

What's Yours Then?

Highlands & Western Isles CAMRA
Free Newsletter

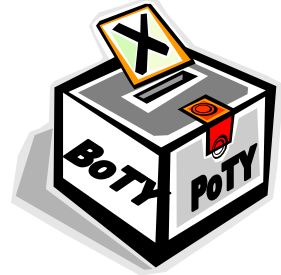


Contains Full List of Highlands & Western Isles Real Ale Outlets

**Look out for Seasonal Brews from
Highlands & Islands Brewers**



Time to VOTE



Winter 2010

**CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE**

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

- > Updated Branch Diary
- > Tasting Panel Update
- > Socials & Outings - Reports
- > Festivals Update
- > Focus on - Walter Meldrum
- > 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.

Spring edition **deadline** is 7th March, with publication in early April 2011

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.

As 2010 draws to a close we can look back on a very busy but enjoyable year for the Branch. We have covered a lot of ground on our trips and we have tried to visit as many pubs as possible for Committee and Branch meetings, and for our tasting evenings. We have always been made very welcome and have enjoyed some wonderful hospitality from our hosts.

A big thank-you to all publicans and brewers, and to their hard working teams, and we wish you all a very busy and prosperous 2011.

There was a record turnout for our AGM, held at the Kings Highway early in November.

Chairman Eric Mills praised the efforts of our small Branch committee in fulfilling their CAMRA commitments which he feels have a significant input to the success of real ale in the Highlands and Western Isles. Eric and Secretary Gareth Hardman both noted that local breweries have prospered, with several progressing brewery expansions, despite the difficulties the industry as a whole is facing.

Branch finances are currently very healthy thanks to the continuing loyalty of newsletter advertisers, to a successful Marymas Fair, and to the growing number of real ale supporters who fill the minibus seats for outings.

Brewery Liaison Officer (BLO) reports provided an encouraging picture which we hope will continue into 2011 and far beyond.

The outgoing committee was returned with little change, Branch Officers continuing in post, but a number of new volunteers meant that most committee posts were filled, some for the first time. There is still a vacancy for a newsletter editor, and breweries are springing up quicker than BLOs (see page 27), so if you would like to be involved in the vibrant real ale scene please let us know (see page 6).

Eric has also taken on the Tasting Panel Chair following Bill Tring's decision to stand down.

Thanks to Mark Phinn and his team at the Kings Highway for hosting our AGM.

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

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Ullapool and Beyond

Late October, beer festival time in Ullapool, and our last minibus outing of the year. The weather was fine, a hint of rain perhaps, as we left Inverness and headed north-west, but the clouds cleared, the sun came out, and we enjoyed fine views of hills, lochs and coast.

By way of a change we headed directly to the Scourie Hotel. Although the hotel had just closed for the year, and owners Patrick and Judy were on holiday, the rear bar is open all winter at times to suit the locals. Black Isle Red Kite (4 - average group score) was on tap in the fishing themed public bar. During the season hotel guests have access to 25,000 acres of game fishing on lochs and rivers, and sea fishing can be arranged as well.

Travelling back south now the roads were a bit kinder to the minibus engine as we cruised down long inclines. Next a small detour to the Altnacealgach Inn, signposted from and close to Ledmore Junction. A truly beautiful scenic location overlooking Loch Borralan with views to Cul Mor and Suilven. Owner Mike Dwyer, who ran the Castle Hotel in Portmahomack for several years, has renovated a lot of the site forming a bar, conservatory, outside drinking area, and car parking, and he has plans for more development including accommodation.

