

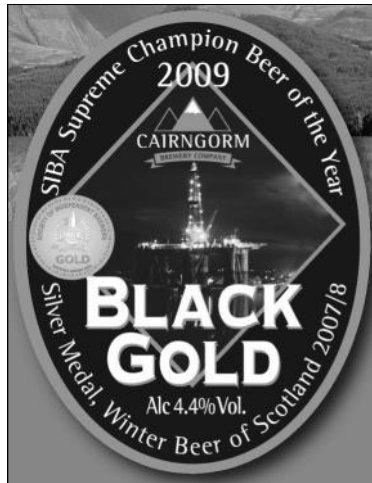
What's Yours Then?

Highlands & Western Isles CAMRA
Free Newsletter



Contains Full List of Highlands & Western Isles Real Ale Outlets

**Cairngorm Black Gold wins
Local and National Awards**



Pub-of-the-Year



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**CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE**

Spring 2009

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

- > Pubs-of-the-Year - *Results*
- > Beers-of-the-Year - *Results*
- > Socials & Outings - Reports
- > Updated Branch Diary
- > Focus on - Del & Janette
- > 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.

Summer edition **deadline** is 5th June, with publication in time for Summer visitors.

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

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

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

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

3,500+ 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.

Congratulations to Head Brewer Sean Tomlinson, and all at **Cairngorm Brewery**, in having their **Black Gold** stout selected as **SIBA Supreme Champion of the Year** at the National Beer Competition. See page 36. Black Gold took the Gold award in the Porters, Strong Milds, Old Ales & Stouts category; and the Orkney based Highland Brewing Company took the Strong Ales (Over 5.6%) Gold award. Local Real Ale fans also selected Black Gold as their favourite **Beer-of-the-Year**, with Isle of Skye Brewery Black Cuillin and Cairngorm Wildcat sharing Silver. Please see page 27.

Congratulations also to Gordon and Morag Holding on the **Bandstand Bar** at the Braeval Hotel in Nairn being selected as the Highland & Western Isles Pub-of-the-Year.

Full list of winners by district on page 14

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

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Updates to the 2009 Good Beer Guide

The following amendments and deletions have been notified to CAMRA HQ:

Page 668 - Corran Inn - Deleted (pub closed)

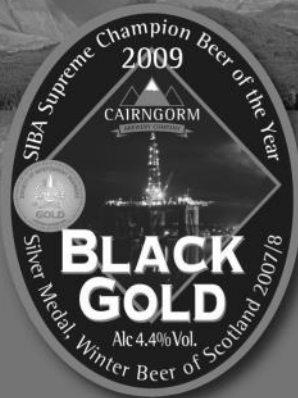
Page 670 - Whitebridge Hotel - Change of telephone number (486 226 not 486 413)

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

e-mail - consumer.advice@highland.gov.uk
www.tradingstandards.gov.uk/highland



Good things brewing in the Highlands



2009 SPECIALS

Available
Apr/May



Available
May



Available
Jun/
Jul/Aug



Available
Sept

Available
Sept/Oct



PERMANENT BEERS



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Champion of
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as voted
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Winter Walkabout 2009

It has been our custom for a number of years to finish off the year with a spin around the Inverness real ale hostelrys, and December 2009 was no exception.

This excuse to sample the real ales on offer in Inverness has grown in popularity over the years, and on a fine December evening a total of 13 real ale fans arrived at the Blackfriars rendez-vous at the appointed hour.

A good number of late afternoon/early evening drinkers were enjoying the selection of ales on offer: Robinson's Mr Scrooge (group average NBSS score 4), Camerons Christmas Ale (3), Caledonian All American (2); Old Speckled Hen was not tasted.

The large number in our party meant we could split into smaller groups, enabling us to visit more venues, and to sample a wider range of ales. Our paths crossed regularly as we criss-crossed the town, and the make-up of the groups changed as the night wore on.



From Blackfriars we crossed the road to the Phoenix, where there is a temporary Manager as they wait for someone to take over the lease. Caledonian Deuchars IPA (2), Courage Directors (2) and Orkney Dark Island (4) were available in this excellent example of an Island Bar which is on the CAMRA Heritage list.

Along the road to the Exchange (was Bar Pivo), a new real ale outlet in the City, which was filling up with youngsters. Greene King IPA (3) was on the one handpump and we found that the barman was a CAMRA member and was keen to add another handpump for the summer, if it sold well. Rain started as we walked through to the busy Kings Highway.

Slow service meant that some were not willing to wait in the queue and so moved on. Those who waited to be served tried the Houston's Santa's Wee Helper (3); also available was

Greene King Abbot Ale, but not tried.

A very loud 'juke-box' welcomed us to the Caledonian where we sampled Hardy and Hanson's Rocking Rudolf (0, sour) and two brews from the local Cairngorm Brewery - Sheepshaggers (3) and Monster Mash (2).

Toilets are upstairs, a fair trek from the bar, but a lift provides a route for wheelchair users.

The rain stopped as we made our way across the river to the Palace Hotel which was very quiet. After a wait for someone to come and serve us, we settled into the window seats, overlooking the river and castle, with Isle of Skye Brewery Red Cuillin (4).

Back across the river to the Glen Mhor Hotel where we found two Cairngorm beers: Stag (3) and Trade Winds. Then on to Number 27 for two Orkney beers: Red MacGregor (4) and Dark Island (4). Tight sparklers/creamers on the pumps seemed to lead to a lot of wastage.

Onwards and upwards to our final stop of the evening, the Castle Tavern, where we found a new Isle of Skye special - Cuillin Gorm (4), made with blueberries. A more bitter brew than some of the full fruit beers. Hebridean Berserker (4), plus Cairngorm Wildcat (3.5) and Trade Winds (4) completed an excellent selection of Highlands & Western Isles real ales. Some very tasty sausage rolls provided very welcome and much-needed sustenance!

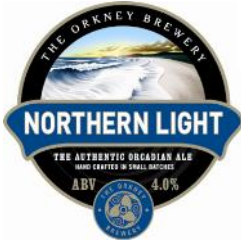
We settled in to enjoy the live folk music and lively conversation over a few more beers - no queue for service here! A special thank-you to Veronica for the generous hospitality, and for giving our weary octogenarian a lift home.

Thanks to all who joined us to taste what the Highland Capital had to offer in December; a fine range of breweries and their beers were represented. Other outlets that serve real ale on a permanent basis but which were not visited on this occasion are the Heathmount Hotel (usually have 3 beers available), Johnny Foxes (Old Speckled Hen on top pressure), the Snowgoose (Timothy Taylor Landlord and Caledonian Deuchars IPA), and Clachnaharry Inn (constantly changing range of five beers, regularly featuring brews from the Greene King stable and the Inveralmond Brewery).



