

What's Yours Then?

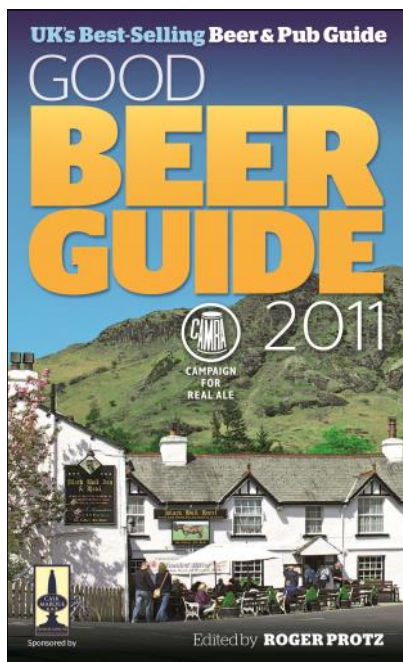
Highlands & Western Isles CAMRA
Free Newsletter



Contains Full List of Highlands & Western Isles Real Ale Outlets



**Blackfriars is Scottish
Cider Pub-of-the-Year**



Real Ale really is
making a Comeback
Celebrate with the
Good Beer Guide
Only £10 to
CAMRA members



**CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE**

Autumn 2010

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

- > Updated Branch Diary
- > Tasting Panel Update
- > Socials & Outings - Reports
- > Festivals Update
- > Focus on - Mark Phinn
- > 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 Steven, who keep us up-to-date with brews and what is happening in local pubs. Please note that the editor reserves the right to edit contributions sent for publication. All marks and copyright are acknowledged.

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

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

- Full Page Advert..... £58.00
- 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.

4,000+ copies are distributed to CAMRA 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.

The end of September signals the year end for the Branch and a time to reflect ahead of our **AGM on Tuesday 9th November.**

It has been a challenging year for the trade, a year when every cost associated with making and distributing beer has increased, a year of recession, and a year when the Government has heaped even more tax on a pint of beer.

It is not all doom and gloom however and real ale is making a comeback. For the first time in half a century real ale has increased its share of the draught beer market. According to figures released by the British Beer and Pub Association real ale's share of the draught beer market - served in pubs and clubs - rose from 5.8% in 2008 to 6.1% last year, the first increase for generations.

There are now over 700 real ale brewers in the UK, the highest number since the second world war and four times as many as in 1971, when CAMRA was founded for a last-ditch effort to save real ale from oblivion.

So some good news for a change, and which seems to be confirmed in Scotland judging by the number of new breweries opening, and the number of existing breweries which are carrying out expansions to their operations.

This is no time to rest on our laurels, and brewers and publicans continue to need our support; hopefully the efforts of the Branch have contributed in some small way to the very welcome revival of our National Drink.

Why not become involved in Branch activities? It would be great if you can spare a couple of hours a month to help our small committee to carry out various Branch functions, but if you cannot make a regular commitment we would still be very pleased to see you at a meeting, or at a social, or on one of our outings. Our Branch membership continues to grow so we must be getting something right? Come along to our AGM and let us know what you think.

Most of all enjoy your pint - of Real Ale that is!

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



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"Some things are clear . . ."

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Glenfinnan Outing

It's the 10th July. The weather is fine. It's my birthday. Another year older. It's the busiest time for my B&B but I was taking the day off! I'm meeting the other chaps outside the post office in Drum (Drumnadrochit for those not local). We are on our first outing taking in Glenfinnan (and the Glenfinnan Brewery), plus Fort William and some areas of the West.

First things first though and I open my cards. I've done well this year, and with quite a few gifts. No present from the old man though! Or a card!! He is in big trouble!!! I am now running late so leg it to the post office. Not easy with heels! The coach has not gone past but I do not see Walter, Bob, or the others (the usual revellers) when I get there. Our regular driver Sandy and his trusty minibus arrives within seconds of my arrival and Walter, Bob and the others come out from behind the bushes. In hiding were we??

Onto the minibus and Walter gives me a birthday card (Thanks Wal) and the chaps all sing me happy birthday. I realise that I am the only female on this trip. Why is that?? Del takes a guess at my age - 38. Let's keep it at that shall we? Ha, ha!

Our first stop is in Fort William where we are dropped in the car park and wander up the high street like the magnificent 13. A few of us were aiming for the Grog & Gruel, a recent regional POTY winner. It was closed. This was 11.45 and we had forgotten our Good Beer Guide which would have told us it opens at noon! So we wandered over to the first real ale bar we found open - the Ben Bar at the Ben Nevis Bar & Restaurant. Three real ales on hand pump: 4.6% Orkney Dark Island, 3.8% Deuchars IPA, and 4.1% Caledonian 80/- . I tried the Dark Island. It looked fine, right temperature, but tasted slightly sour. However it was the first beer of the day to be drawn. After about the fourth pint pulled it was fine. Those that tried it gave a score of 3. Gareth popped over to the West End Hotel, hoping to find Atlas Latitude, but none today.

We then ventured over to the Grog & Gruel where six real ales and one real cider were on offer: An Teallach 4.4% Kildonan and 4.2% Crofters Pale Ale, Williams Bros 5% Scottish

Joker IPA and 3.9% Gold, 4.3% Houston Texas, 4.5% Isle of Skye Black Cuillin, and 4.8% Weston's Bounds Scrumpy cider.

Most tried the Kildonan first and gave it a 4. We ordered food at the same time as we did not want to drink on an empty stomach. That would be very irresponsible! Del could not read the menu and borrowed my reading glasses. Only he did not give them back for a while! I had to remind him before he got too attached to them.

Next tried was Williams Bros Scottish Joker. Some thought that this IPA was too sweet. A full on flavour bitter-sweet beer with a citrus nose, I could have drunk it all day. Score 4 to 4.5. Lunch arrived and so did one of the party, Mark with a bone for his dog! Don't ask!! Houston Texas was my third beer drunk at the Grog and Gruel. It had a nice liquorice after-taste, score 3.5. Best beer in Fort William was definitely the Scottish Joker.

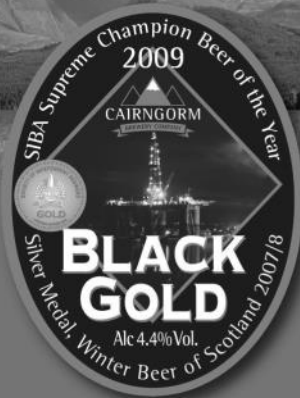
Some headed for Cobbs at Nevisport where 4.1% Tower Ridge, an Isle of Skye house beer, Black Cuillin, and 3.6% Atlas Latitude were on tap. After a beautifully clear first half of Latitude, the second one was very cloudy and subsequent attempts failed to produce a clear one. It was freshly on and methinks a small collision in the cellar with the cask may have been the cause! The clear half was a worthy 3.5. The Black Cuillin was also in good form scoring 3.5. A quick visit to the nearby Alexandria Hotel revealed no real ale on tap.

It was time to get back to the minibus at the designated meeting place. There was some mix up with where we were supposed to meet. Some thought it was at the other end of the high street. Eventually all present and correct, and off to the Glenfinnan Brewery. After negotiating some hairpin bends and one in particular was pretty scary (It cleared my sinuses!), we arrived at the Glenfinnan House Hotel, who usually have a Glenfinnan brew on tap but were closed today for a wedding. Our best to the Bride and Groom. The brewery is just behind the hotel. I know it's a girly thing, but I must mention St Mary and St Finnan Church. A truly beautiful Church, in an area of outstanding beauty overlooking Loch Shiel.

(Continued on page 8)



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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10% discount when you bring this ad along to the shop.

Branch Diary (Meetings start at 7.30 pm)



October is CAMRA's Cider & Perry Month. See page 10 for details of where Real Cider and Perry is sold locally

Tues 5th Oct Scottish Cider POTY Presentation Blackfriars, Inverness

Tues 12th Oct Committee Meeting The Anderson, Fortrose

Fri 15th - Sun 17th Oct * Cider & Blues Festival Argyll Hotel, Ullapool

Fri 15th - Sun 31st Oct * Octoberfest 2010 Clachaig Inn, Glencoe

Thurs 21st - Sun 24th Oct * 6th Ullapool Beer Festival at Morefield Motel

Sat 23rd Oct  Social/Outing - Far north-west Real Ale pubs and 6th Ullapool Beer Festival

Tues 26th Oct Tasting Evening Clachnaharry Inn, Inverness

Tues 9th Nov **AGM** Kings Highway, Inverness



**CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE**

CAMRA Needs YOU!

Protect your pleasure!

Become actively involved with your local branch.

