two days later and was pleased to see three festival ales on tap. There was Smokey Pete, a 4.3% seasonal brew from Caledonian, which had been brewed with lightly peated malt. A tasty quaffable brew but, to my mind, none too special and lacking in the smokiness I would have hoped for. Firestone Walker California Pale Ale was one of the international ales in the programme and Matt Brynildson, the brewer from Firestone Walker, was able to brew his beer at Marston's Brewery in Burton upon Trent. This 4.5% USA pale ale was brewed with all American hops and did produce a good hoppy well balanced brew, but was a touch hazy. The third beer on was Alton's Pride from Triple FFF Brewery in Hampshire. Those of you who like a classic bitter such as Young's Bitter (or Ordinary as we used to call it) would have lapped up this delicious 3.8% brew. A beautifully balanced session beer with light malt, good hop aroma and taste, and a great bitter finish. In my opinion fully justifying its status (as the eagle-eyed of you would have spotted) as CAMRA's Champion Beer of Britain 2008.

I popped in on the last day of the festival to find only 2 festival ales on (plus of course Abbot and 80/-). I tried a  $\frac{1}{3}$  pint glass of Namyslow Plum beer from Poland - recognising it from a previous festival (50 beers and I always hit the fruit one), and two  $\frac{1}{3}$  pint glasses of Okell's Maclair from the Isle of Man. The 4% Polish plum beer was everything I remembered - the first taste was as if I had finished off the juice from the bottom of a can of prunes, its only redeeming feature being a little bitterness but not enough to overcome the intense sweetness. The Maclair was a totally different beast, a 4.4% wheat beer made with no less than seven different varieties of hops! Full of fruit aromas and flavours, with hints of lemon and banana, and with a good bitter finish - very moreish.

It looked as if it had been a good festival and I wish I had visited earlier and then popped in every other day to have sampled more. Apart from scoring a 2 for the California Pale Ale all the other beers were worthy of 3's and 4's in the CAMRA beer scoring system - so well done to The Kings Highway. GNH, Inverness.



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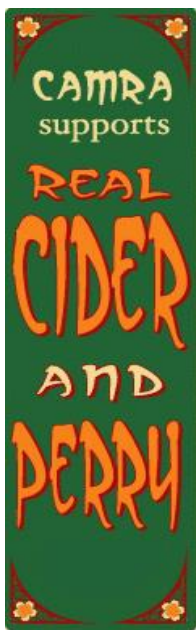


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## Traditional Cider Matters

**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 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** - Westons ciders from the box are regularly available

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

**Pomona Award 2008** - Roger Wilkins, of Wilkins Cider in Somerset, scooped the award for his lifelong devotion to producing some of the most renowned traditional cider in the country. Wilkins has been making cider in a large barn at his home since he was a boy, taught the skills of the ancient art by his grandfather. His contribution to the industry is so well-appreciated that customers have been buying from the farm for over thirty years. Roger took over the business after the death of his grandfather in 1969, and is now a Cider Legend.

*Real Cider fans who have visited his farm, and who have enjoyed both the cider and Roger's generous hospitality, will be pleased to learn that his efforts have not gone unrecognised. Ed.*

## **Do You Measure Up?**

Dear Ed, just a quick note to let you know that The Bandstand Bar at The Braeval Hotel in Nairn has responded brilliantly to the article in the Summer Newsletter about accessibility, and converted the male toilet to enable access for a wheelchair user (male). I think this is a really positive act and shows the power of lobbying through the local Branch of CAMRA! The choice, and importantly the quality of the ale on offer has also improved significantly - which means that I now have the ideal pub on my doorstep! Thanks for publishing the article so prominently and for pricking the business senses of a very keen owner.

I think such a positive reaction deserves another mention - plus a line of congratulations on earning the Cask Masque and an entry in the Good Beer Guide. Hopefully the local branch will be able to hold the odd meeting / tasting session / social event there.

I understand that Blackfriars, in Inverness, also plan to make alterations to the door of their loo in order to afford access into a cubicle - very limited space within to manoeuvre - but it provides the required privacy - although will not be suitable for all (by a long way). Works had yet to begin when I visited in November, but the thought is there. Seamus.

*Seamus also sent us updated information on local pubs which may be found on our website.*





KONICA MINOLTA



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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.

## **Highland Visit**

Hello Highland CAMRA, I am just back from a tour of the Highlands and thought I'd drop you a line or sixty about some of the pubs my wife and I went to. Some of them are featured in the GBG and some were mentioned in your excellent Summer edition of 'What's Yours Then?'. Some of our observations did raise a few concerns though!

Inverness was generally well represented with the likes of Number 27, Castle Tavern, Kings Highway and Blackfriars performing highly. We were also pleased to see the Pheonix back in business and they had a good selection at good prices. The beers were well kept too. I have no doubt you will be keeping an eye on this pub.

After reading WYT we decided to give Nairn a try. The Claymore Hotel produced a rancid looking pint of Deuchars IPA (1) at £3 a pint. We didn't stay for another. We tried the Havelock but upon entry we found no real ale on any of the three hand pumps. Next was the Braeval Hotel's Bandstand Bar and this came up trumps with a very nice pint of Youngs Bitter (3) - well it was nice until a wasp landed in it!