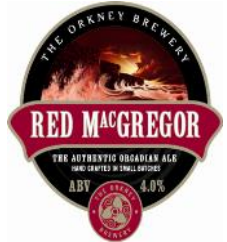
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Branch Diary (Meetings start at 7.30 pm)

Sat 25 th April		Social/Outing/Tasting to the Atlas Brewery & Lochaber
Tue 28 th April	Tasting Panel	Blackfriars, Inverness
>>> May is Mild Month <<<		
Tue 5 th May	Committee Meeting	Bandstand Bar, Nairn
Tue 26 th May	Tasting Panel	Fort Augustus hostelries
Thurs 4 th - Sat 6 th June	23 rd Great Grampian Beer Festival	Richard Donald Stand, Pittodrie Stadium, Aberdeen
Tue 9 th June	Branch Meeting	Cawdor Tavern
Sat 20 th June	Marymas Mediaeval Fair Real Ale Bar - Please see page 12	
25 th - 27 th June	Scottish Real Ale Festival	Assembly Rooms, Edinburgh
Tue 30 th June	Tasting Panel	Dores & Inverness
Tue 7 th July	Committee Meeting	Whitebridge Hotel
Tue 28 th July	Tasting Panel	Aviemore hostelries
Tue 4 th August	Branch Meeting	Glen Hotel, Newtonmore
Tue 25 th August	Tasting Panel	Black Isle West
Tue 1 st Sept	Committee Meeting	The Anderson, Fortrose
Sat 12 th Sept <i>To be confirmed</i>		Social/Outing to Isle of Skye Brewery, and Skye & Lochalsh Real Ale Hostelries
18 th - 26 th Sept	* 8 th Loch Ness Beer Festival	Benleva Hotel, Drumnadrochit
Sat 19 th Sept	Hill Walk, Social & Tasting	Benleva Hotel, Drumnadrochit
Tue 29 th Sept	Tasting Panel	Black Isle East
End Sept (TBC)	* 5 th Inverness Beer Festival	Castle Tavern, Inverness
Tue 6 th Oct	Committee Meeting	Blackfriars, Inverness
22 nd - 25 th Oct	* 5 th Ullapool Beer Festival	Morefield Motel, Ullapool

* Not all events listed are necessarily organised by CAMRA.

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

Please see the regularly updated on-line diary at www.highlandcamra.org.uk

Contact

Gareth Hardman (Secretary & Branch Contact) - 01463 238462

Details

18, Scorguie Gardens, Inverness, IV 3 8 SS.

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



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

Mike Whittall - 01463 831259
news@highlandcamra.org.uk

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Festival News

A quick report from my very brief excursion to Glencoe for the annual **FebruaryFest at the Clachaig Inn**. En route from Drumnadrochit I called in for a spot of sampling in Fort William:

I went to Cobbs@Nevisport for a quick lunch and some Red MacGregor (3), then to the Grog and Gruel for some Skylight (3), and on to the Ben Nevis (Ben Bar) where I tried the Caley 80/- (3). Newsletters were deposited safely and then it was on to the Clachaig.

I checked in to my room which was perfectly comfortable and with a spectacular view - not that I was planning on spending much time in the room! Quickly down to the bar where the following ales were available:- Alba, Midnight Sun (4), Cairngorm Gold (4), Young Pretender (4), Red Cuillin (4), Moo Coo Brew (3), Blaven, and Suilven. Unfortunately I didn't manage to try them all before it was time to attend the Isle of Skye Brewery Beer Tasting session.

The beer tasting session involved nosing some hops, tasting some malt and, unsurprisingly, drinking several bottled Isle of Skye brewery

beers. The session was hosted by Norrie MacLeod who did his best to keep the rowdy rabble (well mainly me) in check as the beers flowed on. A really good time was had by all before I retired to the residents bar with a bunch of Geordies for a last pint of Midnight Sun (my favourite of the day).

You will not be surprised to learn that I didn't make breakfast in the morning, but I'm sure it would have been lovely. It was great to see this fine Highland hostelry so busy on one of our dark February evenings, and I'd strongly recommend your attending next year.

I'll see you there! Cheers, Steve.

National Cask Ale Week

CAMRA has teamed up with Cask Marque, The Independent Family Brewers of Britain, Enterprise Inns, and Punch Taverns to bring you the first ever National Cask Ale Week.

NATIONAL
Cask Ale
WEEK
6th - 13th APRIL 2009

Taking place from 6th to 13th April 2009, it will be a week of campaigning across the UK to promote the importance and pleasures of drinking real ale in pubs. Cask Ale Week will provide essential support for community pubs whilst also promoting real ale as the unique selling point for the British pub.

Hot on the heels of the first ever Nairn Beer Festival at the Braeval Bar, held at the end of March, two of our leading Inverness Real Ale hostelries, **Blackfriars** and **Castle Tavern**, will be supporting National Cask Ale Week by hosting events:

George MacLean will be running a festival at the Tavern from Thursday 9th April through to Monday 13th April, to coincide with Cask Ale Week. He will have a range of English Ales on the outside bar and Scottish Ales inside.

Del Graham has a week of activities planned at Blackfriars, between Monday 6th April and Monday 13th April, including meet the brewer, quiz, ceilidh and race nights; various bands and, of course, the Singing Landlord. A wide range of cask ales will be on offer throughout culminating with a Guess the Cask Ale event.

Hope to see you at one or other venue. Ed.

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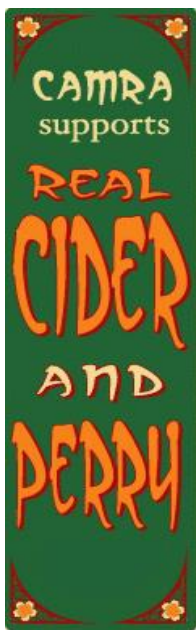


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Traditional Cider Matters

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 - Westons ciders from the box are regularly available

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

As far as we know sales of real cider are still on the increase in the Highlands & Islands. An Teallach Brewery's Davie Orr supplies boxes of the Weston's Cider and Perry, and sales of these have doubled in the past year.

A pal spotted boxes of a farm cider at the Edinburgh Farmers Market recently. The cider is made on the east coast near Dunbar apparently, but we do not have the name and cannot confirm whether it is made using traditional methods. Please tell us if you know.

Pub Closures

We understand that customers and staff at a Ross-shire bar have put out a rallying call – *Save Our Local!* Apparently the owner of the former **Drouthy Duck** in Conon Bridge has unveiled plans to demolish the pub - thought to be the oldest building in the village - and erect a new block of 12 flats on the site.