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

Tues 30th Nov Tasting Evening Bandstand Bar, Nairn

Tues 7th Dec Committee Meeting Clachnaharry Inn

Tues 14th Dec Inverness Walkabout & Social (19:00 Rendez-vous at Blackfriars)

2011

Tues 11th Jan Committee Meeting Snowgoose, Inverness

Tues 25th Jan Tasting Evening Meet at Heathmount Hotel

* 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 on-line diary at <http://highlandcamra.webnode.com/events-calendar/>

Contact Details

Gareth Hardman (Secretary & Branch Contact) - 01463 238462

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

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



Eric Mills - 01456 459343

chair@highlandcamra.org.uk

Mike Whittall - 01463 831259

news@highlandcamra.org.uk

BANDSTAND

BAR & RESTAURANT, NAIRN

CAMRA Highlands & Western Isles
PUB OF THE YEAR 2009



Inverness & District South
PUB OF THE YEAR 2009



Inverness & District South
PUB OF THE YEAR 2010
(joint winner)



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(Continued from page 4)

The Glenfinnan Brewery, capable of producing 1200 bottles, this 4 barrel plant produced 100 barrels in 2009. Five years in business, this is a part time venture for the owners, John Fish, Dave Lechie and Donald Robertson (who lives next door but was not present that day). The brewing area is rented from Donald's son. The brewery was located by a small waterfall. Everyone was given a bottle of their regular beer to try - the 3.8% Glenfinnan Gold. Quite fizzy from the bottle-conditioning, fruity with a slight sulphurous taste from "Burtonising".

Despite being by a natural source of supply, which would be very difficult to get consistent for brewing, the water for the beers comes from mains supply. This is then treated with calcium sulphate to make it hard and suitable for brewing. They also produce the 4.0% Standard Ale and a 5.2% Dark Ale in winter. After an in-depth insight to their beers and the brewery, it was time to leave. Many thanks to John and Dave for their hospitality.

Next to the Glenuig Hotel on the Mallaig road. We were treated to some beautiful scenery along the extremely winding roads. It's a good job I was not on the back seat. Driver Sandy would have had to stop! The Glenuig Inn had officially opened only two weeks previously, following refurbishments, and had been operating out of the dining room for a year. A very "green" inn, contemporary, but in keeping with its rugged surroundings. No lager or fizzy stout here. Just real ale. No crisps but jars of nuts and seeds served by the bowl.

On offer were Cairngorm's 4.4% Black Gold, 4.3% Trade Winds, 4.5% Gold and 4.1% Stag. The cider was Belhaven Fruit Farm's 4.4% Thistly Cross. A sharp intake of breath at £3.50 for a pint, followed by choking at £2 a half!! This was explained by the 50p policy, that is everything is a round pound or 50p. Bottles were £4.50. I suppose it means you can use a small till draw and cut down your bank charges for change! However every beer was spot on scoring 3's and 4's. Yvail, a young Belgian member of our party gave an excellent turn on the somewhat out of tune piano!

We were shown the hub of the inn, its cellar. 100% green energy is used throughout the

inn via solar energy and a wood burning stove with any excess heat from coolers and kitchen recycled through the interior of the building. We learned that Steve, the owner, is the UK supplier of the LED lights which are used all around the premises. The consensus was that we all could have happily spent the afternoon here, but it was time to go. Many thanks to Steve and his staff for their hospitality.

Lochailort Inn stands along-side the original 'Road to the Isles'. More stunning scenery above Loch Ailort. Only Cairngorm Trade Winds on offer so it was 8 pints and 5 halves. The beer merited a score of 4, and it was a shame we could only spend 15 minutes here. Our next pit stop was at the Stronlossit Inn. Maurice, as always, was very welcoming. An Teallach Crofters Pale Ale and Cairngorm Trade Winds both scored 4. An end-of-cask 4.2% Atlas Three Sisters was given a 2.

Back onto the mini bus and the banter was becoming more raucous and bladders becoming weaker. Walter continually complaining about being bounced around on the back seat. He always makes a beeline for the back on these trips, so stop complaining!! He treated us to an appalling rendition of Silent Night in the key of 'off'. I have it on my mobile. Should be a hit on You Tube!

The Eagle Inn is a floating Dutch barge on Laggan Loch serving real ale. This was not our first visit and it certainly won't be our last. Always a warm welcome from Paul and Janet. 4.0% Orkney Red MacGregor and Dark Island both scored 4, Atlas Three Sisters 3.5, but Atlas Nimbus was being changed so not tried. Our last stop was at the Invergarry Hotel. It was extremely busy and the only beer on offer was Timothy Taylor's 4.3% Landlord (3).

Only a couple ordered as by this time it was 7.40pm and time to go home. A good day was enjoyed by all and we were very impressed overall by the beers on offer.

Many thanks to Sandy again for taking care of us and for dropping me off at my door.

What topped the (birth)day off for me was not being allowed to pay for even one drink!

Thanks boys! C.W.





Blackfriars Highland Pub Great Beer

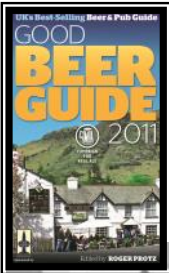


*Traditional Highland Food (New Menu)
All meals are cooked to order using
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Real Ales and Real Cider On Tap

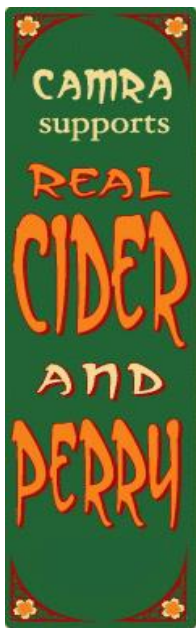
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Traditional Cider Matters

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

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 all year round, selection of real ciders for September festival

Scourie Hotel - Two Westons Ciders on handpump

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

Badachro Inn - Westons Cider is served here

Argyll Hotel, Ullapool - Westons ciders from the box

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

Blackfriars, Inverness - Westons Old Rosie Scrumpy and 1st Quality

Ciders on handpump. Highlands & Western Isles **Cider-Pub-of-the-Year 2009**.

Kinlochewe Hotel, at the foot of Beinn Eighe, is serving Westons 1st Quality Draft Cider

Torriddon Inn - Westons Ciders are served in the bar.

Clachaig Inn, Glencoe - An initial trial (at Mayfest 2010) but (with your support) continuing through the Autumn, Westons cider on hand pump. Having had difficulties getting hold of the Thatchers we've had over the last few years we've been looking for a change. (From Website)

Bandstand Bar, Nairn - Westons ciders on a recently installed handpump. If successful we understand that a second handpump will be installed for the Autumn season (at least).

Grog & Gruel, Fort William - has been selling Thatchers Heritage cask cider since 1st April 2010. On tap for as long as sales make it viable - could be all year round but unfortunately sales usually drop dramatically during winter months.

Glen Affric Bar, Cannich - serving Westons Cider after requests from hill-walking customers.

Scottish Cider Pub-of-the-Year

Congratulations to **Blackfriars** on being nominated Scottish Cider Pub-of-the-Year.

Blackfriars will now be judged against other regional cider pubs-of-the-year. The winner of Cider & Perry Pub of the Year 2010 will be announced in October as part of the CAMRA's Cider and Perry month promotion.

Cider fans may be interested to know that **Gwynt y Ddraig Black Dragon** (Llantwit Fardre, South Wales), which won the Silver medal at CAMRA's National Cider and Perry Championships 2010, is on sale in Tesco.

A very impressive cider selection was on tap for the recent **Loch Ness Beer Festival**:

Oliver's Dry Cider, Janet's Jungle Juice, Gwynt Y Ddraig Farmhouse and Happy Daze, Westons Old Rosie and Country Perry, Wilcox Farmhouse, Roger Wilkins' Farmhouse, Thistly Cross 4.4 and 7.2

Loch Ness Festival organiser Steven Crossland has increased the range of ciders each year, and perhaps the time has come for change of name to Loch Ness Beer & Cider Festival?

The Argyll Hotel in Ullapool is advertising a Cider & Blues Festival in October (see diary).

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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.

YourRound Real Time News for Real Ale Drinkers

YourRound is a unique web service that provides REAL TIME information to you about the beers available in your local pubs.

You choose your favourite beers or brewery, select a search radius (e.g. within 5 miles) and select how and when you want to be informed (by e-mail or text message). When the beers you have selected are on tap, at pubs who are participating in the service, you receive a text or e-mail notification!

You can ask to display beers from a selected pub or search by post-code if you are planning a trip to another part of the country.

By selecting a search radius you are presented with a list of pubs, including distances from, plus links to detailed routes to each pub!

As a Publican, you can add your latest beers, menus, events, pub photos and even include what's in the cellar waiting to come on next if you like! The system will automatically build an entry on the system displaying in real time

the beers currently on tap in your bar which any prospective drinker can view. Obviously they can click to link to your full website.

Publicans can even use it to display a live 'blackboard' with today's offering (if you're lucky enough to have a pub which is so big that people can't see the bar!), and YourRound can also provide a link to insert on your website to display YourRound data.