A visit to Brora gave us the chance to try out the Sutherland Inn and a drop of Trade Winds (2) before we hit the Clynesh distillery! Wick was also visited and the Alexander Bain was possibly one of the best Wetherspoons I have been to in recent months. Orkney Dark Island (3), and the Deuchars IPA (4), at £1.49 a pt was the best ale all holiday.

Over on the West the Glenfinnan Hotel produced a very cloudy Standard Ale (2) for £2.60 which was very disappointing considering where it's brewed. We did find a better example of this ale in the Grog & Gruel in Fort William. They also served up a cracking pint of Northern Light (4). This was our first visit to the 'Grog' and was by far the most cheerful of the pubs we had been to. A worthy entry in the GBG. We tried the Oban Inn and got that 'here comes another tourist' look from the 'boy' behind the bar who continued to chat away despite my

presence. When he did decide to serve me the ale produced was up to GBG standard.  
Kinds regards, Dave Wilson, Member 75343, Coventry .

I forgot to mention we travelled over to Plockton on the Sunday for a wee look at the Brewery but, as I expected, it was closed. I did see the shed though! We had a nice pint of Spitfire (3) in the Plockton Inn though. Unfortunately they didn't have any Plockton beers there but they did point us in the direction of the local stores but, sadly, we didn't have time to get a couple of bottles before catching the train back to Inverness. I hope you find of the above useful. I didn't bore you with the beer scores as I have already entered these onto the NBSS web site. Keep up the good work with WYT..

### **Festival News**

The 7<sup>th</sup> Loch Ness Beer Festival, held at the Benleva Hotel in Drumnadrochit, was again a huge success, with a grand total of 58 ales and ciders consumed during the week. Breweries new to the festival were Northumberland, Fyfe and Strathaven; their beers being well received by the discerning 'Ben' clientele, and receiving votes for the all-important Beer-of-the-Festival award. Regular breweries represented were Isle of Skye, Cairngorm, An Teallach, Stewart's Brewing, Highland Brewing Company, Orkney, Atlas, Fyne Ales and Inveralmond. Special mention has to be made for Stewart's Brewing who were an almost unanimous choice for Brewery-of-the-Festival. Their ales were excellent, all received votes but, unfortunately, it meant that none of their beers secured enough votes to be the outright Beer-of-the-Festival, which went to Orkney Skullsplitter, narrowly beating Fyne Ales Highlander into second place. *Well done!*

Festival entertainment included four music nights, the second festival Pool Competition, won by Jeremy, and a first ever Beer Festival Poker Tournament, won by Mal. Sales of Beer Festival glasses raised over £150 for local charities. Thanks to all, including local members who trekked over the hill to work up a thirst, and to the breweries for the excellent range of beers.



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## 18<sup>th</sup> - 26<sup>th</sup> September 2009

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## **Pubs-of-the-Year (POTY)**

The roll of honour for 2008: The Anderson, Fortrose; Castle Tavern, Inverness; Glen Hotel, Newtonmore; Applecross Inn; Plockton Hotel; Stein Inn, Waternish, Isle of Skye; Ben Nevis Inn, near Fort William; and the Scourie Hotel. These were your top pubs for 2008, but a lot of real ale has flowed under the bridge since you last voted for your favourite hosteleries.

Have these pubs continued to serve real ales in tip-top condition? Is the welcome and service as good as last year? Have the tested & proven rested on their laurels, or are there some new kids on the block who are challenging the old guard? ***Vote now!*** Take a few minutes to show your support for the top pubs on our patch by sending in your votes.

### **Highlands & Western Isles Branch of CAMRA 2009 Pub of the Year Voting Form**

Inverness & District (N) .....

Inverness & District (S) .....

Aviemore & Cairngorms .....

Wester Ross .....

South Skye & Lochalsh .....

North Skye & Hebrides .....

Fort William & Lochaber .....

Caithness & Sutherland .....

Member's Name/No. .....

Please check the pub lists on pages 19-22 if you are unsure in which area a pub is located.

Please use the voting form and post to the Branch Contact (see page 6).

Alternatively you can either e-mail your selection to the secretary or use the on-line voting form. Further information at **[www.highlandcamra.org.uk](http://www.highlandcamra.org.uk)**

All Branch members are allowed to vote for a pub in each of the eight districts.

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

All entries must serve real ale.

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

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

The overall Highlands & Western Isles CAMRA Pub-of-the-Year, which will represent the Branch in the annual Scottish Pub-of-the-Year competition - The Anderson in 2008 - will be selected by committee (using CAMRA judging guidelines) from the eight area winners.

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



# The Old Inn

Gairloch, Ross-shire, IV21 2BD

Telephone: 01445 712006 Enquiries - *Call Free* - 0800 542 5444

Scottish Tourist Board 3 Star Inn

AA Best Seafood Pub for Scotland 2005/06

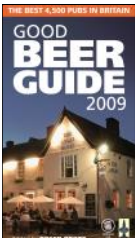
Abbot Ale Perfect Pub for Scotland 2005/06

AA Pub of the Year for Scotland & Northern Ireland 2003



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**E-mail: [enquiries@theoldinn.net](mailto:enquiries@theoldinn.net)**



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

## Focus on Andy Ribben

Andy is the owner of the Hebridean Brewery, based in Stornoway on the Isle of Lewis. Andy built the brewery in an old bus station, and has been brewing since early in 2002.