Customers of the Drouthy, which was re-named the Riverside Tavern during Inverness publican George MacLean's tenure, and which is under new management, are aghast at the prospect of losing their pub and have raised a petition to persuade its owner to think again.

The Riverside Tavern is run by Scott MacLean who took out a three-year lease on the pub just over a year ago, and who has built it up as a pub and eatery. Mr MacLean has been

reported by Jackie MacKenzie in the North Star, last November, as saying that he was very worried about the plans for the Riverside. The North Star went on to quote Mr MacLean:

"The place is going well and we have a good reputation," said Mr MacLean. "It would be a big loss to the area because people come from all around to the Riverside Tavern, to eat, socialise and to hear music."

"There is a hotel across the road, the Conon Hotel, but the village can definitely support two licensed premises, particularly with plans for all these new houses in the village."

There are a number of housing developments planned for various sites in and around the village, and Mr MacLean went on to say: "With the development of all those houses there will be more people looking for a village



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

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.

pub and a place to eat locally, why go and knock down a lovely traditional building like the Riverside Tavern and then have to build a modern pub to serve the village?"

Although not a listed building, the Riverside Tavern is believed to be the oldest building in Conon and was used as offices by the famous engineer Thomas Telford while he was working on the road bridge over the River Conon between 1806-9.

The 'WireIn' website, which is "is packed with the latest leads & tenders", included in their downloadable 'Leads & Tenders News Jan-Feb 2009', **Block of flats**, Dingwall, Demolition of pub and building of a block of twelve flats at Drouthy Duck Site, High Street, Conon Bridge, Dingwall, Planning Authority: Highland.

Regulars say Amen to Island Pub

Last November the keys to a former island pub were handed over to the Free Church to begin the building's conversion into a place of worship. Regulars held a farewell party to the Carinish Inn on North Uist.

The Free Church said the new role would see

the building bring together about 60 members who presently worship at three churches.

Apparently the move reverses a trend of old churches being converted into bars.

According to Scran (part of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland), in 1703, North Uist had one inn, probably this one at Carinish. During various periods afterwards, the island had 13 inns or public houses, although only four or five were occupied at any one time. In 1837, the Statistical Account records that there were four inns, three of which were slated.

One was at the packet (mail-boat) station at Lochmaddy in the north-east, another at Carinish at the opposite extremity of the island, and the other two 'at proper intermediate distances along the road'.

Fascinating! One can only wonder at what a 'proper intermediate distance' between two inns might be? Happily in 2009, and hopefully for many years to come, locals and visitors alike can rely upon the GBG-listed Westford Inn at nearby Cladach Chireboist.

The annual **Marymas Mediaeval Fair** has been moved from its regular August date to **Saturday 20th June**. The Fair is a traditional festival which was held every year from 1590 until 1850 on the feast day of Mary (August 15), and was then revived in 1986.

The Fair takes place between 11am and 5pm at the Northern Meeting Park in Inverness, and begins with a horse and carriage procession through the city centre, and all participants are asked to dress in medieval style costumes.



The procession ends at Inverness Town House where the Marymas Queen, in the presence of her four ladies-in-waiting, is formally crowned by the Provost and Highland Councillors in full dress in front of the crowds.

The crowning will take place at 11.30am and then all return to the park for midday.

The afternoon Fair consists of over 90 trade and voluntary sideshows, delicatessen, tea tent, BBQ, entertainment, plus a number of performers and many other events.

Highlands & Western Isles CAMRA will, as usual, be running a **Real Ale Bar**, which will offer Cairngorm Brewery Black Gold, your Highlands & Western Isles Beer-of-the-Year, plus another three or four brews from local Highlands & Islands breweries.

We always try to offer a mix of beer styles and strengths, and we try to choose ales which are not regularly on offer in Inverness.

We look forward to seeing you there! Ed.

Our **Singing Landlord** from Blackfriars, Del Graham, is performing as Jim Reeves at Eden Court on 16th May as part of a concert for Diabetes UK. He will have moral support in the audience from his family, so your humble Branch Secretary will be making his debut as a barman on that Saturday.

Any customers making a comment on the quality of the ales may have to contend with a challenge backed up by a newly acquired Real Ale tasters certificate!! Cheers, GNH.

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18th - 26th September 2009

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Highlands & Western Isles Pubs-of-the-Year for 2009

A record number of votes this year, and more of our pubs attracted votes than ever before. A sure sign that there is no shortage of great real ale hostelrys in this one-time real ale desert.

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

Congratulations to publicans and their teams at -

Inverness & District North - Benleva Hotel, Drumnadrochit

The sweet chestnut tree outside this 400 year old former manse is a former hanging tree. Inside four handpumps dispense an ever-changing range of mainly Highland & Island beers, including Isle of Skye and an occasional beer from the wood. Real cider is served from a fifth handpump. Host to the annual Loch Ness Beer Festival, held in September.

Inverness & District South - Bandstand Bar, Braeval Hotel, Nairn

The Bandstand Bar overlooks Nairn's famous Victorian Bandstand after which it is named. A relative new-comer to the local real ale scene, it has quickly become popular with locals who enjoy the friendly atmosphere and bar food. Walk up a thirst along the promenade, or admire the traditional Fishertown which sits behind a harbour built by Thomas Telford.

Aviemore & the Cairngorms - Glen Hotel, Newtonmore

In the heart of the BBC's 'Monarch of the Glen' country, and close to the Monadhliath and Cairngorm Mountains, this elegant Edwardian hotel has a busy local trade and is popular with outdoor enthusiasts. A mixture of English and Scottish beers are served, often from local breweries, plus a real cider. There is an extensive bar menu.

Wester Ross - Applecross Inn

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

South Skye & Lochalsh - Plockton Hotel

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

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

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

Fort William & Lochaber - Grog & Gruel, Fort William

Up to six real ales are on tap in summer at this bare-floored traditional ale house, fewer in winter. Owned by the same family as the Clachaig Inn in Glencoe, it has regular live music and beer festivals. The beers are predominantly Scottish and it is busy with locals, outdoor enthusiasts and tourists.