In September a search for 'All Breweries', 'All Beers', 'Any Region', 'Within 100 miles' of an Inverness postcode resulted in a list of nine pubs: The Benleva Hotel (10.18 miles), The Anderson (12.7), The Bandstand Bar (21.45), The Glen Hotel (30.44), Kinlochewe Hotel (34.17), Morefield Motel (40.57), The Torridon Inn (41.66), Sutherland Inn (42.26), and The Ericht Alehouse (73.21).

The majority of pubs and hotels now have comprehensive websites, and increasingly people are using the Internet to research an area when planning holidays or outings.

Clearly a useful tool, if only for getting a flag when your favourite brew is on tap locally!

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CAMRA Pub-of-the-Year Awards

Highland 2003 & 2005, Inverness 2006 & 2007 (tied)

Inverness & District North Pub-of-the-Year 2009

10th Loch Ness Beer Festival
16th - 24th September 2011

En-Suite Accommodation
Excellent Food Every Evening
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Inverness Beer Festival

The annual Inverness Beer Festival, held in early September at the Highlands & Western Isles Pub-of-the-Year, the Castle Tavern, got off to a real flyer thanks to an influx of visitors to the town. Calendar Girls, described as the fastest selling theatre show ever, was on at Eden Court and quite a few of the audience popped in. Visitors were also attracted to Inverness by the First Monster Challenge, one of the UK's most popular duathlon (running and cycling) events - a unique 120km race for teams of four around the breathtaking shores of Loch Ness. The course consists of eight stages - four running and four cycling, and each competitor has to complete one of the running stages and one of the cycling stages. Castle Tavern Landlord Georg MacLean had set up an additional outside bar under the Victorian-style canopy, allowing for ten beers and a cider to be available at any one time. Beers on Monday included Houston Warlock Stout, the 10% Sinclair Orkney Dark Island Reserve, Cairngorm Witches Cauldron, An Teallach Beinn Dearg, and Inveralmond Lia

Fail from north of the border. From further afield there was a choice of Howard Town Snake Ale from the Peak District, an Bushy's Piston Brew from the Isle of Man. Cider fans were well served by Westons Old Rosie Cider.

During the week the ever-changing selection included brews from Inveralmond, Isle of Skye, Orkney, An Teallach, Atlas, Cairngorm, Houston, and Strathaven. From south of the border came Shepherd Neame Spitfire, Hook Norton's Hooky Gold, and Gales Seafarers.

Another visit on the second Friday and the festival was still going strong with An Teallach Ale, Harviestoun Schiehallion, Houston Auld Humdinger and Texas, Isle of Skye Skyelight and Red Cuillin, Strathaven Claverhouse, and Deeside Macbeth making for an appealing selection. Thistly Cross cider from Belhaven Fruit Farms was the latest cider offering.

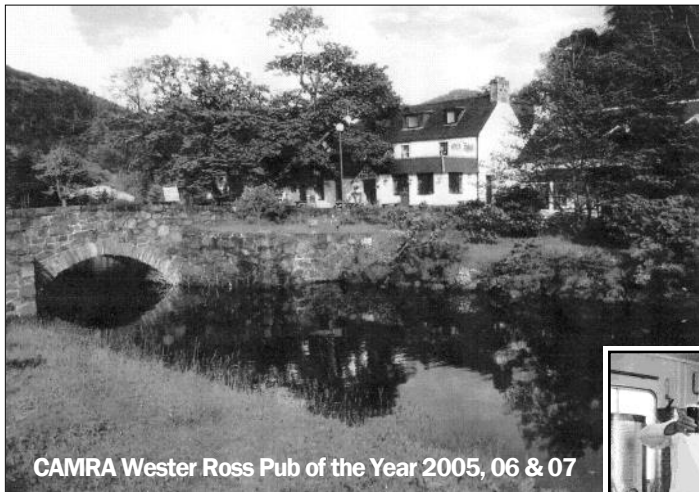
The fastest selling cask was the Inveralmond Thrappledouser which went in a couple hours.

A rare opportunity to sample the Orkney Dark Island Reserve - at 10% abv this is hardly a 'session' beer, but if you get a chance you really should try it. A very special ale indeed!

**NOW
BREWING**

The Old Inn

Gairloch ross-shire



CAMRA Wester Ross Pub of the Year 2005, 06 & 07



**Real food, real fires,
Real friendly ... and
now our own ales - really!**

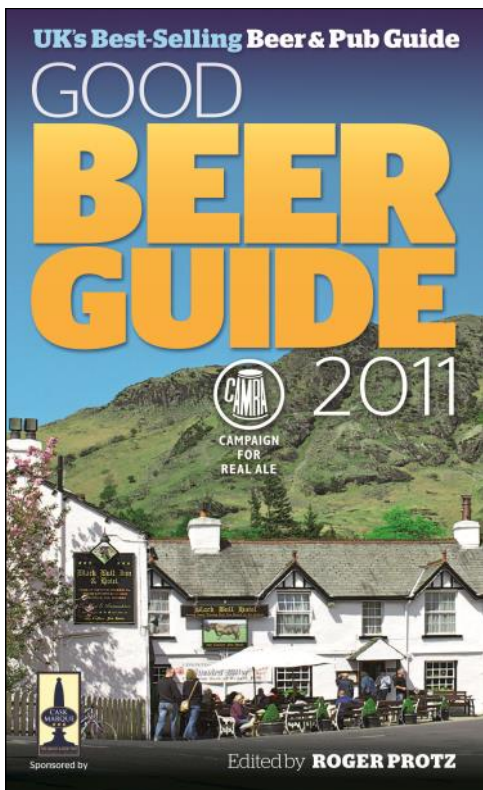
Restling at the foot of the Flowerdale Glen, with the river flowing under its charming old footbridge, The Old Inn is a traditional coaching inn set amid picturesque surroundings. Specializing in locally landed fish and shellfish, together with seasonal game, The Old Inn enjoys a reputation for a friendly welcome and comfortable accommodation...and now, with the addition of its own brewhouse, you are assured of an even "*cheerier*" welcome at The Old Inn.

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Where good food and ales come naturally



Good Beer Guide 2011

The 4,500 Best Real Ale Pubs according to the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA)

The 2011 edition of CAMRA's best-selling guide to Britain's 4,500 best real ale pubs was launched on Thursday 16th September 2010.

The 38th edition of the original independent guide to great beer and good pubs contains descriptions of 4,500 real ale pubs in Britain.

There is no charge for entry into the Good Beer Guide. All entries are surveyed on a regular basis by CAMRA members. Other guides may only send a questionnaire and may never be visited.

Information about pub facilities for families, disabled visitors, history, architecture, food, accommodation, local places of interest... And, of course, the beer: the best pubs serving the

finest real ale in the country.

Unique brewery section listing all British real ale breweries and their regular beers.

Special features on:

How the Good Beer Guide is produced by CAMRA's 115,000 members.

The Battered Pub - *Why CAMRA supports the family brewers' tie.*

The Pub Fights Back - *how pubs can thrive if they attract customers with a wide range of real ales and regular beer festivals.*

Pub of the Year - *featuring this year's winning pub and three runners-up.*

The Demanding Life of a Pub Landlord - *how Cask Marque supports pubs to make sure they serve real ale in the best condition.*

Highlands & Western Isles

A total of 35 pubs in our Branch area are listed in the guide. New for 2011 are:

Argyll Hotel – Busy Ullapool hostelry offering bed & breakfast, local food and entertainment. An Teallach ales and a guest ale. Westons ciders from the box. Regular music sessions and live bands, plus weekly quiz and poker nights. Cider & music festival in October.

Dores Inn – A family-run pub and restaurant set on the south shore of Loch Ness. The cosy bar is attached to an extended dining room serving great food. Up to four real ales, mostly from Scottish independent breweries. Advisable to book in advance for meals.

Kings Highway - A busy Wetherspoons pub in Inverness town centre, located on a street known in old charters as The King's Highway to the North. Up to 10 handpumps serve two regular ales and a cider, plus a good mix of guest ales. Brews from Isle of Skye, Houston and Cairngorm breweries are regularly on tap.

Kinlochewe Hotel – Friendly and welcoming hotel, at the foot of Beinn Eighe, which makes an ideal base for exploring Wester Ross. Home-cooked food using the best of high quality local produce, including seafood, game, and beef, all freshly cooked with an emphasis on simplicity and flavour. Isle of Skye Brewery beers are served. Real Cider.

Well done to all Highlands & Western Isles pubs who merit inclusion in GBG 2011. Ed.



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Focus on Mark Phinn

Mark has been the Manager of The Kings Highway, in Inverness, for the last two and a half years. During that time he has refurbished the place, improved the quality of the real ale and now stocks more local brews.

Beer reports have impressed so much that it is now in CAMRA's Good Beer Guide 2011.

Mark lives in Inverness.