Q. Born, brought up, and schooled?

A. Born at Farnborough Hospital in Kent, in 1966, and brought up in Bromley, Kent. I went to Ravenswood School for Boys.

Q. Your working life?

A. My working life began at EF Huttons Ltd, commodity brokers in the City of London, as a messenger. I came to Stornoway, to my Grandfather's croft for a holiday, and on returning to the rat race I decided to try to move to Stornoway. I was unable to find permanent work, so returned to London.

Q. Other hobbies?

A. Other than Brewing I like fishing and rugby. Unfortunately the old knees have given up so I can't play any more, but I still enjoy watching. My other hobby is Edith, my old 1968 Bedford CA. I restored her over the winter and she now does local deliveries for the brewery.



Q. Your first pint?

A. My first pint was most probably at a party; the first pint I can remember buying was out with my sister's boyfriend. I think it cost 78 pence.

Q. Favourite beers ?

A. I always liked Riddles until they moved the brewery; Rob Hill in Orkney does some nice beers - St Magnus comes to mind; and O'Hanlon's Stout is another which sticks in the mind - tried a pint with an ex-girlfriend, went back to the pub next day because it

was so nice, but all gone. I like Ossian from Inveralmond. I do not like anything with fuggles in; I hate the hop - far too flowery.

Q. Your brewing career?

A. My brewing career started when I took redundancy from the pharmaceutical firm where I had worked for nine years. I sent myself on courses and lent my time to breweries whilst working temporary over a few years. I would go either to the now defunct Flagship Brewery at Chatham or to Don Burgess's Freeminer Brewery. Don was a great help in setting up the brewery and came up for the commissioning brew on the 26<sup>th</sup> January 2002. Clansman gyle no 001.

Q. Why Stornoway?

A. My mother's family are from the village of Tong just outside Stornoway. I spent every holiday returning "home". Eventually when I was old enough I would travel up to my Grandfather's croft on my own - in April to cut peats and August for fishing. Even when my friends were going to Spain and elsewhere I would choose to come back instead, I just always loved it. I now live at my family's croft. The idea of the brewery was to bring work with me. My Grandfather had to move away after the war to find work, and he always hated being away from the island, so if I can cause a few jobs then all the better. One of the reasons for keeping all brewing and bottling in Stornoway.

Q. What's the worst part of your job?

A. The stress of running a business I suppose, the winter, ferries, costs of shipping, and all the naked women.

Q. What's the best part of the Job?

A. The most satisfying part is seeing something I brewed being appreciated in a pub, coming up with a good recipe, winning an award for my beers, having a crack with the lads in the brewery, and the naked women.

Q. Do your beers ever get to England-shire?

A. We send shipments through wholesalers throughout the country, and on occasion will take a delivery away if I am going to London. Our beers have been to all parts of Britain - from Cornwall to Kent, and from Newcastle to Wales. We are planning to





# *Blackfriars Highland Pub*

## *Great Beer*



*Traditional Highland Food (New Menu)*  
*All meals are cooked to order using  
freshly prepared local produce*

**Real Ales and Real Cider On Tap**

**Selection of bottled ales,  
malt whiskies, and wines**

**Open all day, every day  
Food served every day  
from 11am until 9pm**



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Email: [stay@morefieldmotel.co.uk](mailto:stay@morefieldmotel.co.uk)

Proprietors: Mr & Mrs A.D. & B.J. Oulton

Accommodation bookings accepted online



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

**Real Ale in the Real Highlands**



send a cask of Berserker to South Georgia at the moment. We have some contacts down there and thought it would be good to send a cask of Berserker on a sea journey as the original 19<sup>th</sup> century India Pale Ale recipes it is based on were brewed strong to survive up to three months at sea.

Q. Your personal favourite?

A. I try to brew different beers for differing tastes, my personal favourite is Seaforth. I was mulling the recipe over for a long time and one day I jotted it down and brewed it instead of the brew I was planning. It turned out absolutely spot on with what I was aiming for. Islander is also a personal favourite. It's the only beer I brew using a single variety of hop, Cascade, an American species. In the brewery we use hops from all over the world in an attempt to introduce well balanced, unique and intricate flavours.

Q. Naming your beers?

A. I have always tried to name my beers with a local connection but also to appeal to all. Berserker is named after the Rook of the Lewis chess set. It depicts a Viking warrior chewing his shield. These warriors would

work themselves up into frenzy before battle and were known as Berserkers - where the English language gets the word.

Islander and Clansman are self explanatory, Seaforth after the Earls of Seaforth and Loch Seaforth on the island. Seaforth features the stags head as its pump clip, the cap badge of the Seaforth Highlanders.

Q. Future expansion?

A. We are always looking for more suitable premises for the brewery and we're looking into a number of options, I can't really say more at present, but if we proceed it will allow us to do proper tours with a visitor centre. The brewery as it is doesn't lend itself well to tours, with hot pipes, etc., but we get a lot of visitors asking.

Q. Road Equivalent Tarrif (Ferry fares)?

A. The RET should be of huge benefit to the islands, not only helping bring more visitors to the islands but also making it cheaper to get away. Traditionally many tourists have been deterred by the high ferry prices; they turn up in Ullapool but then go elsewhere. It will really help develop the local economy.