Caithness & Sutherland - Scourie Hotel

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

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

The Old Inn

Gairloch, Ross-shire, IV21 2BD

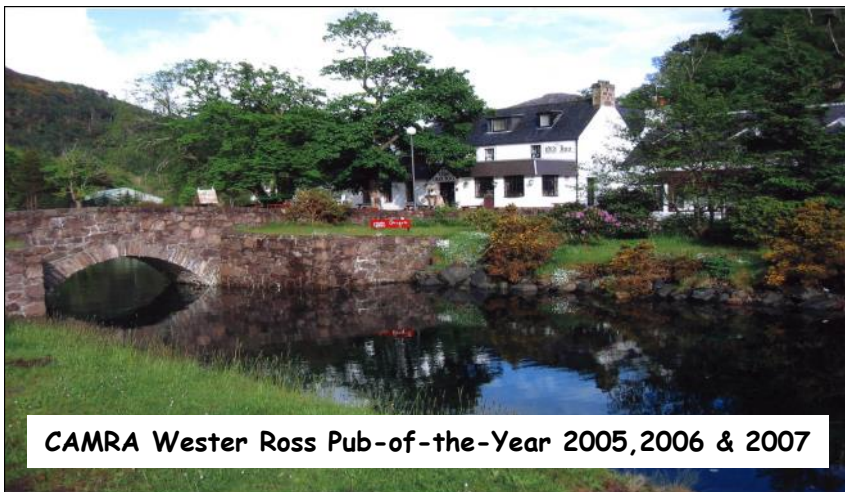
Telephone: 01445 712006 Enquiries - *Call Free* - 0800 542 5444

Scottish Tourist Board 3 Star Inn

AA Best Seafood Pub for Scotland 2005/06

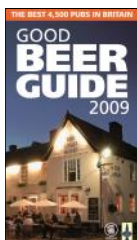
Abbot Ale Perfect Pub for Scotland 2005/06

AA Pub of the Year for Scotland & Northern Ireland 2003



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Food served all day

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

Focus on Del Graham & Janette Scott

Del & Janette run the Blackfriars in Inverness. They took over the lease from S&N Pub Enterprises on February 8th 2007. Janette is the licensee and looks after front of house whilst Del looks after the kitchen, the all important cellar, and the microphone as he is probably the only singing landlord in the Highlands. They recently married, on November 1st 2008, and have a house in Inverness.



Q. Where were you born?

A. Del is a born and bred Invernessian and Janette, although born in Dingwall is more associated with Kylesku where her father still lives having been the ferryman on the Kylesku ferry for many years until it ceased to run when the bridge was built.

Q. What is your background?

A. Del left school at 16 and joined the RAF where he served 12 years as an electronics engineer. During that period he worked part time in bars and launched his singing career whilst serving in Germany between 1964/67 during the "Mersey Beat" era.

Del's grandmother Mrs Paterson owned the Loch Ness Hotel until she sold it in the 1960's, sadly now due for demolition. Del continued his hospitality career, learning the trade "hands on", working his way through all departments up to management level in the hotel and catering industry.

Janette on leaving school attended catering

college in Perth where she attained her City & Guilds in hotel management. Since then she has worked for various companies, the last one being Little Chef before becoming self employed when taking on Blackfriars.

Q. When were you introduced to real ale?

A. They were both introduced to real ale after taking over at Blackfriars (especially Del!). On seeing the impressive real ale history associated with the pub they were determined to keep it going, hopefully serving only Scottish and Highland ales from the excellent brewers we have up here.



Q. What real ales/styles do you like?

A. Del has no particular favourite style of ale and enjoys all the ones he stocks and tastes, but is an ardent supporter, as are his customers, of Rob Hill's excellent beers from the Highland Brewery on Orkney. Whilst on honeymoon in Perth Del was introduced to the magical tastes of Thrappeldouser and Ossian, from Inveralmond Brewery, and which can now be found at Blackfriars as guest beers.

Q. You stock a variety of English Ales. Is there a possibility of stocking more Scottish ones?

A. Unfortunately, as Blackfriars is a leased pub, the brewery involved has already got ties with primarily English breweries on a reciprocal basis which makes it extremely awkward for us to explain to both regulars and visitors as to why we have no Scottish or Highland ales in a Highland pub. After a long and frustrating period we were finally allowed a compromise of one guest Scottish ale. One ale out of seven hand pumps hardly seemed a compromise to us.

As we are a tourist pub, and mentioned in the Good Beer Guide, we feel that we should be able to choose the ales we and our customers want. Being a Highland pub we should be able to stock all Highland ales or at the very least all Scottish ones.

Q. What type of pubs do you like?

A. We both like pubs that are quaint and quiet, full of character and welcoming, with



Blackfriars Highland Pub

Great Beer

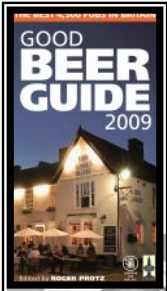


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www.ullapoolbeerfestival.co.uk

Real Ale in the Real Highlands



real ales, a real fire and good food.

Q. What is the best part of your work?

A. Seeing and hearing customers enjoying themselves after enjoying the drinks we have and the food we serve.

Q. What is the worst part of your work?

A. Clearing up, paying the bills - especially to Mr Darling - and the long hours which are inevitable with the business.

Q. Has the downturn in customer spending and the credit crunch had any affect?

A. There has definitely been some effect on the business, but certainly not to a drastic level and we are ticking over well.

Q. What are your hobbies/interests?

A. If more spare time was available to Del he would like to get back to some golfing. He enjoys all kinds of music. Janette is a keen gardener but again it is finding the time. They both enjoy dining out and entertaining friends at home.



Q. Any future plans?

A. Health and happiness and continued good fortune and success at Blackfriars.

Conservation Matters

Brandon Brewery, in Suffolk, is helping with conservation in the local environment with Highland Cattle. The spent malted barley is a favourite treat for these highland cattle.



A herd of 26 highland cattle graze a number of different sites throughout the year. The sites grazed include

areas belonging to the Suffolk Wildlife Trust & Forestry Commission. Cows do not graze as intensively and in a different manner to sheep and so are favoured on more environmentally sensitive areas such as SSSI's.

The cows break up overgrown areas and also help to suppress overgrowth of bracken and saplings. Their dung provides flies for birds and bats to feed on, and therefore only certain types of spray are used on the cows to prevent parasites. The cows are very food orientated and their favourite treat is brewer's grain, this helps to find them when they are grazing very large and overgrown areas.

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

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*)
Number 27, Inverness
Phoenix Bar, 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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tel. 01381 620 236
www.theanderson.co.uk

Snowgoose, Inverness
 Tomatin Country Inn (S)
 Dores Inn
 Whitebridge Hotel, Loch Ness South
 Bothy, Fort Augustus
 Inch (Inchnacardoch) Hotel, 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)

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, Kincaig

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)

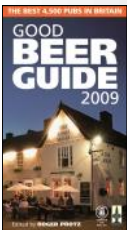
Fort William & Lochaber

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
 Corroul Halt Tea Rooms (01397 732236)

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.