Q. Where are you originally from?

A. Born and bred in Glasgow - Easterhouse originally, then Kirkintilloch. Easterhouse isn't exactly ale country and Kirkintilloch was in need of a decent ale house.

Q. What is your background?

A. I never went to university or college, I just wanted to get out and start work. My part time job while at school was at a McDonalds restaurant. I worked there for six years and still keep in touch with the guys I worked with - that was just at the time when McDonald's seemed to rule the world - before there was a bit of a backlash against them. I started at Wetherspoon on 10th September 2001 - I remember this date as the next day the world changed forever in New York... Anyhoo, I never thought I'd work in a pub and I'm not sure what appealed to me about JDW. I started in the Crystal Palace as a shift manager and worked in various JDW's around the central belt before becoming a pub manager at the Kirky Puffer in Kirkintilloch.

I was manager there for two years before being asked to take over in Inverness. I

moved to Inverness in April 2008 and have been in the Highland capital since. I'm about to start my tenth year with JDW.

Q. How/when were you introduced to real ale?

A. I didn't know what real ale was until I started with JDW. It has been a bit of an eye opener and I like the fact that people can be so passionate about beer - I thought that kind of passion was kept for wine! I remember trying to convince a regular in the Crystal Palace that the IPA's were actually brewed in India - I was that clueless. Fortunately that particular regular wasn't convinced.

Q. What are your favourite real ales/styles?

A. I'm a big fan of Arran Blonde (probably after being forced to drink some after an over-order by myself) and if a pub sells ale it's almost a foregone conclusion it will have Deuchars IPA, and so one can always fall back on that!

Q. What is the best part of your work?

A. The varied shifts. There's rarely two shifts the same. I enjoy the hard work shifts - it's busy, three ales have gone off, a customer needs to speak to me while the kitchen is impossibly busy, and there's someone wanting to check into the hotel, and all while there's a delivery waiting!

Q. What is the worst part of your work?

A. Like all big companies the paperwork and audit trail seem never ending. I need to sign my name about a thousand times a day! We're spending money on the Kings Highway - a new carpet 18 months ago, bar floor, kitchen floor, furniture plus money being spent in the hotel. The pub needs a coat of paint and it is coming, but these big things seem to take a life-time to happen - yet only needs done once every 8 or 9 years. I'd rather just go ahead and get these things done rather than waiting for months.

Q. How much say do you have on your beer selection?

A. Surprisingly quite a lot. Wetherspoon has a Company called East West Ales and they source the beers from all over the UK and make them available on one delivery to the

Clachnaharry Inn

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www.ullapoolbeerfestival.co.uk

Real Ale in the Real Highlands



pubs. Every Quarter there's a selection of around 50 to pick from - the best part is that we get ales that other pubs probably would not get in this area. On top of that we can get beers delivered direct from Houston, Cairngorm and Isle of Skye. We can get beers from any brewery - they just have to get in touch with our purchasing department though they do try to recommend breweries within 20 miles of the pub - but we'll take anyone who is willing to deliver - as long as it sells!

I'll give anything a go - the breweries just need to get in touch with me.

Q. What hobbies/interests do you have?

A. Work takes up most of my time and Wetherspoon are putting me through a diploma - Licensed Retail Management - as I never went to further education I figured I would have a stab while JDW was willing to pay!

Q. Why should we visit the Kings Highway?

A. The range and price! We normally have Deuchars and Abbot on at all times then we have another five guests. We also have on Weston's Marcle Hill cider which still leaves us two spare lines. The main problem is the

layout of the bar - the top five lines sell well but as soon as we put a guest up the top end of the bar it never sells. I think the Caledonian Deuchars IPA and Greene King & Abbot Ale are big enough brands but only the really popular guests can survive up that end of the bar. But we can only put more ales on if there's the demand. I think that now we have got it just about right. There is enough throughput so quality is not an issue unless it's an unpopular ale.

We also use the older style handled jugs - not 100% popular but definitely a nice touch that most ale drinkers like.



Castle Tavern Theft

There was outrage on the Inverness Real Ale scene in early July when Veronica Finlayson, manageress of the Castle Tavern, Highlands & Western Isles Pub-of-the-Year, revealed that the prestigious award had been stolen from its display position above the bar.

Happily CAMRA HQ was able to arrange for a

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
Waterfront, Inverness
Old North Inn, Inchmore
Benleva Hotel, Drumnadrochit
Loch Ness Inn, Lewiston
Glenmoriston Arms Hotel, Invermoriston
Steading Bar & Restaurant, Kilmartin (TP)
Glen Affric Bar, Cannich
Munlochy Hotel (TP)
The Anderson, Fortrose
Plough Inn, Rosemarkie
Cromarty Arms (TP)
Royal Hotel, Cromarty (TP)
Culbokie Inn
Slaters Arms, Cannich (S)
Conon Bridge Hotel
National Hotel, Dingwall
Richmond Hotel, Strathpeffer
Inchbae Lodge Hotel, Garve
Aultguish Inn
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
Steak Academy Bar & Restaurant, Inverness
The Exchange, Inverness
Nico's Bar, Glen Mhor Hotel, Inverness
Heathmount Hotel, Inverness
Hootananny, Inverness
Johnny Foxes, Inverness (TP)

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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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Kings Highway, Inverness (*Wetherspoons*)
 Number 27, Inverness
 Phoenix Bar, Inverness
 Ramada Jarvis Hotel, Inverness (TP)
 Snowgoose, Inverness
 Tomatin Country Inn (S)
 Dores Inn
 Whitebridge Hotel, Loch Ness South
 Bothy, Fort Augustus
 Lock Inn, Fort Augustus
 Caledonian Hotel, Fort Augustus (S)
 Lovat Arms Hotel, Fort Augustus
 Cawdor Tavern, Cawdor
 Bandstand Bar, Braeval Hotel, Nairn
 Claymore Hotel, Nairn
 Golf View Hotel, Nairn (TP)
 Invernairne Hotel, Nairn (S)
 Seaforth Club, Nairn (Members only) (TP)
 Old Mill Inn, Brodie (A&NI)

Dalfaber Country Club, Aviemore
 Glenmore Lodge, Nr Aviemore
 Old Bridge Inn, Aviemore
 Winking Owl, Aviemore
 Suie Hotel, Kincairg
 Glen Hotel, Newtonmore
 Lodge Hotel, Newtonmore
 Kingussie Golf Club
 Silver Fjord Hotel, Kingussie
 Typsy Laird, Kingussie
 Ben Mhor Hotel, Grantown-on-Spey
 Craig Bar, Grantown-on-Spey
 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
 Boat Hotel, Boat of Garten
 Cairngorm Hotel, Aviemore

Wester Ross

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

Stein Inn

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angus.teresa@steininn.co.uk

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

Fort William & Lochaber

Alexandria Hotel, Fort William
 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
 Glen Nevis Restaurant & Bar
 Invergarry Hotel
 The Eagle, Laggan Locks
(An Inn on a boat on the water)
 Loch Oich Restaurant/Bar, South Laggan
 Letterfinlay Lodge Hotel, Loch Lochy
 Old Station Restaurant, Spean Bridge
 Spean Bridge Hotel (S)
 Stronlossit Hotel, Roy Bridge
 Tomdoun Sporting Lodge
 Moorings Hotel, Banavie
 Glenfinnan House Hotel
 Glenuig Inn, Lochailort
 Glenuig Village Hall
 Chlachain Inn, Mallaig
 Steam Inn, Mallaig
 West Highland Hotel, Mallaig
 Loch Shiel Hotel, Acharacle
 Old Forge, Inverie
 Corran Ferry Hotel, Onich
 Four Seasons, Onich
 Inn at Ardgour
 Ice Factor, Kinlochleven
 MacDonald Hotel, Kinlochleven
 Mamore Lodge, Kinlochleven (S)



Claddach Kirkibost (A865)
Isle of North Uist
Outer Hebrides
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Limited hours during winter
Please call to check
hours of business

Laroch Bar, Ballachulish (G&WS)
 Clachaig Inn, Glencoe (G&WS)
 Kings House Hotel, Glencoe (G&WS)

South Skye & Lochalsh

Kintail Lodge Hotel
 Jac-o-bite Restaurant, Kintail
 Clachan Bar, Dornie
 Loch Duich Hotel, Dornie
 Plockton Hotel, Plockton
 Plockton Inn, Plockton
 Saucy Mary's Lodge, Kyleakin (S)
 Isle Ornsay Hotel
 Ardvasar Hotel
 Stables Restaurant, Armadale
 Claymore, Broadford
 Dunollie Hotel, Broadford
 Hebridean Hotel, Broadford
 Sconser Lodge Hotel
 Sligachan Hotel (S) *Closed October - March*
 Old Inn, Carbost
 Taigh Ailean Hotel, Portnalong