## **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  
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

### **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  
Number 27, Inverness

TP - Served using top pressure

“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  
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restaurant • bar • accommodation

**Fortrose, by Inverness**

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

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)

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)

### 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  
 Suie Hotel, Kincaira

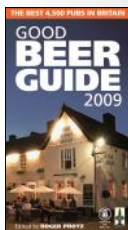
### Fort William & Lochaber

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  
 Tomdoun Sporting Lodge

# Stein Inn

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 1790

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**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.**

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 Stein Inn, Waternish,  
 Isle of Skye, IV55 8GA**

**Tel: +44 (0)1470-592362**

**[angus.teresa@steininn.co.uk](mailto:angus.teresa@steininn.co.uk)**



Moorings Hotel, Banavie  
 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

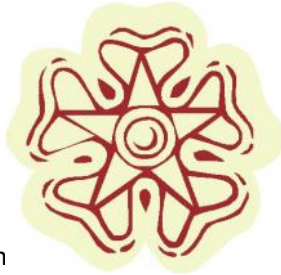
Isle of Raasay Hotel  
 JJ's Bistro at Struan  
 Dunvegan Hotel  
 Stein Inn, Waternish  
 Edinbane Hotel  
 The Lodge at Edinbane  
 Ferry Inn, Uig  
 Uig Hotel, Uig  
 Pub at the Pier, Uig

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.

# Stronlossit Inn

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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 1<sup>st</sup> 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, Grampian & Northern Isles area; Brewery Arrans in the Ayrshire & Islay Ales, Glasgow & Breweries covered by Highland. 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

### Pubs around Fort William

My wife and I stayed in Fort William for a week earlier in the month. We visited several of your GBG pubs, plus some others. Sorry I cannot list the beers we enjoyed - but there were many. The Grog & Gruel fully lived up to its reputation with an excellent and ever changing choice of local ales - it became my evening 'local' for the week.

The Ben Nevis Inn, at the end of that winding road, was a welcome place to arrive at after a walk in the hills - beer excellent. Nevisport Bar I found disappointing - beer was not up to much and the ladies behind the bar were struggling with some credit card transaction for ages, before getting round to serving me. And they had both vanished when I needed a refill. Maybe just an off night?

The Steam Inn [not sure it doesn't display a different name, as well] in Mallaig had no real ale, as far as I could see - the whole town seems a desert. The Glenfinnan House Hotel, dispensing ale from the local brewery, was a real find - a short stop there for a quick drink

at around mid-day turned into a long stay and a meal. Their food is excellent. I hope you consider it for next year's GBG.

The Tailrace Inn in Kinlochleven had excellent beer from the local brewery, but no food at 14:30, [despite the sign Food All Day] as the chef had gone home - or something. The Ice Factor bar didn't open until 16:00 and, as expected, the Mamore Lodge - at the midpoint of our walk that day - had no real ale, but a great place to call in at, when the ale is on!

On another day, the Corran Inn, after we had finished a walk, was a welcome venue for a couple of pints and a bite to eat. I think they are now being supplied by the Kinlochleven brewery, having had some delivery problems with their previous brewery. We found a bar not in your list - the Moorings Hotel at Banavie - regularly serves Deuchers IPA [sadly, not on when we called in, as it was not ready].

Many thanks for the listings on your website - without them, and the GBG, our stay would have been much less enjoyable. Cheers,  
Chris Miller, Kingston & Leatherhead CAMRA.



## Beers-of-the-Year and Champion Beers of Britain

Time for you to vote already for your Beers-of-the-Year. Further to the results published in our Autumn edition, the following were judged at the Alloa and Troon Beer Festivals:

- Old Ale/Strong Mild: 1. Stewarts Brewing 80/-, 2. Kelburn Dark Moor, 3. Orkney Dark Island  
 Golden Ale: 1. Caley XPA, 2. Stewarts Pentland IPA, 3. Highland Orkney Best  
 Real Ale in a Bottle: 1. Arran Milestone, 2. Bridge of Allan 80/-, 3. Black Isle Hibernator III

The nine category winners will now go forward to the 'Champion Winter Beer of Scotland' and to the 'Champion Beer of Scotland' competitions respectively; and finally the winners of these two competitions will join all the other National Regional competition winners in the 'Champion Beer of Britain' and the 'Champion Winter Beer of Britain' competitions.

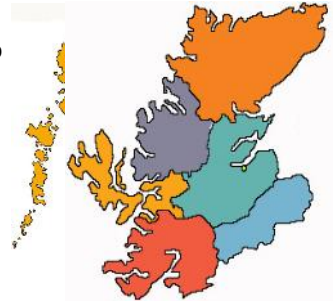
Without going into detail, please see our Winter 2007 edition for that, the new Champion Beers of Britain system - now in its second year - involves beers being chosen by a roughly 50/50 combination of Tasting Panel recommendations, and a voting system at CAMRA Branches level. Under the new system you may vote for any Scottish real ale, not just local brews, which you have enjoyed during the past twelve months. The list of eligible beers in each category may be found on our website ([www.highlandcamra.org.uk](http://www.highlandcamra.org.uk)).

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

Your locally brewed favourites last year were:

- Gold: Isle of Skye Hebridean Gold  
 Silver: Isle of Skye Cuillin Beast  
 Bronze: Cairngorm Black Gold

Please use the voting form below, or our on-line form, or just send us an e-mail! This is your chance to help put the best beers brewed in Scotland on the map!