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

Tomdoun Sporting Lodge
 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
 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

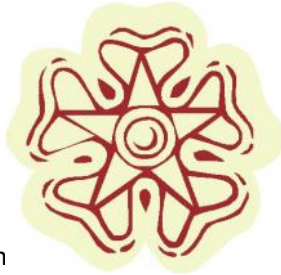
Isle of Raasay Hotel
 JJ's Bistro at Struan
 Dunvegan Hotel
 Stein Inn, Waternish
 Edinbane Hotel
 The Lodge at Edinbane
 Ferry Inn, Uig
 Uig Hotel, Uig
 Pub at the Pier, Uig

A total of 33 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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at Roy Bridge

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

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11 Craigrory, North Kessock, Inverness. IV1 3XH

Highlands & Islands Brewers in 2009

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. Local Branch website, or simply send us an e-mail.

You can obtain NBSS cards from your local CAMRA branch or download from the members area of the national website.

CAMRA HQ no longer accept the cards, but we are happy to receive your feedback in any format. Please send to Branch Contact (Please see page 6).

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

News of Brews

After the successful launch of Isle of Skye's blueberry brew '**Cuillin Gorm**' at Christmas, they will be brewing more this year, with limited quantities to be bottled. Earlier in the year this time so look out for it during the summer.

Hebridean Gold is now brewed on Skye and bottled in Alloa, along with Red and Black Cuillin. All three now sport the redesigned labels which match the new pump clips.

We hear that Cairngorm Brewery have been battling with the elements. Temperatures in February were down to -20 deg centigrade, which meant frozen equipment and bursting pipes. Happily not too much beer was lost.

Black Isle Brewery produced four seasonal beers for Christmas, all bottle-conditioned in 330ml bottles. Two new brews, an 8.5% ABV Export Oatmeal Stout made with oatmeal, and St Nicholas Knicker Dropper Glory, a 7.5% winter warmer, made with caramelised malt and spices. The 6.5% IPA is now labelled as Goldeneye Pale ale and Hibernator was again

available, this time at an ABV of 7.2%.

We understand that the stout and IPA will be available all year round, once the new brew plant has been installed in the Spring.

Hebridean Brewery in Stornoway have added a couple of seasonal brews to their range: a seasonal variant of Islander, called Pagan Dark Winter Ale, brewed with dark crystal malt, and for March/April/May they plan to brew a 4.3% ABV Island Spring, mid colour with a reddish tinge and a crisp taste.

Portman Ruling Welcomed

Sinclair Breweries has welcomed the decision by drinks industry watchdog, the Portman Group, not to uphold a complaint against its Skull Splitter ale. The future of the award winning ale - produced by the Sinclair owned Orkney Brewery - was in doubt after a report claimed its Viking branded bottles had an "aggressive" theme. A report, by management consultancy PIPC, was commissioned by the Portman Group to investigate compliance with an industry code of



(Continued on page 28)

Highlands & Western Isles Beers-of-the-Year

In our Winter edition we have traditionally asked you to vote for the best local beers (i.e. brewed within the Branch Area) that you have enjoyed during the preceding twelve months.

Following changes in the way the various Champion Beers of Great Britain are selected we asked you to vote for the best beers you had sampled, in nine different categories, and we also extended the eligible beers to include any that are brewed in Scotland.

Voting closed at the end of February, and we totalled the votes to find the winning beer in each category. These results will be combined with those from other Scottish Branches and with beers selected by CAMRA Tasting Panels in the quest to find the Champion Scottish Beers and Champion Beers of Britain for each style of beer and then, in the final judging, the overall Champion Beer of Britain (CBoB).

Your local committee had wanted to continue to promote the best of Highlands & Western Isles brews and so we have carefully sifted through the mountain of votes to determine, regardless of category, the locally brewed beers polling most votes. We are delighted to announce that our Beers-of-the-Year are:

Gold:	Cairngorm Black Gold
Silver:	Isle of Skye Black Cuillin (tied vote) Cairngorm Wildcat

Dark & Light Milds	Highland Dark Munro (Orkney)
Bitters	Fyne Ales Pipers Gold (Loch Fyne)
Best Bitters	Isle of Skye Red Cuillin
Strong Bitters	Cairngorm Wildcat (Aviemore)
Golden Ales (tied vote)	Highland Orkney Best (Orkney) Cairngorm Sheepshaggers Inveralmond Ossian (Perth)
Speciality Ales (tied vote)	Isle of Skye Young Pretender Cairngorm Trade Winds
Old Ales & Strong Milds	Isle of Skye Black Cuillin
Stouts & Porters	Cairngorm Black Gold
Barley Wines & Strong Ales	Isle of Skye Cuillin Beast

Congratulations to award-winning brewers Sean Tomlinson (Cairngorm Brewery) and Pam MacRuary (Isle of Skye Brewery), and to all at the breweries and at our real ale hostellers who have helped to make these beers into Highlands & Western Isles favourites.

Tasting Notes

Black Gold - 4.4% - A Scottish stout with a wonderful rich dark colour. Smooth full bodied beer with subtle bitterness giving way to late sweetness and underlying roast barley hints.

Black Cuillin - 4.5% - A distinctive dark ale brewed with roast barley and rolled roast Scottish oatmeal, giving an almost stout-like bitterness, smoothed through the addition of pure Scottish heather honey.

Wildcat - 5.1% - A deep amber coloured ale with a complex malt and fruit flavour, and with a delicate bitterness from Challenger and Fuggles hops. Strong and distinctive.

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

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

If you have followed the Champion Beer saga, via local CAMRA newsletters such as this or by checking Branch websites, you will know that the Scottish Champion Beers for each category are judged at the Scottish Real Ale Festivals throughout the year. A very lengthy process! We are obviously very hopeful that Scottish beers, especially those brewed locally in the Highlands and Western Isles, will make it all the way through the various recommendations, area voting, and judging to the grand final itself.



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

(Continued from page 26)

practice on the naming, packaging and promotion of alcohol. Skull Splitter, an 8.5 per cent ale created over 20 years ago and sold internationally, had been highlighted in the PIPC report because its name "implied violence" and the potential impact of the strength on the drinker. Fearing one of its longest established and most popular ales could be withdrawn from sale in the UK, Sinclair Breweries Ltd launched a campaign to save Skull Splitter, a former Champion Winter Ale of Britain. Already commended for leading the way with efforts to increase awareness of sensible drinking, the brewery stressed to the Portman Group that the ale was in fact named after Thorfinn Hausakluif, the Seventh Viking Earl of Orkney - nicknamed "Skull Splitter". The brewery's campaign received support from around the world and had the backing of several politicians. Responding to the Portman Group's decision not to uphold the complaint against Skull Splitter, Norman Sinclair, managing director of Sinclair Breweries Ltd, said:

"I'm absolutely delighted by this announcement and very relieved that Skull Splitter can continue to be enjoyed here in the UK. "It's been a long process but, as responsible brewers, we accepted it was something we just had to undergo if we were to save our ale. Our campaign was vigorous, but we tried to cooperate with the Portman Group as much as possible, recognising that they also had a job to do. Clearly they've listened to what we've said and I think that's very encouraging for the drinks industry as a whole." According to Mr Sinclair the level of support the Skull Splitter campaign received had been "overwhelming". "We've had representations from all over the world," he said. "We knew Skull Splitter was popular, but the response to the news that it was under threat was simply staggering. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone in the UK and overseas who gave us their backing. It was the best Christmas present we could have received and some much needed festive cheer during what is a difficult period for the brewing industry."