For such a remote place there seemed to be plenty advertised; quizzes, food nights, music evenings and Christmas day lunch. Musical instruments were around the bar, including a harp which Mike's partner Kate plays. As with a lot of rural businesses people have more than one role, and Kate is also the local vet. After trying out a few beers, Mike has settled on Caledonian Deuchars IPA (3) and 80 (4). Continuing south to Ullapool, and to the Arch Inn at the far west end of the seafront under an arched entrance. There was a bit of a wait as the person behind the bar had to also deal with a large coffee order, and accommodation, but the wait was worthwhile as An Teallach Kildonnan (3) was very good. Along to the Seaforth where An Teallach Ale (4) was also in excellent form and where whitebait snacks were enjoyed. Further along the front to the Ferry Boat Inn where Deuchars IPA (2) was the single option for our visit.

One street back from the front was our next stop, at the Argyll Hotel where Nigel and Fran (who were married in September) have done so well that the Argyll is a new entry in this year's Good Beer Guide. A warm welcome, a warm fire and two very good beers plus a selection of cider and perry were on offer. Another excellent beer from An Teallach, this time Suilven (4), and Fuller's London Pride (3). Back on the minibus and a short hop to the Morefield Motel on the northern outskirts of the village for their Beer Festival. Always a good selection of beers on offer at this annual festival and all in very good condition as usual.



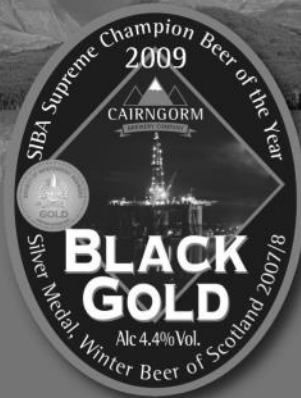
Casks were ready in the cellar to replace ones that finished. Brews available this afternoon were Angus Ales Mashie Niblick, An Teallach Suilven, Kelburn Tartan Army, Isle of Skye Red Cuillin, Cairngorm Brochan (their new seasonal made with oats to celebrate the recently held Porridge Championships), Williams 7 Giraffes, BrewDog Edge, Deeside Macbeth, and a new brew from Tempest called Citra – using a new citrus hop from the States. Tempest has been brewing since April 2010 and is a small craft brewery based in a former dairy and run by the proprietor of it's tap, the Cobbles Inn in Kelso. They brew Emanation Pale Ale and Elemental Porter as regulars for the inn, plus 'small batch, hand crafted products'.

We then tucked into the very good, special Beer Festival menu and took part in quiz sheets which raise money for local charities. The main restaurant was open at lunchtimes and evenings throughout the festival, and

(Continued on page 12)



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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Branch Diary (Meetings start at 7.30 pm)

Tues 11 th Jan	Committee Meeting	Snowgoose, Inverness
Tues 25 th Jan	Tasting Evening	Meet at Heathmount Hotel

CAMRA is promoting Stouts, Porters and Old Ales in February and March. Please remember to ask for traditional cask-conditioned stouts and porters at the bar and enjoy an authentic taste experience.



Tues 8 th February	Committee Meeting	Castle Tavern, Inverness
Tues 22 nd February	Branch/Tasting Meeting	Meet at Hootananny
Tues 8 th March	Committee Meeting	The Anderson, Fortrose
Fri 8 th - Fri 15 th April	* 3 rd Bandstand Beer Festival	Bandstand Bar, Nairn
Sat 9 th April	14:00 Tasting Course 16:00 Branch Social	Bandstand Beer Festival 2011
Tues 12 th April	Branch Meeting	
Sat 23 rd April		Minibus Trip around the Black Isle with stops at real ale hostelrys and breweries. 11.00 from Inverness or Clachnaharry Inn
Tues 26 th April	Tasting Evening	Blackfriars, Inverness

May is National Mild Month - Celebrate Mild in May

Tues 10 th May	Committee Meeting	Suie Hotel, Kincaig
Tues 31 st May	Tasting Evening	Cawdor Tavern
2 nd - 4 th June	Aberdeen Beer Festival	Pittodrie Stadium
Tues 14 th June	Branch Meeting	Cairn Hotel, Carrbridge
17 th - 19 th June	Scottish Real Ale Festival	Adam House, Edinburgh
Sat 18 th June	Marymas Fair Real Ale Bar	Northern Meeting Park, Inverness