### Highlands & Western Isles Branch of CAMRA 2009 Beer-of-the-Year Voting Form

- Mild .....
- Bitter .....
- Best Bitter .....
- Strong Bitter .....
- Stout / Porter .....
- Old Ale / Strong Mild .....
- Barley Wine .....
- Golden Ale .....
- Specialty Beer .....
- Real Ale in a Bottle .....
- Member's Name/No. .....



Closing Date - 28<sup>th</sup> February



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### **Inverness Real Ale Festival**

The 5th Inverness Real Ale Festival was held at the Castle Tavern in late September/early October. This was the second year at the Tavern following landlord George Maclean's move across town from the Clachnaharry Inn where it had been held previously.

The Inverness Gaelic Choir opened the festival and George very generously donated 50p from every pint sold at the festival to help the choir make their trip to Cape Breton to take part in the Celtic Colours Festival. The choir were victims of the collapse of Zoom Airlines, and were hoping to raise around £20,000 for the replacement (and more expensive) tickets.

A fabulous range of 42 real ales and 2 real ciders were on offer for the week, with no less than 38 beers coming from Scottish breweries, including Glen Ample, a seasonal ale from the Cairngorm Brewery. This light fruity ale made with Scottish raspberries was on from the start of the festival, and even had its pump clip delivered by motorcycle courier as Cairngorm's head brewer Sean Tomlinson called in to drop it off on his way home!

As you would expect from this Good Beer Guide listed pub all beers were in excellent condition, whether served from the four hand pumps in the bar, or from a temporary outside bar under the covered terrace. Stars of the show for me were definitely our Highlands & Islands brews, especially Rob Hill's beers from the Highland Brewery on Orkney. It was no surprise to find out later that his Dark Munro had been voted beer of the festival. Congratulations to Rob and to George for a successful festival - same again next year please!

*We are happy to report that after much fundraising, the Choir raised almost £20,000 in three weeks to purchase replacement tickets.*

### **Inns & Things**

- Knoydart's Old Forge - the pub with a pet hen - has been named Best Independent Pub in Scotland by the Scottish Licensed Trade News. The award was presented to owners Jackie and Ian Robertson by Kirsty Gallacher at a prestigious 'Oscars' type awards ceremony at the Glasgow Hilton on 23rd October 2008. The award is just one of many won by the Old Forge, possibly the remotest pub in Britain.
- For one week only in late November diners at Clachnaharry Inn were able to enjoy a special offer menu priced at £1 per course!
- Real ale drinkers in Inverness were alarmed to see notices advising that Blackfriars would be closed all day on a Saturday in early November. Happily this was only a temporary closure to allow Del and Janette (pictured below) a day off to tie the knot.



*Congratulations!*

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**CAMRA LocAle** - the new accreditation scheme to promote pubs that sell locally-brewed real ale, thereby reducing the number of 'beer miles' and supporting your local breweries.

## What is CAMRA LocAle?

CAMRA LocAle is a new initiative that promotes pubs stocking locally brewed real ale. The scheme builds on a growing consumer demand for quality local produce and an increased awareness of 'green' issues.

The CAMRA LocAle scheme was created in 2007 by CAMRA's Nottingham branch which wanted to help support the tradition of brewing within Nottinghamshire, following the demise of local brewer Hardys and Handsons.

Everyone benefits from local pubs stocking locally-brewed real ale...

- **Public houses** as stocking local real ales can increase pub visits
- **Consumers** who enjoy greater beer choice and diversity
- **Local brewers** who gain from increased sales
- **The local economy** because more money is spent and retained locally
- **The environment** due to fewer 'beer miles' resulting in less road congestion and pollution
- **Tourism** due to an increased sense of local identity and pride - let's celebrate what makes our locality different.



## What's involved - can anyone join?

If you wish to benefit from participation in the LocAle scheme you must agree to endeavour to ensure that at least one locally-brewed real ale is on sale at all times. Only real ale can be promoted as a CAMRA LocAle. See list of local breweries on pages 25-26.

**Joining the CAMRA LocAle initiative is FREE** and accreditation is easy, so, simply contact your local CAMRA branch to arrange. Contact details on page 6.

Highlands & Western Isles Branch is promoting the LocAle initiative. Pubs which sign up for LocAle will be able to display window stickers, leaflets and posters to highlight the fact that they are serving a locally-brewed real ale. CAMRA LocAle branded pump-clip crown caps are also available and can be displayed at the bar to help inform customers which beers have been brewed within the Highlands & Western Isles - surely a range to meet all tastes?

Each participating CAMRA branch is allowed to decide on what they think is an appropriate definition of 'local' for their area. For example, Nottingham CAMRA adopted a definition of 20 miles and York CAMRA has opted for a 25 miles definition. We think that 30 miles is probably a more realistic figure for our Branch area, however some of our more remote pubs may not have a brewery this close, so we may have to extend the radius a little in some areas.

Participating pubs include the Glen Hotel in Newtonmore and Castle Tavern in Inverness, which regularly serve a Cairngorm brew; and in Ullapool the Arch Inn, Argyll Hotel, Morefield Motel, and Seaforth Bar & Restaurant feature An Teallach beers. We are looking forward to more pubs signing up for LocAle, especially from the Cairngorms, Lochaber, and the Isle of Skye.