Common-sense has thankfully prevailed. Ed.

WANTED

Newsletter

Editor

Applicants are likely to be real ale enthusiasts. Must have desktop publishing skills, time to spare, and be able to meet publishing deadlines.

~~REWARD~~

*Please contact
Gareth Hardman
(see page 6)*

BANDSTAND BAR, NAIRN

6 REAL ALE PUMPS

Selection of our Regular Ales



Youngs Special

Adnams Bitter

St Austell Tribute

Kelham Island Pale Rider

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**Bar Meals by an open fire - Real Ales -
Beer Garden - A La Carte Restaurant**



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.

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

- **Public houses** - stocking local ales can increase pub visits
- **Consumers** who enjoy greater beer choice and diversity
- **Local brewers** who gain from increased sales
- **The local economy** - more money is spent locally
- **The environment** due to fewer 'beer miles' resulting in less road congestion and pollution



National Mild Month - May 2009

CAMRA, with the help of pubs and brewers, will again be celebrating its **Mild in May** initiative with a variety of new events to promote this endangered beer style.

Last year, CAMRA reported that although Mild is enjoying a revival in today's real ale market, it still only accounts for an estimated 3-5% of all real ale sales. Since last May, there has been more good news on the success of small brewers published by trade bodies such as SIBA. Therefore Mild Month 2009 will further look to expand upon the progress of previous years.

Mild beers tend to be of low ABV, and are usually dark in colour, due to the use of well-roasted malts or barley, and are conventionally less hopped than bitters. Past CAMRA champion milds include Beckstones Black Dog Freddy, Hobson's Mild, and Oscar Wilde Mild by Mighty Oak.

CAMRA is urging all licensees to support the initiative by stocking a mild throughout the month of May, or even organising mild related events such as 'try before you buys' and 'meet the brewer' sessions. CAMRA hopes the month will therefore show licensees that stocking rare beer styles can offer something new to the consumer, and benefit their business in the future.

Sadly the opportunity to sample a mild in the Highlands & Western Isles is a very rare event. According to the Champion Beer of Britain 2010 Eligible Beer List (Scotland), only two beers categorised as milds are brewed in the Branch area - Hebridean Celtic Black from Stornoway, and Cuillin Black Face from Sligachan. From a little further afield are Highland Dark Munro and Light Munro from Orkney, and Arran Dark. Does this mean that there are no milds brewed in the Highlands at all? Happily we can confirm that Cairngorm Brewery will be brewing their seasonal 3.7% ABV Mild May. So although local mild sightings may be few and far between, hopefully you may find a **LocAle mild** to enjoy during May.

Please do encourage your local publicans to try a mild if they can, a local brew if possible! Please let us know if you spot a mild in a local hostelry and we will do our best to check it out.

National Mild Day will be celebrated on **Saturday 9th May**. See www.camra.org.uk





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Real Ale Routes

There have always been some great drives, or tours, in the Highlands & Islands but, for real ale fans at least, finding a suitable refreshment stop has been less than straightforward! How times have changed - today, if you can find a willing pilot, many of these great drives also qualify for the title 'Real Ale Route'. One of our Drumnadrochit real ale fans sent in this report:

A fine February Saturday encouraged us to have a day out in the car, taking a circular route via Fort William and Newtonmore. Down the Great Glen on the A82, by Loch Laggan on the A86, and back up the B9152 (quiet scenic route) and A9 to Inverness, then back on the A82 to Drum. No shortage of real ale pubs to visit, but I limited myself to a conservative five.

After a stroll around Fort William, I found myself outside the Grog and Gruel just as it was opening. Two Atlas Brewery beers were available, very tempting, but I had been keen to try the Glenfinnan Standard Ale (2, a bit flat and not too much taste). Glenfinnan beers are not seen too far north of Fort William, so a rare opportunity to sample one.

Back through Spean Bridge, and to the Stronlossit Hotel at Roy Bridge where two Cairngorm seasonal brews were on tap: Bards Ale (4) and Winter Flurry (4). A new cask of Atlas Three Sisters was being pulled through the third handpump. A fair amount of landscaping work was in progress in the hotel gardens ahead of the upcoming tourist season.

A drive through Monarch of the Glen country took us to the Glen Hotel in Newtonmore, busy with afternoon diners and pool players. Caledonian Deuchars IPA (4) and Westons Old Rosie Cider were on offer. A walk around Kingussie (I know it doesn't take long) and off to the Suie Hotel in Kinraig. Two more Cairngorm beers, Stag (4) and Trade Winds, and the roaring fire warmed us up after the late afternoon drop in temperature. Continuing along the B9152, the last stop was at the very busy Old Bridge Inn in Aviemore. Caledonian Deuchars IPA and 80/- were options, but Orkney Red MacGregor (3) finished the day off very nicely thank-you!



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70/- has dropped so dramatically that it simply isn't worth stocking. All the locals either drink cask ale or lager. Somer, one of the Hotel's two resident dogs, had nine puppies on the 15th January - Father as yet unidentified. All the puppies have homes, most will be staying locally, and one will remain in the licensed trade, going to George at the Inch Hotel in Fort Augustus.

A quiz night was held recently raising £170 for the local lifeboat. We have also been running a Sunday Roast for £5 promotion, from 1pm - 3pm every Sunday, and we will be keeping this running all spring. Booking is always a good idea. Cheers, Steve.

- The **Masonic Club** in Inverness has closed. We understand this is a temporary closure while alternative premises are sought.
- The **Caley Inn**, by the Caledonian Canal locks in Inverness, has been closed for some time. Building works are currently in progress. We do not know if it will re-open as a pub, or if it is being converted into housing. A planning application was lodged for an extension, under the Caley Inn.

• **News from the Grog !!**

Just a quick note to let you know that we will be holding an Ale & Pie festival over Easter. The hope is to have 10 cask ales on dispense, mostly from the smaller Highland Breweries. We have a great range of pie recipes which we are perfecting & tasting at the moment. Is there anything better than a pint of ale and a freshly cooked pie? We are still waiting for details to be finalised, music and entertainment to be confirmed, etc. As we get more information we will keep you informed. If you want to keep in touch with what's going on in the Grog and Gruel a trip to our frequently updated blog will let you know what we're up to:

<http://grogandgruel.blogspot.com/>

We also hope our website will become a well used resource for people wanting to keep up with the Lochaber area and Ale scene. We have been cataloguing our cask ales and breweries - a very long and laborious job but we are near to being finished:

<http://www.grogandgruel.co.uk>

Neil Dennison, Grog and Gruel, Fort William.