North Skye & Hebrides

Isle of Raasay Hotel
 JJ's Bistro at Struan



Dunvegan Hotel
 Old Schoolhouse Restaurant, Dunvegan (S)
 Stein Inn, Waternish
 Edinbane Hotel
 The Lodge at Edinbane
 Bakur Bar, Uig
 Ferry Inn, Uig
 Uig Hotel, Uig
 Flodigarry Hotel
 Greshornish Lodge
 Bosville Hotel, Portree
 Isles Inn, Portree
 Royal Hotel, Portree
 Tongadale Hotel, Portree (S)
 An Lanntair, Stornoway
 Carlton Tavern, Stornoway
 Harris Inn, Tarbert (S)
 Lochmaddy Hotel, North Uist
 Tigh Dearg Hotel, Lochmaddy, North Uist
 Langass Lodge, North Uist (S)
 Westford Inn, North Uist
 Dark Island Hotel, Benbecula (S)
 Borrodale Hotel, South Uist (S)



Caitness & Sutherland

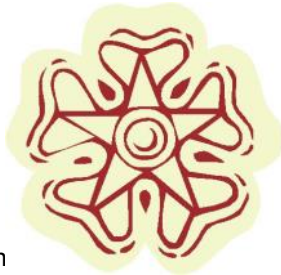
Inchnadamph Hotel
 The Caberfeidh, Lochinver
 Scourie Hotel, Scourie
 Altnacealgach Inn, nr. Ledmore Junction
 Castle Hotel, Dornoch
 Eagle Hotel, Dornoch
 Dunroamin Hotel, Bonar Bridge
 Invershin Hotel
 Sutherland Arms Hotel, Golspie (S)
 Sutherland Inn, Brora
 Belgrave Hotel, Helmsdale
 Bay Owl Restaurant, Dunbeath
 Tongue Hotel
 MacKay's Hotel, Wick
 Alexander Bain, Wick
 (*Wetherspoons*)
 Central Hotel, Thurso
 Commercial Hotel, Thurso
 Seaview Hotel, John O'Groats

34 of the pubs listed here are in the *Good Beer Guide* - We cannot tell you which, you will have to buy the guide for that, but there is a chance you may find clues somewhere in this newsletter.

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Highlands & Islands Brewers in 2010

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

of Skye Brewery - Based at Uig, next to the Western Æs ferry terminal, and has been brewing since December 1995. Ales include Red & Black Cuillin, Hebridean Gold, King Pretender and Blaven. Seasonal, House, and speciality ales are regularly brewed.



Isle of Mull Brewery - Most northerly brewery in the UK, started brewing 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 - Closed. Brewing moved to Orkney in Autumn 2010.

An Teallach Brewery - Moved to the family's croft, near Dundonnell, in March 2003. Ales include An Teallach Ale, Beinn Dearg 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 10th September 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.

Isle of Mull Brewery - From May 2005 in Tobermory. Sold plant to Oban Bay in 2009

Sinclair Breweries Ltd - Formed in 2006 by local hotelier and restaurateur



Norman Sinclair, who purchased the Orkney and Atlas Breweries. Ales regularly brewed include Three Sisters, Latitude, and Nimbus from Atlas; plus Raven Ale, Dark Island, Red MacGregor, and Skull Splitter from Orkney.



Glenfinnan Brewery - Brewing on a 4 bbl plant since October 2006 - Regular brews are Glenfinnan Gold, The Standard Ale, and Glenfinnan Dark (for the Winter).

Colonsay Brewery - First brews in March 2007. IPA, 80/- and Lager (no real ales).

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

Oban Bay Brewery - Brewing since mid 2009. 5 barrel brewery attached to Cuan Mor.

Old Inn (Gairloch) Brewery - 100 litre micro-brewery. First brews in February 2010.

Loch Ness Brewery - First brews are planned for end of September 2010.

Not all of the breweries listed are in our branch area: the Highland Brewing Co, Valhalla and Orkney are all in the Aberdeen, Grampian & Northern Isles area; the Arran Brewery falls in the Ayrshire & Galloway area; while Fyne, Islay, Mull, Colonsay & Oban Bay Breweries are covered by Glasgow & West Scotland. Similarly for Highlands & Islands pubs listed in the GBG, pubs in Orkney and Shetland are submitted by the Aberdeen, Grampian & Northern Isles Branch, and the Clachaig Inn somehow falls within the Glasgow & West Scotland branch area!

Black Skies on the way to Skye

Do we cancel our trip and join the Monster Challenge (a race around Loch Ness), um no, the weather is not good, so a ride in Sandy's minibus is preferable. We did see Sally Gunnell running through Drumnadrochit though.

Heavy rain (hope the Monster race had better weather) for much of the way, but a hint of sunshine as we arrived at the Sligachan Hotel, which sits beneath the spectacular Cuillin mountains, and is home to the Cuillin Brewery. On tap in Seamus' Bar was their popular 4.3% Black Face and a new brew - Cool-in Ginger, also 4.3%, and tasting of, you've guessed it, ginger! The 4.7% Pinnacle was not ready. Preparations were in hand for Iain's Ceilidh, an annual Highland Hospice charity event held in memory of the late co-owner Iain Campbell.

We headed north, along the west coast, to our regional Pub of the Year and oldest pub on the island, Stein Inn. Despite a typically busy lunchtime, owner Angus McGhie was able to spend some time with us and Chairman Eric Mills presented him with his POTY certificate.



Bright sunshine now and we sat outside on benches overlooking Loch Bay where much of the seafood served at the inn is caught. Isle of Skye Hebridean Gold (4) and Cairngorm Black Gold (4) were enjoyed by all, but no time to try Deuchars IPA, the third beer on tap.

A little behind schedule so we hurried on to the Isle of Skye Brewery. Norrie and Dom welcomed us to the Trophy Room and we

were treated to Skyclight and Black Cuillin. There was also a 'guess beer', a mix of a third each of Skyclight, Red Cuillin and Black Cuillin. Steve guessed correctly but cheating was rumoured! Norrie gave an informative brewery tour and Committee member Steve presented him with a certificate for Black Cuillin, which took the Bronze award in our Beer of the Year. Alas, time to leave but no need for the bus as we strolled the few yards to the Bakur Bar, at the ferry pier. Very handy if you are taking the ferry and popular with locals. Two Isle of Skye beers on tap: Red Cuillin (2) and Hebridean Gold (3). Back on the bus to the Ferry Inn at the far end of the village, where there were two Cuillin brews available; another of their new beers, 4.3% Skye Amber (1, yeasty) and Black Face (2). Now behind schedule, Steve ran up the hill to the Uig Hotel, in a prominent position overlooking the bay and sampled Isle of Skye Red Cuillin (3) – Skyclight also on tap. As we neared Portree the rain came back. A stop here meant we could take on food and sample beer in the four real ale pubs -

Bosville Hotel: A sour Cuillin Pinnacle was changed for Isle of Skye Red Cuillin (3). Slow service as the beer was pouring very frothy.

Tongadale Hotel: Had stopped selling real ale for the year - too little custom out of season.

Isles Inn: A house special (3) and Hebridean Gold (3), both were a touch cold for some.

Royal Hotel: One of the bars has now closed but a tasty Isle of Skye Red Cuillin (3) was on in the other. It did run out but was very quickly changed for a new cask.

So three out of four Portree pubs with good (locally brewed) beer in good form.

Back on the bus for our return trip, dropping Mike at Sligachan and a stop at Dornie, near the famous Eilean Donan Castle where we stopped to take photographs. In fact a very good day for photography as the island's mood changed with the weather. Two pubs in Dornie had served real ale: The Dornie Hotel had a handpump with no clip and no bar staff on hand to ask, but the Clachan Bar had their Isle of Skye house beer, Ale an Donan (3).

Still a little behind schedule, but no more pit stops before dropping people home in Drum and Inverness. Thanks to all for a great day.

the Old Bridge Inn - Aviemore



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

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

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www.oldbridgeinn.co.uk



Tasting Panel Update

Our June tasting meeting saw us travel to Aviemore where we started at the Glenmore Lodge which is a little way out of the town. We were greeted by clouds of Scottish biting midge, our first encounter of the season.

Upstairs in the bar the greeting was far less hostile and the single handpump which had previously carried Cairngorm Stag now features **Cairngorm Trade Winds** as the regular beer. The 4.3% abv ale was unmistakably Trade Winds on the nose with the hops and elderflower very evident. Very faint malt in the taste with the strong fruit and hops coming through as usual giving a pleasant bittersweet flavour. There was a little astringency which left a bitter dry aftertaste but it still scored 8's (out of 10) all-round.