* 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

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Eric Mills - 01456 459343

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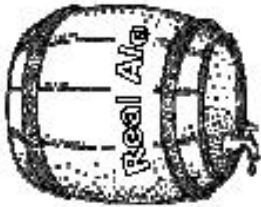
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Wedding Bells at the Loch Ness Beer Festival

Possibly the first UK wedding at a pub Beer Festival. On Friday 24th September, at 14:00, Barbara Allen and Peter Gray were married under the 400 year old chestnut tree in the grounds of the Benleva Hotel. This tree has a history as a hanging tree for the local villains.



Barbara and Peter are from South Reston in Lincolnshire, and had been looking for a beer festival to be married at. After trawling the internet and getting very good reports of the Loch Ness event, they booked in.

'Tie the Knot', a special brew from the Isle of Skye Brewery, was on tap on the day and the money raised from it's sale - nearly £150 - went towards the RNLI who have a boat on Loch Ness. The event went so well that the happy couple have booked to come back for their first anniversary.

The festival has grown every year and sixty beers were planned with around ten on tap at any time. As one finished another one quickly replaced it. The beers were mainly from the

Scottish Breweries: Isle of Skye, Cairngorm, Inveralmond, An Teallach, Highland, Fyne, Tryst, Plockton, Angus (a new micro-brewery in Carnoustie), Strathaven, Stewarts and one from BrewDog. The English guest Brewery this year was the award winning Thornbridge, whose Jaipur, Halcyon, Kipling, Hopton, Lord Marples and Wild Swan all went down very well. There were also two very good beers from Foxfield; Befuggled Stout and Big Mark's Oaty Mild. Isle of Skye launched their new Witch Wand brew, made with rowanberries. Cider fans enjoyed the largest selection in the Highlands during the week: Oliver's Dry Cider, Gwynt Y Ddraig Farmhouse and Happy Daze, Janet's Jungle Juice, Westons Raspberry Twist and Country Perry, Wilcox Farmhouse, Roger Wilkins' Farmhouse, and Thistly Cross.

£1 from the sale of each festival glass went to Highland Hospice in memory of local regular Jimmy Smart, and nearly £200 was raised.

Beer of the Festival was Jaipur IPA from the Thornbridge Brewery - the first ever English winner of this award. Brewery of the festival was closer to home - the Cairngorm Brewery in Aviemore. The 'Guess Beer' was Isle of Skye Hebridean Gold, correctly guessed by just 3 people. There were free guided tours of the soon-to-open Loch Ness Brewery.

As well as ale and cider tasting there were numerous activities during the week. Topsy Laird played on the opening Friday. Saturday saw our CAMRA social with a presentation of the new 2011 Good Beer guide to our 200th member, Walter Meldrum, followed by folk music. The Sunday poker tournament was won by Goth Tom. Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday had a pool tournament won by Alan MacLeod. The Thursday night quiz was won by Cornered (Carolyn, Denise, Mike and Eric). Popular group Penny Dogs played on the Friday and Saturday nights.

Did they get through 60 beers? No, only 59, as the sixtieth, Cairngorm Black Gold, did not make it until the day after the festival when they converted back to the four handpumps.

Accommodation gets booked well in advance, so if you are planning to go next year, for the tenth Loch Ness Beer Festival, book early - the dates are 16th to 24th September.



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Great Beer



Traditional Highland Food (New Menu)
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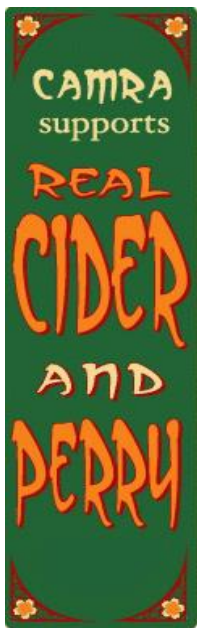
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Traditional Cider Matters

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

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 Winter, 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 Winter 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

Alastair Boyd, CAMRA's Scottish Cider Co-ordinator, travelled to Inverness to present the award to Blackfriars Landlord Del Graham.