Inns & Things

- **Wotherspoons** comes to Fort Augustus!

No, not JDW but George Wotherspoon who has purchased the Inchnacardoch Hotel, overlooking Loch Ness near Fort Augustus.

According to a letter which was published in February's What's Brewing, George's first major change at the hotel was to put in real ale. Surely this would be madness in the middle of winter? But George, a lifelong fan of real ale who feels it should be available in all establishments, put his money where his mouth is and installed a handpump. First ale on tap was Ossian, from Inveralmond, which went on to outsell ALL the fizzy stuff by 3 to 1. A good move by George and we wish him every success and warmly welcome another real ale outlet in our area.

No promises, but if time allows we'll swing by and pay him a visit on our way back from Lochaber in April. Why not join us on our trip to the Atlas brewery on 25th April.

- **News from the Ben(leva)** - We are now officially a keg-free zone. Demand for keg

• **Meet the Blackfriar at Blackfriars**

Landlord Del has secured a special brew from the Inveralmond Brewery called - 'Blackfriars' - yes, really! Normally this very deceptively drinkable 7% ABV beer is only available in bottles for export, but some of the brew has been cask-conditioned and will be available as an occasional guest ale in the pub. Pop into the Blackfriars and you may be lucky enough to find it on tap.

- My brother Allan, who turns 40 in November of this year, was once again asked for ID at Tesco in Inverness last week when buying bottles of ale. Does this make him the youngest publican in the Highlands??

Quite what he was doing buying bottles of ale from Tesco when he can buy the real thing here is another matter entirely...

Steve (co-owner of the **Benleva Hotel**).

- Pub Report - **The Old Mill**, Brodie - 20th December - Houston Killellan - Score 4. This pub's beers are consistently good. Usually 1 pump only with Houston / Cairngorm occasional - David Molyneux.

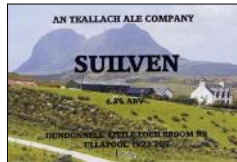
More News of Brews

We have heard that a couple of new brews from An Teallach were on tap at the Clachaig Inn for their annual FebruaryFest event.

The **Clachaig Blog** noted:

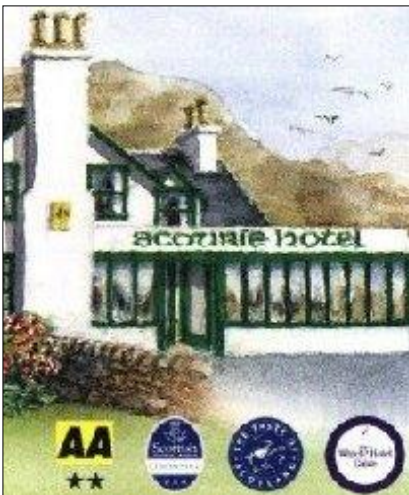
An Teallach Brewery, run by former Clachaig entertainer (and purveyor of terrible jokes) Davie Orr in Dundonnell, have come up trumps with a couple of new ales.

The Hector is a lovely smooth stout named after the famous boat that sailed from Ullapool to what became Nova Scotia in the late 18th Century.



And **Suilven**, named after that famous whale backed big lump of a mountain thingy, has won over a few fans, being a nice light hoppy number.

Hopefully find these locally soon. Ed.



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Tasting Panel Matters

January 2009

Gareth, Allan and Bill made up the trio of tasters who met up in the Kings Highway for the first tasting meeting of 2009. Isle of Skye Brewery Black Cuillin was the only Highlands & Western Isles beer available and, sadly, this usually very fine Old Ale was a poor example, scoring a mere 3 out of 10 from everyone. Having some malt and roast character, but it was considered to be totally lacking in any balance of fruit and hop.

It was thought at the time that this was probably a poor product from the usually reliable Isle of Skye brewery, and not a fault of the publican, however subsequently a card from Branch Chair Eric Mills for the same beer (same batch) at the Benleva Hotel two days later was scored 9!!

So it would appear that the batch of beer from the brewery was fine and that Wetherspoons have, after all, some cellar problems.

A short stroll to Academy Street next and into the Phoenix where Northern Light from the Orkney Brewery was on offer. This pale yellow Golden Ale was also not in the best of condition, being hazy and lacking condition. Grapefruit and other citrus fruit flavours were noted, and it had a good hop character, but lacked any malt flavour and scored two 5s and a 4.

Across the road next to the Blackfriars where two Inveralmond beers were on offer. Homecoming Scotland was the first to be tasted, and at last the tasters were able to enjoy a good pint. There was little in the nose to suggest the massive hop taste that was to follow. Grapefruit was noted in the full spicy fruitiness which held into a long aftertaste. All three tasters scored it 8.

Our tasting panel evening finished with a pint of Thrappledouser, from the same brewery. No cards were filled in but it was a most enjoyable pint - similar to the Homecoming, but with an even greater hop smack; it was considered the BOTE (Beer-of-the-Evening).

February 2009

February saw a short trip out of Inverness, over the Kessock Bridge to The Anderson in Fortrose, where five of the regular tasters were joined by owner Jim Anderson and two visiting CAMRA members, Ian from North Herts, and Wayne from Lincs - both taking advantage of The Anderson's winter offer of two nights for the price of one.

Jim Anderson, a self-confessed beer geek, had once again pushed the boat out for our tasting

session making four cask ales and two bottle-conditioned ales available for tasting.

First beer to be tried was **Stewart's Pentland IPA**. This golden coloured 4.1% ABV brew from Edinburgh had good hop and fruit characteristics in both the aroma and taste, producing a nice bitterness which lingered into the aftertaste. Although a couple of people commented that the hop in both the aroma and taste was not as dominant and as citrus as there had been in their previous encounters of this beer it still scored a very respectable 7 out of 10.

Next up was **Black Isle Yellowhammer**, the 3.9% golden bitter from the local brewery. Not much given away in the aroma, with just a little fruit and hop detected, however good strong hop and fruit flavours with a good lasting bitterness does make this golden coloured ale drink as a traditional bitter despite a light malt flavour. The comments round the table agreed - a very good example of the beer secured another 7 score.

Over the Minch to Stornoway for **Hebridean Seaforth Ale**. Classed as a Golden Ale this 4.3% beer was more amber in colour and although it drank with the bitterness of a best bitter it had an aroma dominated initially by fruity, flowery hops. This aroma declined in the taste to produce a very well balanced bittersweet and quaffable ale, scoring another 7.