Next stop was at the Old Bridge Inn which had Deuchars IPA, Trade Winds and **Cairngorm Black Gold**. This 4.4% Scottish stout was not at peak condition and came out somewhat flat, however all the usual flavours were there. Lots of malt, roasted malt and smoked malt

flavours together with some liquorice and blackcurrant and good bitter aftertaste got it scores of 7's and 6. Into the centre of Aviemore and to the Cairngorm Hotel where we had a slightly too cold **Cairngorm Stag**. Not a great deal in the aroma, some malt and faint roast malt, maybe due to the slightly lower than cellar temperature. The taste though was a great combination of malts, hops and fruit with a good bitterness throughout making this 4.1% tawny coloured best bitter very quaffable indeed and earning scores of 8's and 7. A short trip along the high street to our next stop, the Winking Owl, where **Cairngorm Sheepshagger** was on. This 4.5% golden ale had some hop and fruit in the aroma which were also evident in the taste along with a strong sweetness and almost honey flavour, which did make it slightly cloying, although there was a little bitterness to go with it. Scores were 7's and 6. Passing by the Cairngorm Brewery we called into the Dalfaber Country Club where we tried our second **Trade Winds** of the evening. No giveaway Trade Winds aroma this time and the flavour came across as slightly "dulled down" compared to its normal full on fruit and hops. A little sweeter than normal, 6's all round were scored. Heading back to Inverness our last stop was the Cairn Hotel in Carrbridge where we sampled **Scapa Special** from the Highland Brewery on Orkney. This 4.2% golden ale had some grapefruit in the aroma and was a good hoppy bittersweet brew with the flavours holding well into the aftertaste. However it did lack a little of its usual crisp fruitiness and bite and scored 7's all-round.

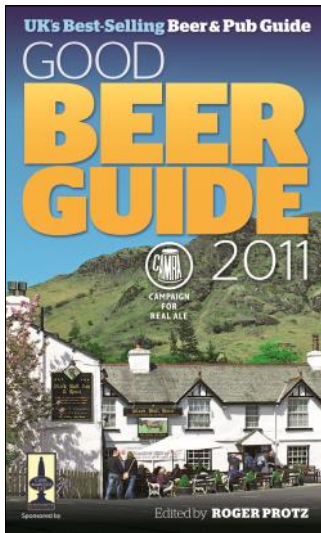
Aviemore is certainly "Cairngorm Country" and it is good to see the local dominance of the brewery now, which was not the case some years back. A close run thing, but well done to the Glenmore Lodge for their **Trade Winds** getting our beer of the evening status.

In July we headed down the Great Glen to Drumadrochit and started out at the Loch Ness Inn where we were able to continue from last month with **Cairngorm Trade Winds!** Unmistakably Trade Winds again with all its hop and elderflower, although slightly toned down and not so full on it scored 8's all round. The second beer on tap was **Isle of**

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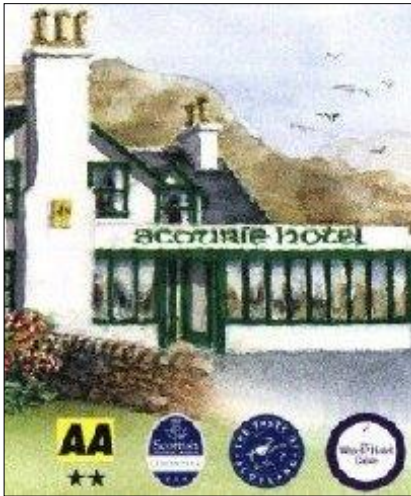
As well as beers from our 'regulars'
**Cairngorm Brewing Company, Houston Brewery
and the Isle of Skye Brewery.**

And new to the pumps, Weston's Old Rosie cider.

All ales served in an ale pot unless otherwise requested.

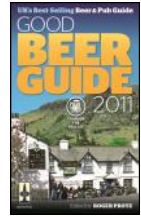
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Skye Red Cuillin. Not quite at its best, as it was a bit on the dull side condition-wise, it lacked its normal aroma and just had some faint malt and hop. There was still a balanced malt, fruit and hop taste with a little caramel and a good bitter sweetness in this 4.2% best bitter. It was just not as intense as normal, so scores were slightly down at 6's and a 7.

A short stroll saw us at the Benleiva Hotel where unfortunately only two tasters of **Isle of Skye Black Cuillin** were available before the cask ran out. This 4.5% malty old ale had a fantastic balance of malts, roast, caramel and fruit but no hops and drank with a smooth bitter sweetness. Considering that it was the end of the cask two scores of 8 were very creditable. Next up was a new ale from the **Highland Brewery. Island Hopping** is a 3.9% golden ale and it comes as no shock that it is crammed with hops which dominate the aroma and taste. The hops also deliver a strong bitterness with no sweetness detectable. Moderate astringency does give a slightly dry mouth feel in the aftertaste, however high scores of 8's and 9's were given for this very

good hoppy golden ale. Last beer of the night was another offering from the **Highland Brewery, Sneaky Wee Stout.**

At 4.2% this black coloured stout was packed full of malts and roast flavours which go from the aroma right through to the aftertaste. No hop flavours but a good mixed berry/Vimto fruit flavour in the taste which hold well into the aftertaste. Scores of 9's and an 8 just nudged this wonderful dark ale in front to secure beer of the evening.

August saw us on home turf as we went to Blackfriars in Inverness. Five ales on tap as usual, two of them from Highland brewers. Deciding not to taste the Deuchars we started with the 4.0% **Highland Dark Munro.** This easy drinking dark brown mild had plenty of malts and roast flavour which held well into the aftertaste. Accompanied by blackcurrant fruit the sweet over bitter flavour reversed into the aftertaste with the bitterness being more prevalent, possibly being driven by the strong roast aftertaste. All agreed a score of 8.

(Continued on page 34)



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e-ALE

> Hi Gareth,

I'm not sure if the Boat at Boat of Garten is on your patch, but it usually has two hand pulled beers, and usually from Cairngorm Brewery. Not exactly sure of the price, but they are certainly around the £3:50p mark and the bottled beers, again mostly if not all from the Cairngorm Brewery, are at least £3:80p.

I found this out to my cost last year when, on my arrival, the only beer on hand pull had just finished. I had to, in the nicest possible way, 'educate' the young French barman of this, when promptly handing back the cloudy and vinegar tasting beer. As it was so late in the evening and it was going to take time to change the barrel, etc., etc., I opted for a bottle of Cairngorm Wildcat.

Give the hotel credit though, the prices are on a narrow blackboard above the bar. However, on a Saturday night when you're rushing in to get last orders, the last thing you're looking for is a narrow blackboard above the bar.

Regards, Stuart.

> Dear Gareth,

I have just returned from a wonderful visit to Scotland and visited so many pubs in the Highlands and the Isle of Skye sampling many ales and I happened to pick up your local CAMRA newsletter. I am the Social Secretary for the Thanet CAMRA Branch in the East of Kent, covering Ramsgate, Margate, Birchington, Broadstairs and outskirt villages. I had a thought about how we might be able to share contacts and enjoy ale from one end of the country to the other.

I was sitting in the Castle Tavern in Inverness, enjoying the great selection of ale they had on (six in total), and thought how expensive my holiday had been in terms of accommodation and really how it would be nice if I had some friends in Inverness that I could call upon and then a dream occurred. Perhaps we could suggest to members who might want to visit one area of the country and go ale tasting might be able to stay at another member's house for a night or two and show each other the best ale pubs to visit, and the return the



hospitality. I would be happy for a member to stay with me whilst on a visit and wonder if someone in your area would be willing to do the same. Any ideas welcome, thanks for your help, Liz Booth.

An interesting idea. Liz may be contacted via the Thanet Branch, contact details on their website: www.thanet-camra.org.uk

> Comments on Pubs Visited

Hi, A group of four of us recently spent a week cruising on the Caledonian Canal and consequently visited a number of the pubs in your region. We also picked up a newsletter which asked for comments and beer ratings, so here they are:

- Clachnaharry Inn, Inverness - rated 4 - Friday eve, Monday lunch - 5 ales on - we drank Lia Fail and a Caledonian mild on both occasions. Excellent food
- Blackfriars, Inverness - rated 2/3 - Monday eve - seemed empty and for sale. Ale ranks 3 but didn't stop us moving on.
- Castle Tavern, Inverness - rated 4 - Monday eve - good beer but weren't impressed by the food.
- Hootananny, Inverness - rated 2 - Monday eve - music better than the quality of the ale
- Number 27, Inverness - rated 1 - Monday eve - really struggled with a poor pint, vinegar notes.
- Bothy, Fort Augustus - rated 2/3 - Saturday and Tuesday evenings - pleasant with ale worth 3 but again didn't stop us moving on.
- Lock Inn, Fort Augustus - rated 2 - Saturday eve - didn't do a great deal for us.
- Caledonian Hotel, Fort Augustus - rated 4 - Saturday and Tuesday evenings - good pints of Cairngorm Stag and Gold. Also had guest come and go between visits. Keen landlord.
- Ben Nevis Inn, Fort William - rated 0-2 - Thursday eve - our first port of call after 600 miles and £7 taxi found 3 pubs but no ale!! They got one on for us. First half was ruff but became drinkable for the third pint.
- Eagle, Laggan Locks - rated 5 - Friday lunch and Thursday eve - 4 ales from Orkney and Atlas went down beautifully on both our visits (a week apart). Yes we give it the rare

Highlands & Western Isles Pub-of-the-Year



The Castle Tavern

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5 although the Ork Dark Island might have a bit to do with that.