Del and Janette Graham took over the lease of Blackfriars in February 2007. Janette and two daughters run the bar while Del looks after the kitchen and cellar. Del is also known as The Singing Landlord, and can usually be found behind the mic on Friday nights, singing songs from the 60's and 70's. After experimenting with one cider and finding it popular, he now has two handpumps serving Westons brews.




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

(Continued from page 4)

there were live bands in the evenings.

All too soon it was time for us to head back to Inverness so that we would be in time to catch our buses home. Many thanks to all the publicans and bar staff for making this a very good day out, and to driver Sandy of Fraser's Coaches for another safe journey.

More Festival News

1. Torridon Inn Real Ale Festival

The Venue - Torridon Inn, by Achnasheen. Surrounded by mountains and sea in a very scenic part of the Highlands.

The activities, spaced out over the festival, included nightly music; meet the brewers from Cairngorm and An Teallach; meet the distiller from Loch Ewe Distillery; a talk by mountain rescue veteran David Whalley; Craft Workshop on Feltwork; Quiz in aid of Macmillan Cancer; Arts and Craft fair (about ten tables featuring pictures, feltwork, Isle of Skye bakery with cakes made with beer, wood turning, cards, etc); Torridon & Kinlochewe Mountain Rescue demonstration with B-B-Q and proceeds going

to their important work in the area.

The food - as well as their normal meals head chef James came up with a regularly changing selection of meals with beer as an ingredient.

The accomodation - 10% festival discount if you stayed for two or more nights. Hotel rooms and bunkhouse were available.

The beers - Manageress Magda Zorawski (Polish/Australian) had selected Scottish brews from An Teallach, Cairngorm, Inveralmond, Orkney, Atlas, Highland, Hebridean and Isle of Skye breweries; plus a Westons Cider. On the Saturday afternoon there was Atlas Latitude, Inveralmond Lia Fail and Independence, An Teallach Crofters Pale Ale, Orkney Dark Island, Highland Scapa Special, and for cider fans Westons Traditional Scrumpy. There was also the launch of a house beer - Ben Damp - from An Teallach, a 4.1% abv brown hoppy bitter. All the beers were in good form.

Magda and James worked really hard to pull off a beer festival in such a remote area and they have plans to have another one at the

(Continued on page 14)

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same time next year, so watch out for dates in this newsletter and support our local pubs. Meanwhile, they are open during the winter, all day Thursday, Friday and Saturday plus Sunday lunchtimes. Re-open fully at Easter.

2. Autumn Ale Festival at Wetherspoons

This year's festival took place between the 27th October and 14th November and again featured 50 ales in the festival programme.

Those of us looking for old favourites were likely to be disappointed as around 35 of the brews were either exclusively brewed for the festival and making their debut, being brewed by an overseas brewer at a UK brewery, or returning after a long absence for a one off appearance. Nevertheless there were plenty of styles and strengths to cover most people's palate. With the three thirds for the price of a pint running again I popped in every day or so and managed to try 27 of the featured beers. I will not fill up the newsletter with details of all 27 but will highlight a selection.