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### More Inns & Things

Dear Ed, just for a change, in late November, we thought we would take a spin along the quiet side of Loch Ness, and we were very glad that we did:

- > A quick stop to check out the Whitebridge Hotel, just after they opened at 11 am, where we found a very good Cairngorm Trade Winds (NBSS score 4).
- > The Dores Inn, on the shore of Loch Ness, has recently re-opened after refurbishment. The inn is a new venture for Michelle and Quintin Stevens, owners of the award-winning Foulis Ferry Storehouse restaurant and farm shop on the shores of the Cromarty Firth. The focus of their business will be on food and beer - in that order - using the best local, seasonal ingredients to create a simple but delicious menu. They plan to serve two regularly changing real ales, one from a local brewery, in 'a good country pub that serves quality food all day'.

We enjoyed lamb shank and game pie, washed down with Deuchars IPA and Cairngorm Nessies Monster Mash, both scoring NBSS 4. Food is served from midday to 9 pm. CME.

*Sounds as if a Loch Ness circular would make a pretty good real ale outing? Ed.*

### Award Winners

- Latitude Highland Pilsner - made by Kinlochleven's Atlas Brewery - was voted best in its class for the third year running at the International Beer Challenge in London, held in November, retaining its position as one of the world's 50 best beers. There was further success at the event for Atlas Brewery's parent company - Cawdor based Sinclair Breweries Ltd - when its Orkney Brewery also secured a top 50 listing for Dark Island Reserve Ale.
- Black Isle Yellowhammer IPA won Best Beer at the Soil Association Organic Food Awards 2008. Judges said: "Seductive honeycomb and beeswax scent and taste. Very fine floral palette with a fine faintly muscat scented finish. Admirable and unusual level of complexity,



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Kelham Island Pale Rider and this years GBBF winner TripleFFF Alton Pride. Scottish beers are of course also well represented so that there is an even spread of brewers and beer styles. He is doing a fantastic job, and



long may it last. The attached photo shows Gordon, on the left, receiving his copy of the Good Beer Guide from local CAMRA member Des Murray. Thanks, DM.

*Another gem to add to the growing list of fine real ale hostelrys on our patch! Ed.*

## E-Ale

- Hello, it was my good lady's fortieth at the weekend and so we went to the Isle Ornsay Hotel for a couple of nights with friends. This place needs consideration for the GBG. We had two super nights in the bar - live music (local band) and the Red Cuillin was in excellent form. It was just at the exact temperature I like it, which is a wee bit lower than most folk prefer, but was easily, and consistently, a 4+. AMcR.
- Dear Ed, I hope you can find room for me to pass on congratulations from myself and all real ale drinkers in Nairn to Gordon Holding, the proprietor of the Bandstand Bar in the Braeval Hotel in Nairn. The Bandstand has deservedly gained an entry into the Good Beer Guide and now has four beers on tap on a regular basis. Gordon has also gained Cask Marque accreditation. He is happy to source beers on the recommendation of his regular customers which means beers have come from as far afield as Cornwall and Orkney. Recently there has been the likes of

- Having become a bit out of touch with the real ale pubs in Inverness of late, I agreed to meet up with a friend and Branch official for a pint or two in the Blackfriars, late one Friday afternoon at the end of October.

I arrived first, the bar was quiet, and so I settled down to wait with a pint of Highland Brewing Company's Orkney Best (4). This was a cracking pint, full of flavour at 3.6%. About half way down it, I was joined by not one but two of our hard-working committee members. It was a difficult decision to move on from this excellent light ale from Rob Hill, but the availability of one of the beers which had played a part in my mis-spent youth, Camerons Strongarm at 4%, tempted me. They say the past is a foreign country and the sweetish pint in front of me bore little resemblance to the beer I remembered. Nothing wrong with it, worth a 3, just not what it was (but then neither am I). We found putting the world of real ale, pubs, supermarkets and off-licenses to rights was thirsty work, and we moved on to sample Robinsons Spellbound (3). This



turned out to be a bit cloudy, but otherwise in good nick and was enjoyed by two of us. The visit was rounded off by asking for a taste of Hydes Owd Bill at 4.5%. A very full-flavoured drink with a nice hop finish, this proved too much of a temptation and an excellent pint (4) was enjoyed.

The remaining offers were not tasted: Deuchars IPA on the grounds of its wide availability and Westons Old Rosie Cider on the grounds of sanity (7.3%).

Good ales well presented, good company, and a seat at the bar - what better way to start the weekend! DS.

### News of Brews

- In October Clachaig Inn were advertising "a special guest beer will be Bidean Ale (ABV 4.3%), specially brewed for Oktoberfest by the Isle of Skye Brewery."

Both the Bidean Bar at the Clachaig Inn and the festival brew are named after Bidean nam Bian, the highest (3,766 feet) summit in the old county of Argyll.

- Atlas Brewery in Kinlochleven brewed a new

beer, Red Squirrel Ale, to coincide with Red Squirrel week, which ran from 4<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> October. Part of the proceeds from the sale of this traditional 4.6% ABV Scottish style ale will be donated to the Highland Red Squirrel Group based in Dingwall.

It is estimated that red squirrel numbers are down to less than 160,000 in the UK due to loss of woodland and encroachment of the non-native grey squirrel. More details can be found at [www.highlandredsquirrel.co.uk](http://www.highlandredsquirrel.co.uk).