- Loch Oich Bar, South Laggan - rated 0/2 - Friday eve - They managed 4 pints (between us) before the ale ran out. What there was ok
- Moorings Hotel, Banavie - rated 0 - Thursday lunch - Deuchars handpump but no ale Bit of a mixed bag there, although that's why we buy the (Good Beer) guide to help us in unknown territory. However the 2010 guide entries didn't fare too well. Memorable two were the Eagle at Laggan Locks for its Dark Island and the Clachnaharry above all else for the food with good beer.

Andy, Marcus, and Robin,
(and non ale drinking Judith).

Excellent! Our thanks to Andy and his crew for the comprehensive report on pubs visited on their trip. Beer scores from reports such as this help to inform the local committee when recommending pubs for inclusion in the Good Beer Guide. Committee members do follow up on these reports. We are always looking to

identify pubs where real ale is consistently served in the best of condition. Ed.

> To Whom this may concern:

I am returning from a recent trip to Scotland and during which time I stayed in Inverness with a friend who is also a member of your branch. It was good to visit old haunts like Hootananny, Blackfriars and the Clachnaharry Inn, but also find a gem in the Bandstand Bar at Nairn.

The beers I had were all in fine form.

My favourite was Island Hopper.

My main purpose in writing to you now though is to ask would you consider making your branch mag colour?

Regards, John Devlin.

Yes, we would very much like to produce our quarterly Branch newsletter in a colour format. Moving to colour will require additional work and expertise. We have been advertising for a newsletter editor for some time, and hopefully a new editor will have the necessary time and skills to move this forward. Cheers, Ed.





Cawdor Tavern

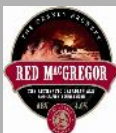
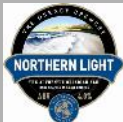
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t: 01667 404 777 e: enquiries@cawdortavern.info

(Continued from page 30)

The second of the Highland brews was the 5.1% **Plockton Starboard!** This golden ale is normally a good, hoppy, bitter IPA style beer and whilst it had some good hop and fruit flavours it was very sweet, verging on cloying. It was also quite flat and lacking its normal good condition. As a result low scores of 2's and a 3 were awarded.

We hoped that the next beer, **Inveralmond Sunburst Pilsner**, would cut through the sweetness of the last one but again this 4.8% speciality beer was too sweet for a pilsner. A beautiful pale straw colour, there was some pale/lager? malt in the aroma and plenty in the taste along with some citrus, but because of the sweetness it lacked that good clean bite you normally find with pilsner style beers, and scored 4's and a 3.

The last beer of the night was the August seasonal from **Caledonian** called **Highland Fling**. This was a 4.2% amber coloured best bitter. Not much in the aroma, just some faint malt, hop and fruit but the taste was a well balanced, bitter sweet with good measures of

malt, hop and fruit along with a little caramel, and with all flavours holding well into the aftertaste. 7's all round meant that beer of the evening went to the **Dark Munro**.

It is worth remembering that our scores are subjective, and are given as regards beer style. They do not mean any particular beer is a poor beer and this was underlined by the fact that on popping back into Blackfriars later in the same week I found that **Sunburst Pilsner** had sold through in three days and had been enjoyed by many customers.

We hope to run a (FREE) tasting course in the new year, please let us know if you would be interested in attending. Please note that these events are very informal. An Oz Clarke palate is not required, beginners are welcome.

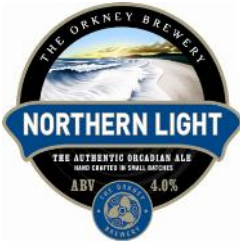
Glad to find your newsletter

I was pleasantly surprised to find a Camra newsletter in a bar from you guys. I am from Edinburgh and was holidaying in your locale recently and the list of pubs serving real ale was really appreciated. Well done and thanks. GB (by e-mail). *Delighted to be of help! Ed.*



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Inns & Things

Good news from the far north-east! Real Ale is on tap in John o' Groats. Brews from the Highland Brewery are being served at the **Seaview Hotel**. As far as we are aware, this is a first for this far north corner of Scotland, outside of the towns of Wick and Thurso, and will be a welcome stopping off point before catching the ferry to Orkney or when exploring the northern coastline.

West Highland Way Extension



In January of this year the West Highland Way, the long distance footpath that traditionally ran 95 miles from Milngavie on the outskirts of Glasgow to just outside Fort William, was extended by a mile, coming to a stop in the west end of Fort William's high street. The extension has come about following complaints from the town's

businesses that they have been missing out on potential trade from walkers. Fife artist David Annand was commissioned to create a near life-size bronze sculpture, entitled *Sore Feet*, of a weary walker nursing blisters - which was erected in August. The footpath extension was officially opened on Saturday 11th September with a day of celebration, including pipe bands and street entertainment.

Walkers may think that 95 miles is more than long enough, without adding another blister inducing, weary leg wobbling mile, but there is a plus side to going the extra mile. The new finish line is almost right outside the GBG listed Grog & Gruel. *If you haven't walked up a thirst by then you never will!* Ed.

Fem-Ale

Having been on quite a few of the Highlands and Western Isles social outings, and evening meetings, one thing is clear - very few ladies regularly attend!

I know all too well of the time constraints and commitments that we have at home and at work. We don't always have time to attend every meeting. However, it would be nice to have a view on real ale in your local/s from a

female perspective. Quality and availability, yearly festivals they may have, and so on.

Do you have a local real ale pub crawl?

Are you aware of the social outings or events organised by your local CAMRA committee?

Hopefully we ladies can put together a regular quarterly Fem-Ale page. My email address is **highlandway@sky.com**, I look forward to hearing from you! Cheers! Caroline.

Good beer!

Hello! My name is Miliukov Egor. I very like your beer, it's perfect! I have a small request to you. I collect beer mats from all over the world. But they are very difficult to search the world. I already have a small collection. Please make a small contribution to my collection beer mats. I would be very glad! I hope you will attribute with understanding. With the best regards.

My mail address:

Novosandetsky street, house 16, apt. 30.
Ulyanovsk city, ZIP 432064,
Russian Federation.

Riverside Tavern Update

We are disappointed to have to report that the 200-year-old pub in Conon Bridge, previously known as the Drouthy Duck, closed its doors on the 27th June with the loss of twelve jobs.

Scott Maclean's lease was not renewed by the owner, George Nixon, who had applied for planning permission to demolish the premises and replace it with twelve flats.

A long-running campaign by local residents, who gathered more than 200 signatures on a petition against his plans, led to Highland councillors rejecting the application in March.

In early August the North Star and the BBC reported that 'An appeal against a council's refusal to approve plans to demolish a long-established pub in Ross-shire and build flats on the site has been turned down'.

Apparently Mr Nixon appealed to the Scottish government, but a reporter appointed to look into the matter has dismissed his request.

It remains to be seen if the pub will re-open, or if Mr Nixon will eventually be successful in having the pub knocked down and building a block of flats on the site. *Fingers crossed, Ed.*

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Heatherbrae Saga – the Final Chapter?

The Summer 2004 edition of this newsletter included a report on an outing to Nethy Bridge: '(Heatherbrae Hotel Landlord) Jan had offered us a 'comfort' stop along with maps and advice on the various walks in the area.' Jan had taken time to download and print maps of walks in the area and we enjoyed a very pleasant circular walk to Castle Roy. When we returned to the Heatherbrae we were treated to 'a wonderful spread of soup and sandwiches, provided by our hosts Jan and Maureen, washed down with pints of Cairngorm's White Lady and the championship winning brew, Trade Winds.'

In his report Chairman Bill noted 'The group was very appreciative of the great country pub atmosphere that Jan and Maureen have created in this Speyside village. Every village should have one.'

Not every village does have one and, sadly, neither does Nethy Bridge any more.

In our Autumn 2005 edition we reported that 'Sadly the branch is about to lose one of its most welcoming and popular landlords. The Heatherbrae at Nethy Bridge has been sold and the new owners will take over in early October. Jan and Maureen have turned the Heatherbrae into one of the most friendly pubs imaginable; a true village Local, always buzzing with happy and contented customers.' The new owners had neither the wherewithal nor the will to run a true village local and within two years the Heatherbrae had closed. The hotel was advertised for sale, but did not attract a buyer. The owners then planned to turn the hotel into a private residence.

In February 2008 the Strathspey & Badenoch Herald reported that members of the Cairngorms National Park Authority's planning board had voted to delay making a decision over the future of the Heatherbrae Hotel and bar, pending an independent survey into the viability of the hotel's future as a business.