Four Scottish beers were featured and sadly I only managed to find one, Harviestoun Wild Hop (score 8 out of 10). This 4.9% brew was

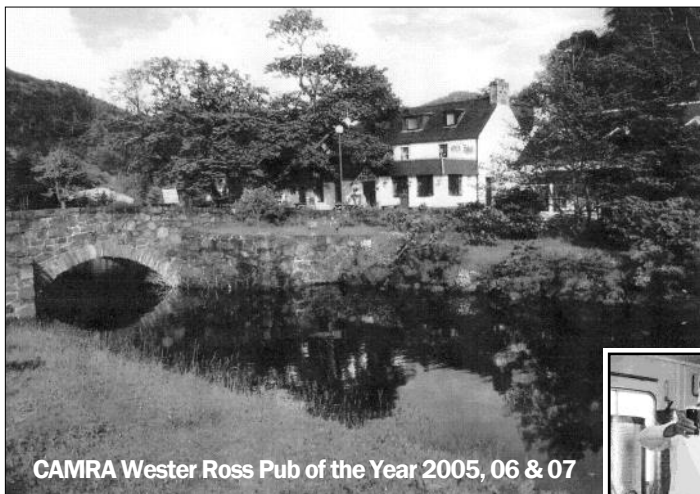
a festival exclusive but tasted quite similar to their regular brew Haggis Hunter. The Scottish beers I missed were Caledonian Strong Ale, Double Espresso from Traditional Scottish Ales and BrewDog Edge. Having tried BrewDog Edge at the Ullapool beer festival I was amused by the tasting notes in the festival guide - quote "This rarely brewed chestnut brown mild has a beautiful plum fruit aroma which gives way to a wave of cascading malt, enveloping the palate throughout, with only the slightest hop background haze emerging late in the finish". Now those of you that have drunk the BrewDog beers know the words "slightest hop background" and "BrewDog" tend not to go hand in hand. This is what I found with the Edge, which drank as a hoppy mild which in my opinion didn't quite work.

I did get to try four out of the five beers from the international brewers. Flying Dutchman (7), brewed by Henk Oexman from Heineken at the Caledonian brewery in Edinburgh, was a 4.3% golden ale containing spices and juniper berries. I am not normally too keen on "messed around" beers which have had what I call "non-beer" ingredients added, but this

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Where good food and ales come naturally

was a very refreshing drinkable ale.

Birra del Borgo Castagnale (8) was a 4.4% deep amber beer brewed with chestnuts and was brewed by Italian Leonardo di Vincenzo at Everards in Leicestershire and had soft malt and spicy chestnut flavours.

Lion Stout (7) was brewed by Sri Lankan Chandraratne Talpe Liyanage at Marstons in Staffordshire. It was a smooth, silky chocolate flavoured stout with some roast malt character. My favourite of the international ales was Samuel Adams Blonde Ambition (9). This was brewed by Bert Boyce and Dasn Melideo at Shepard Neame in Kent and was a 5.5% strong bitter which had been made with lots of East Kent grown American Cascade hops which are used in the brew within a few hours of being picked. This gave a very hoppy beer but with a soft not overly bitter background.

Several other beers are worthy of a mention. Bath Ginger Hare (9) was a 3.9% specialty ale but you have to use the term "ale" lightly, even though it said it was brewed with Golding hops. This was a draught ginger beer with a full bodied lingering spicy ginger flavour which was much less sweet than the processed Crabbies alcoholic ginger beer which

seems to be so popular at the moment. Titanic New York Wheat Porter (9) was a lovely fruity porter with roast malt hints and had bags of flavour at 4.2%.

Banks's UCB (9) or Ultimate Curry Beer was a 5.3% strong bitter. The combination of 4 types of hops gave a beer with loads of spicy hop flavour which had a sharp clean bitter finish which you could easily imagine going well with a curry. Adnams Ghost Ship (9) was a very light pale ale at 4.5%. Light in body as well, it packed a huge spicy fruit hit which was sweet at first but then turned into a lingering bitter aftertaste.

As well as the range of ales there was always a real cider or perry on as well. These turned over well as during the festival all 8 that were in the programme were featured.

Another good festival from Wetherspoons and I have to say all the beers were served in very good condition fully justifying its inclusion in the 2011 Good Beer Guide.

GNH, Inverness.