The last cask ale was **Black Isle Hibernator**; a 6.2% ruby/black Old Ale/Barley Wine which had yeast and fruit on the nose, with almost a woody character. Living up to its name I'm sure Jim had had this tucked away in the cellar for a while as it was a gloriously smooth winter warmer. Dominated by malts and roasts in the taste with caramel and plum fruit, with no evidence of hops, the intensity of flavour nearly carried full strength into the aftertaste. Brewed in previous years with varying ABV's, some up to 7.5%, I think the beer is better for its lower alcohol content, although it does make it dangerously drinkable. It scored fully deserved 8's & 9's around the table.

Onto the bottle-conditioned ales and up first was **Black Isle Porter**. This 4.6% dark brown ale poured beautifully producing a lovely, lasting head. Roasts and malts dominated the aroma with a little caramel present as well. Full on roasted malts in the taste with some blackcurrant and a balanced bitter/sweetness. Reasonably thin in body as you may not have expected, looking at the colour, but perfectly OK in a porter, with the thicker bodied dark

(Continued on page 38)

the loch ness inn

it's what's under the surface...



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SIBA National Beer Competition - 2009

SIBA announced the 10 winners of its National Beer Competition on Friday 6th March, at the close of its annual conference in Stratford-on-Avon.

The winners were selected last month at a judging day at the Canalhouse pub in Nottingham, where the panel tasted the 55 finalist cask and seven bottled beers, served in perfect condition. Commenting on this year's competition, SIBA chairman Peter Amor commented,

"The standard of entries for our National Beer Competition is higher every year, which makes it harder for our judges to select the category and overall champion winners.

"With this focus on quality, taste and provenance, it is no surprise that the smaller breweries are bucking the greater market trend and growing sales volumes."

And the winners were ...

Supreme Champion of the Year

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	Brewery	Product	ABV
Gold	Cairngorm Brewery Co Ltd	Black Gold	4.4
Silver	Arundel Brewery Ltd	Sussex Mild	3.7
Bronze	Oakham Ales	Bishop's Farewell	4.6
Bronze	Castle Rock Brewery	Screech Owl	5.5

Champion Strong Ales (Over 5.6%)

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	Brewery	Product	ABV
Gold	Highland Brewing Co Ltd	Orkney Blast	6.0
Silver	Westerham Brewery Co	Audit Ale	6.2
Bronze	Green Jack Brewing Co	Ripper	8.5

Champion Porters, Strong Milds, Old Ales & Stouts

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	Brewery	Product	ABV
Gold	Cairngorm Brewery Co Ltd	Black Gold	4.4
Silver	Bartrams Brewery	Comrade Bill Bartram's Egalitarian Anti-Imperialist Soviet Stout	6.9
Bronze	Lancaster Brewery	Lancaster Black	4.6

Full Results at http://www.siba.co.uk/AC2007/?2009:National_Winners

Note that SIBA (Society of Independent Brewers) categories differ from CAMRA:

Milds; Bitters & Pale Ales (Up to 4.0% ABV); Best Bitters (4.1% to 4.5% ABV); Premium Bitters (4.6% - 5.0% ABV); Strong Bitters (5.1% to 5.5% ABV); Strong Ales (Over 5.6% ABV); Speciality Beers; Porters, Strong Milds, Old Ales & Stouts; Bottled Beers.

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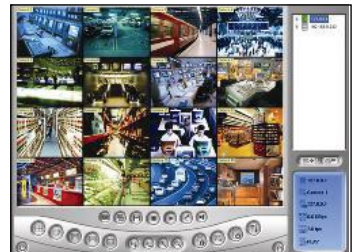
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Highlands & Western Isles Branch

(Continued from page 34) brews tending to be stouts. The strong roast flavour and bitterness carried through into the aftertaste. The carbonation of this beer was just perfect and in my opinion was the best bottle-conditioned beer I have tasted in a very long time indeed. Having tried around 40 BC beers in the last twelve months from around the UK I have noticed that it is extremely difficult to get the yeast flavours and carbonation right. This beer was nigh on perfect and I was not alone in thinking that had we not known it was from a bottle we would have taken it as a cask ale. It is the only BC beer I have tasted that fully justifies the "CAMRA says this is Real Ale" tag on the bottle. Unsurprisingly scores of 9 abounded with even a mention of a 10. The second BC brew was **Orkney Dark Island Reserve**. This is based on the well known Orkney brew but is matured for some months in Orkney malt whisky casks and is a whopping 10%. The whisky flavours in this beer absolutely dominated the flavours and made it too difficult for us to score the traditional beer flavours. Rich and full bodied it almost drank as a

liqueur. A beer definitely for sipping and sharing. Just as we thought the session had ended Jim managed to produce two more beers. Both from **Brewdog** and although not bottle-conditioned beers both had been matured in whisky casks. **Paradox** is a 10% Islay malt cask brew which was immediately evident from it's peaty aroma. Although not so strong in whisky as the Dark Island, the distinctive Islay flavour ran through this stout. The second Brewdog beer was an 8% golden **IPA** which had been matured in an Islay cask. Islay peaty flavours were easily detectable but did not overwhelm the IPA taste.

So how to pick a beer of the evening after a rather heady tasting session? Truth is I don't think we did reach a final decision as it was such a close call between **Hibernator** and **Porter**, so well done to the **Black Isle Brewery**.

* Many thanks to Jim Anderson for hosting and contributing to such a splendid tasting meeting.

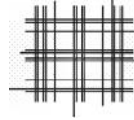
Join our tasting panel on their travels - coming soon to a pub near **YOU**. Please see page 6 or check our on-line diary for full details.

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

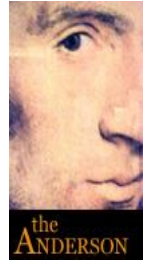




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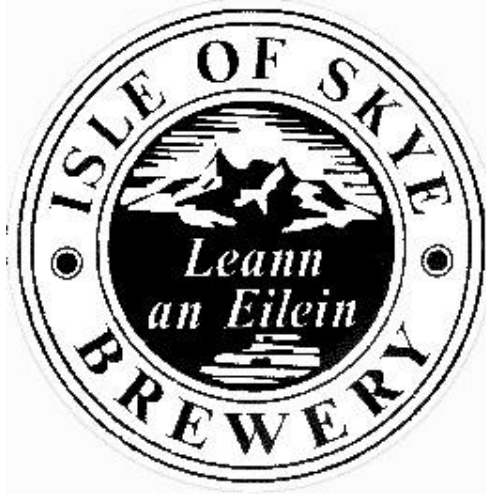


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