Locals claimed that the possible change of use would be a blow to the community as a whole, as well as going against the Cairngorms National Park Authority's Deposit Local Plan.

A week later the Herald reported that the

owners had been accused of destroying the hotel's viability as a business. Workmen had been spotted at the Heatherbrae Hotel stripping out bar fittings and throwing pub and restaurant furniture and carpets into a skip.

On 27th February 2008 the Herald carried a long letter from Irene Taylor, joint owner of the Heatherbrae Hotel: Mrs Taylor and her husband had purchased the hotel in 2005 solely to assist their then housekeeper and her partner who wanted to run the hotel but could not secure the support of any bank.

Within months of moving to Heatherbrae they experienced difficulties in maintaining this secondary business stream and refused help to resolve the problems, preferring to handle it themselves. The secondary business stream had been fundamental to the operation of the business and without this additional income they quickly encountered difficulties.

Mrs Taylor also explained that changes to legislation for licensed premises had added to overheads. She further explained that closure was due to the licensee vacating the premises, and they had no option but to close at that point since it is a legal requirement for the licensee to be on site.

She concluded: "The way forward: Following the inconclusive CNPA meeting we have had to consider our options. The Heatherbrae has been unsuccessful as a hotel and has failed to find a commercial buyer.

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

On Sunday 22nd August 2010 the Scotland on Sunday 'at Home' supplement featured an article on the conversion of a small Victorian hotel in the Cairngorms into a family home.

The eight bedroom Heatherbrae Hotel was purchased by a couple from Glasgow who eventually obtained the necessary planning permission for a change of use from hotel to residential home. The couple carried out a full refit, knocking some rooms together, but were careful to retain the Victorian heritage. The house is currently on the market for £650,000.

the loch ness inn

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



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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. Please send pub reports (good beer, poor beer, no beer) plus any real ale and real cider news to our Branch Contact (Please see page 6).

News of Brews

Isle of Skye Brewery have a new seasonal offering for the Autumn called **Witchwand**. This new brew replaces Cuillin Gorm, which was made with blaeberreries. Rowanberries are used in the brewing of Witchwand, and are far more widespread than blaeberreries which are in short supply this year. Witchwand is one of many names used for the Rowan tree.

As well as the usual Pale Ale malt, Crystal, Amber and Roast are added, and some Torrifed Wheat. Hersbrucker hops will be used, and some Heather Honey. Quite a complex little brew. If successful Witchwand is likely to become a regular September special.

A little research on the Internet discovered: 'The fruit be boiled, strained and made into wine, and gently boiled to make a vitamin C drink which was previously used for scurvy. The Welsh made a special ale using Rowan berries, but the secret of this is now lost. Perhaps with a creative, intuitive, approach the ale-makers amongst us could create a new

Rowanberry ale which could be used for feasts, rituals and ceremonies.'

We're sure the 'ale-makers' of Uig will have no problem in creating a new Rowanberry Ale.

The dates of upcoming feasts, rituals and ceremonies will appear in our Branch Diary.

You may have been told about the dreams, you may have heard the rumours, you may even have seen a new concrete floor and some plasterboard in an outhouse? Watch this space - the **Loch Ness Brewery** is just about to become a reality! We understand that the brewing equipment is on site and that visitors to the annual Loch Ness Beer Festival at the Benleva Hotel may even be given (short) tours of the new brewery.

Stephen Crossland, Benleva Hotel co-owner with brother Alan, hopes to be brewing by the end of September.

Black Isle Brewery has commissioned a new 30 bbl plant and brewing commenced in August. A new bottling line has also been installed. Both premises will be used until the



the finest steaks in town!

The Steakhouse is already a well-established favourite with local diners. A wide choice and grills available for dinner.

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dalhousie@macdonald-hotels.co.uk

visitor facilities at the new building have been completed, thereafter the original brewery will be used for specialist and test brews.

Cairngorm Brewery has started work on an extension which will house their bottling plant. Work is due to be completed early in 2011.

Steve Bailey, one of the **Cuillin Brewery** brewers, has developed a new ale, the 4.3% Skye Amber, a light coloured, lager type beer with a fruity aroma and not too hoppy. It will be available from the cask (no plans to bottle) as a summer special only.

Cairngorm Brewery were 'star struck' to receive news that two of their ales, Trade Winds and Black Gold, had won Gold Star Awards from the Guild of Fine Foods.

Orkney Raven was awarded Joint Bronze in the Bitter category in the Champion Beer of Britain competition at the Great British Beer

Festival. Raven was the only Scottish winner.

The **Cairngorm Brewery** pledged last year to support the "Cairngorms Wildcat Project", with a proportion of sales of their Wildcat Ale going to the initiative.

The Strathspey & Badenoch Herald reported recently that over 51,000 bottles of Wildcat Ale have been sold since, meaning that the Dalhousie-based firm has been able to hand over a cheque for £630 to the project to help protect the endangered species.

Staff from the brewery were at the Highland Wildlife Park by Kincaig in early September to present the money to Douglas Richardson, animal collection manager at the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland-owned attraction.

Definitely a very worthy cause! Hopefully this project may be successful in saving one of Scotland's rarest creatures from extinction. Ed.

We hope you have enjoyed reading our Autumn 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 next edition will be out in December. *Cheers! Ed.*



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Complete the Direct Debit form below and you will receive three months membership free and a fantastic discount on your membership subscription. Alternatively you can send a cheque payable to CAMRA Ltd with your completed form, visit www.camra.org.uk or call 01727 867201. All forms should be addressed to Membership Secretary, CAMRA, 230 Hatfield Road, St Albans, AL1 4LW.



Your Details

Title Surname

Forename(s)

Date of Birth (dd/mm/yyyy)

Address

..... Postcode

Email address

Tel No (s)

Partner's Details (if Joint Membership)

Title Surname

Forename(s)

Date of Birth (dd/mm/yyyy)

Direct Debit Non DD

Single Membership £20 £22
(UK & EU)

Joint Membership £25 £27
(Partner at the same address)

For Young Member and concessionary rates please visit www.camra.org.uk or call 01727 867201.

I wish to join the Campaign for Real Ale, and agree to abide by the Memorandum and Articles of Association.

I enclose a cheque for

Signed Date

Applications will be processed within 21 days

0709



Instruction to your Bank or Building Society to pay by Direct Debit



Please fill in the form and send to: Campaign for Real Ale Ltd, 230 Hatfield Road, St Albans, Herts AL1 4LW

Name and full postal address of your Bank or Building Society

To the Manager Bank or Building Society

Address

Postcode

Name(s) of Account Holder (s)

Bank or Building Society Account Number

Branch Sort Code

Reference Number

Originators Identification Number

9 2 6 1 2 9

FOR CAMRA OFFICIAL USE ONLY

This is not part of the instruction to your Bank or Building Society

Membership Number

Name

Postcode

Instructions to your Bank or Building Society

Please pay CAMRA Direct Debits from the account detailed on this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with CAMRA and, if so will be passed electronically to my Bank/Building Society.

Signature(s)

Date



This Guarantee should be detached and retained by the payer.

The Direct Debit Guarantee

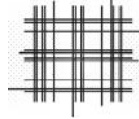
- This Guarantee is offered by all Banks and Building Societies that take part in the Direct Debit Scheme. The efficiency and security of the Scheme is monitored and protected by your own Bank or Building Society.
- If the amounts to be paid or the payment dates change CAMRA will notify you 10 working days in advance of your account being debited or as otherwise agreed.
- If an error is made by CAMRA or your Bank or Building Society, you are guaranteed a full and immediate refund from your branch of the amount paid.
- You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time by writing to your Bank or Building Society. Please also send a copy of your letter to us.

detached and retained this section

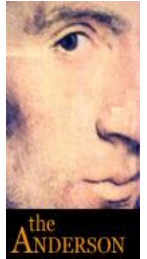
Banks and Building Societies may not accept Direct Debit Instructions for some types of account.



The and restaurant
GLEN Hotel

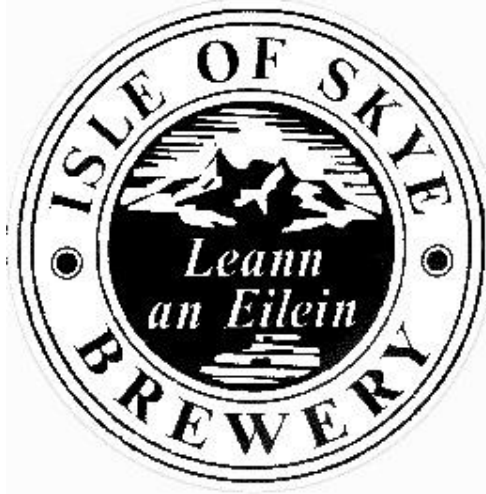


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