Wetherspoons launched a new website ahead of their Autumn Ale Festival, to promote their festivals and real ale in general. Well worth a look - www.jdwrealale.co.uk

Highland Real Ale and Cider Festivals

February

FebruaryFest - Clachaig Inn, Glencoe

April

Bandstand Beer Festival - Bandstand Bar, Braeval Hotel, Nairn

Annual Easter Ale Festival - Grog & Gruel, Fort William

Wetherspoons Spring Festival - Kings Highway, Inverness, and Alexander Bain

May

MayFest - Clachaig Inn, Glencoe

June

Real Ale Bar - Marymas Medieval Fair, Inverness

Summer Ale and Sausage Festival - Grog & Gruel, Fort William

September

Inverness Beer Festival - Castle Tavern, Inverness

Loch Ness Beer Festival - Benleva Hotel, Drumnadrochit

Torridon Real Ale Festival - Torridon Inn

October

Ullapool Beer Festival - Morefield Motel, Ullapool

OctoberFest - Clachaig Inn, Glencoe

Wetherspoons Autumn Festival - Kings Highway and Alexander Bain, Wick

Please check our newsletter diary or website for dates.



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Cyclists following Sustrans NCN Route 1 can take advantage of our secure lock-up for bicycles.

Focus on Walter Meldrum



In August Walter became our 200th Highlands & Western Isles Branch member, and in celebration of this milestone the Branch presented Walter with a copy of the 2011 edition of the Good Beer Guide at the recent Loch Ness Beer Festival.

Walter is retired and lives in Drumnadrochit. Walter is a regular at the Benleva Hotel, and has also been a regular on our minibus trips for a number of years.

Q. Where are you originally from?

A. Glasgow but my work moved me south to Windsor.

Q. What type of work did you do?

A. Quite a few different jobs but mainly as a painter and decorator.

Q. When/why did you move to Drumnadrochit?

A. I had wanted to eventually move back to Scotland and in 2001 my wife dragged me back, this time to Drumnadrochit.

Q. How and where were you introduced to real ale?

A. It was in a bar in Keswick, in the Lake District, in 1975.

Q. What is your favourite beer/beer style?

A. Not too fond of the darker stout/porter beers. I prefer the lighter coloured beers from Isle of Skye, Cairngorm, An Teallach, Orkney and Fyne Breweries.

Q. What are your hobbies/interests?

A. Model making, steam trains, and collecting books.

Q. What made you join CAMRA?

A. I have been thinking about it but never got around to it. Then my old mates Rob and Linda bought it for my birthday.

Q. What is your favourite type of pub?

A. Any that is friendly and sells real ale, like my local the Benleva Hotel.

Q. Which is your favourite CAMRA outing?

A. The Isle of Skye trip is always a great day out, and really topped off by the hospitality

from Angus and Pam and their team at the Isle of Skye Brewery.

Q. Is there anywhere else we should visit?

A. Fyne Ales are a favourite of mine and I would like a trip there.

Q. Which/where is your favourite part of the Highlands?

A. I like and enjoy all the Scottish Highlands and Islands.

We are not sure why Walter didn't join some time ago. Members pay a discounted fare on our minibus trips and Walter's membership fee would have been covered by the discounts!



Walter enjoying a joke with Branch Chairman Eric Mills and friends in the Benleva Hotel bar.

Christmas Special

The Scottish Real Ale Shop at the Lade Inn, near Callander, is offering two Christmas Whisky Ale specials. Their Premier ten ale offering contains Orkney Dark Island Special Reserve (10.0% abv), Traditional Scottish Ales 1488 (7.0), five from Innis & Gunn: Original Oak Aged (7.7), Winter (8.5), Canadian (7.1), Rum Cask (7.4) and Triple Matured (7.2); Brewdog Paradox Isle of Arran (10.0), and two from Harvioustoun: Ola Dubh Special Reserve 18 (8.0) and 40 (8.0). A snip at £42, or there is a five ale pack for £22.

Two great Christmas gifts which you may find difficult to give away! Sadly their 10% CAMRA member discount only applies to mixed case deals of 12 bottles.