Rumours of this ale keeping for up to six months in a cool, dark place, and having a nutty flavour, are unfounded. *Hmm, Ed.*

- Isle of Skye Brewery have bottled a 3% ABV version of their popular Red Cuillin, called Nollaig (Christmas) for the festive season. There is also a 4% ABV fruit beer in the pipeline, using locally-grown blaeberreries and organic honey, which will be called Cuillin Gorm (Blue Cuillin).
- A seasonal brew from Cairngorm Brewery: Winter Flurry; at 3.8% ABV, a light bodied session bitter with a dry slightly spicy finish.



## Scourie Hotel

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## 4<sup>th</sup> Ullapool Beer Festival

After a record breaking turnout for our outing to the Isle of Skye, it was disappointing to find just six members on the minibus to Ullapool. Departing Inverness Town House at 10am, in beautiful autumn sunshine, we were soon hit by some heavy showers along the way but these failed to detract from the fantastic autumn colours en route, and conjured up a spectacular rainbow over Loch Glascarnoch.

Arriving in Ullapool at around half eleven, our first stop was at the **Arch Inn** where we found An Teallach Ale on which picked up scores of 2s and 3s. Into the **Seaforth Bar & Restaurant** next which was a short stroll down the seafront. Apart from it's fantastic seafood menu there is something I really like about this bar which makes you feel comfortable with it's real fire and friendly service coupled with a knowledgeable barman. An Teallach Ale was on here as well scoring easy 3's all round. We then popped into the nearby **Caley Bar** and were sorry to see no hand pumps. However we did meet the new owner/manager? who seemed very keen to try real ale next summer.

Along the seafront again to the former GBG listed **Ferry Boat Inn**. This pub is now owned by Punch Taverns and is a shadow of it's former self. 2 hand pumps were on dispensing Caledonian 80/- and Deuchars with the Deuchars scoring 2s and 3s. Reassuringly, the new tenants are very keen to turn this cosy pub around and focus on real ales. We then cut through to the road above to visit the **Argyll Hotel**, another Punch owned property. This was closed on our visit last year so we were happy to see it open and serving 2 ales and 2 ciders. Black Sheep Bitter and Crofters Pale Ale from An Teallach were on along side Weston's Scrumpy & Old Rosie. Our party covered all 4 of them scoring 3's all round. A nice welcome here with the beer quality being the best it has been for some while.

Back onto the minibus for the short drive to the GBG listed **Morefield Motel**. Tony & Bev Oulton, along with bar manager Neil, had again provided an excellent range of 10 ales for the festival including several from breweries not often seen here in the Highlands, such as Islay, Plockton, Arran and Moulin. The beers available during our visit were An Teallach Crofters Pale Ale, Cairngorm Wildcat, Fyne Ales Avalanche, Hebridean Clansman, Highland Scapa Special, Houston Auld Humdinger, Moulin Ale of Atholl, Plockton Crags Ale and Haggis in the Skye with Diamonds which was produced for the festival. Sadly this specially produced ale was not up to spec. and was quickly changed for Orkney Raven Ale. There was also a pump clip for "Feck Ale Left". Unfortunately this cheeky little 0.0% abv ale wasn't on but supposedly it is similar to "Sorry Not Available" which is often found in Wetherspoons. Their "Guess Ale" competition was run again where drinkers could, for a £1 entry for charity have a go at guessing the beer. No clues on the pump clip, and yet again yours truly failed to identify it despite being a member of the tasting panel!!! The closest I got was that it was a beer I was sure I had drunk before. This turned out to be true when I learned later that the beer was Cairngorm Gold. Their usual excellent seafood menu was again accompanied by a tasty beer festival menu offering main courses for a very reasonable £5.95.

Live music was featured during the festival but this was later in the evening and it was time for us to head back to Inverness. Thanks to all involved for a very enjoyable afternoon and thanks also to Sandy from Fraser's Coaches. Next years festival will be on the 22<sup>nd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> October - Make a note in you diary.



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## A Voyage to the North And West Highlands, October 2008

An Eddi Reader concert in Inverness and the annual beer festival in Ullapool ended up with my wife and I doing a roundabout tour from the city to Fort William. A good opportunity to sample the range and qualities of ales available in your area, but being mid-October it was already beyond the main tourist season.

Day 1 - Inverness. Blackfriars got us off to an encouraging start with Orkney IPA (4), and the Castle Tavern provided Orkney Best and Scapa Special (both 4). After the concert, our night-caps at King's Highway - eventually produced by staff more concerned with cleaning glasses and loading shelves - were Saltaire Crystal Red (3 and rather chilled) and Caley 80/- (2).

Day 2 - Brora for lunch at Sutherland Inn. The Trade Winds (2) was cold. In the evening Thurso's Central Hotel served Scapa Special (3) and Theakston's Paradise Ale (2), the latter - as with Caley 80/- and Deuchars these days - a rather dull product.

Day 3 - A day out to Orkney, home of two top breweries. Our search for cask ale in Kirkwall suggested it was hard to find, but the Bothy Bar had Scapa Special and Dark Island (both 4) - unfortunately at £3.10 a pint and, worse, £1.90 for a half pint! The Flattie Bar in the Stromness Hotel could provide only bottled beer, cask being available in the upstairs bar only, from 5pm.

Day 4 - Lunch at Tongue Hotel included a pint of Deuchars (2). This was the last source of ale before Scourie! McKay's Rooms had bottled Dark Island, which we used to celebrate having filled up with unleaded petrol round the corner at £1.18 a litre on the day headlines reported the price had just dropped below £1!

Day 5 - Lunch and a pint of Deuchars (cold and again 2) at the Caberfeidh, Lochinver. In the evening, at the Morefield, Ullapool, we got stuck into the Festival's range of mainly Highland ales, most of which were, unsurprisingly, given ratings of 4+ : An Teallach Ale, Nessie's, Avalanche, Scapa Special, Auld Humdinger, Angus Ogg, Ale of Atholl, Raven, Northern Light. However Crofter's (2) seemed to taste of

turnip, and Craggs Ale (2) of disinfectant, while Highlander (2) had the unpleasant 'strong' flavour I find higher abv ales tend to have.

Day 6 - More at the Morefield.

Day 7 - Sunday lunch at the Old Inn, Gairloch, with Red Cuillin getting a 3. In the evening, a fantastic seafood meal (with white wine!) at Applecross Inn, preceded by Red Cuillin (3). The proprietors are aware of the problems of keeping quality up over the winter, and the regular summer offering Hebridean Gold is to be replaced by Black Cuillin.

Day 8 - Lunch at the Plockton Hotel, where this time the local Craggs Ale was in fine form (4). On to Skye, with a Trade Winds (3) at the Stein Inn, followed by a major disappointment in Portree at the Bosville, where a mechanical breakdown had cut off supplies of cask ale.

Day 9 - Ordinary Red Cuillin (2) at Cluanie Inn.

Day 10 - To the Old Forge, Inverie, where the barman commented on the difficulty in keeping turnover going and recommended Deuchars as opposed to Greene King IPA, but the Deuchars rated only just 2. A teatime visit to Fort William's Nevisport Lounge (now Cobbs) brought Three Sisters and Nimbus (both 4).

Day 11 - Still in Fort William, the Grog & Gruel supplied Beinn Dearg (4) and Three Sisters (3).

Day 12 - ended in the Fisherman's Tavern, Broughty Ferry - my old local and first stop when passing through on the way north - and it supplied a sobering (if that's the word) context for the previous days. Here is a pub that has at least six ales on 365 days a year, with a volume of sales that means everything rates at least 3, usually 4. On this occasion, Black Sheep (though it ran out a pint later), Mauldon Ever Amber and London Pride all got 4.

Questions: Can many pubs outside major population centres manage to keep cask ale at an acceptable quality? If not, should they sell bottled instead? Is it possible to regard cask ale as a popular drink among the Scots? How can more people be converted? Which leads on to: How many Scottish cask ale pubs - and breweries - in Highland and other rural areas are run by Scots, or are the bulk of the proprietors - and drinkers - English immigrants?

In these sensitive political times this may sound like a racist comment, but is not intended as such! Bob Peden, Aberchirder.

*Food for thought. Ed.*

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230 Hatfield Road, St Albans, Herts, AL 1 4 LW



Highlands & Western Isles Branch

(Continued from page 4) early to enjoy a pint or two before catching the Stornoway ferry), to check the beer quality: Isle of Skye Brewery Hebridean Gold (4) and Red Cuillin (4).

South now to Portree, where our party split up and visited the three real ale hostelrys within easy reach of the square. The Bosville Hotel, now back in the Good Beer Guide, offered their Isle of Skye Brewery house ale, the 4.1% Ditcher (4), and Cuillin Brewery 4.7% Pinnacle (1). Another Isle of Skye Brewery house ale at the Royal Hotel, the 4.3% McNabs (3), plus Red Cuillin (3). The Isles Inn, now a Punch Taverns outlet, had a very cold Deuchars IPA (3), and Theakston's Black Sheep (3).

We stopped at the Sligachan Hotel, home of the Cuillin Brewery, where hotel co-owner Iain Campbell, who sadly has cancer himself, had organised a special ceilidh to raise funds for the Highland Hospice. Final preparations were underway and we enjoyed pints of 'Hoss Piss' at 4.7% (4), donated by the Cuillin Brewery,

5% Glamaig (4) and 4.1% Skye Ale (3).

We learned a few days later that the ceilidh had raised over £12,000 on the night, a figure which was then doubled by Taslisker Distillery owners Diageo, giving an incredible total of £24,688. Plans are already in place to make 'Iain's Ceilidh' an annual fundraising event for the Highland Hospice. We wish all the best to Iain and well done to all involved.

On to Dornie and to two pubs which lie only a short walking distance from the famous Eilean Donan Castle. Both were busy with diners and the Clachan had it's Isle of Skye Brewery house ale 'Eilean Donan' (3) and the Dornie Hotel had Deuchars IPA (3).

Back through Glen Shiel and Glen Moriston, and along Loch Ness with drop-offs en-route to Inverness. A long day out but the weather did not dampen our enjoyment of spectacular scenery and some excellent beers. Thanks to everyone for some wonderful hospitality, and to driver Sandy for a safe journey.

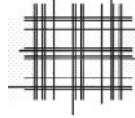
We hope you have enjoyed reading our Winter newsletter. Unless you intend to keep it for some reason, please **DO NOT** throw it away. Why not pass it on to a friend, or just leave it in a pub somewhere for others to read. Newsletters are often found many miles from source! The Spring edition will be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



*Cheers!*



The and restaurant  
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