Ed.

Clachnaharry Inn

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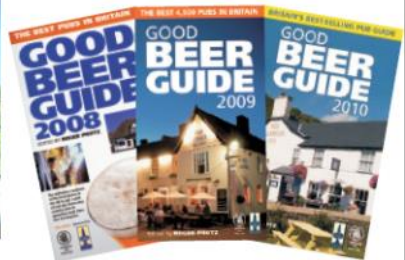
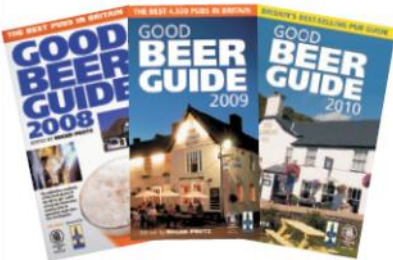
Proprietors: Mr & Mrs A.D. & B.J. Oulton

Accommodation bookings accepted online



www.ullapoolbeerfestival.co.uk

Real Ale in the Real Highlands



Michelin Eating Out in Pubs 2011

A total of 524 pubs, from across Great Britain and Ireland, are listed in the guide.

Editor Derek Bulmer is quoted in the on-line Michelin Media Centre: *'Our guide shows that pubs are not dying, they are merely changing. The traditional drinking pub has undoubtedly been suffering but those that are making efforts with their food are flourishing. Even some of the breweries have acknowledged this and have begun recruiting talented chefs. If there is one message it is; adapt and thrive.'*

'We are also finding that these food-driven pubs are playing an even greater part in the local community. Chefs are rediscovering regional specialities and often deal directly with local farmers and many hold food-themed nights, such as pie nights or fish nights. We are pleased to see that most are also moving away from restaurant-style cooking and are now serving 'proper' pub food.'

At least one local pub has picked up on this theme and includes 'proper fish & chips' on their menu. Joking aside it is interesting to note that of only nineteen Scottish pubs listed seven are in the Highlands. Of this seven, six

serve real ale, four are listed in the Good Beer Guide, and three were voted Highlands & Western Isles Pubs-of-the-Year for 2010.

So real ale and good food go well together..

Full listing for Highland:

- Summer Isles Hotel
- Applecross Inn
- Cawdor Tavern
- Kylesku Hotel
- Loch Ness Inn
- Plockton Hotel
- Stein Inn

Other 'Scotland' listings:

- Aberdeenshire: Balmedie - Cock and Bull
- Aberdeenshire: Glenkindie - Glenkindie Arms
- Angus: Memus - Drovers Inn
- Argyll & Bute: Connel - Oyster Inn
- Argyll & Bute: Tayvallich - Tayvallich Inn
- Borders: Swinton - Wheatsheaf
- East Ayrshire: Sorn - Sorn Inn
- Edinburgh: Leith - Kings Wark
- Edinburgh: Leith - Ship on the Shore
- Glasgow: Babbity Bowster
- Perth & Kinross: Guildtown - Anglers Inn
- Perth & Kinross: Kirkmichael - Strathardle Inn

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
Conon Bridge Hotel
National Hotel, Dingwall
Richmond Hotel, Strathpeffer
Inchbae Lodge Hotel, Garve
Aultgush 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



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80 Belgians

real cider
200 malts

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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)

Aviemore & Cairngorms

Cairn Hotel, Carrbridge
Muckrach Lodge Hotel, Dulnain Bridge
Boat Hotel, Boat of Garten
Cairngorm Hotel, Aviemore

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)

Wester Ross

Applecross Inn
Summer 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
 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)



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 hours of business**

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

South Skye & Lochalsh

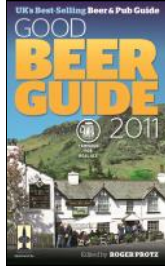
Kintail Lodge Hotel
 Jac-o-bite Restaurant, Kintail
 Clachan Bar, Dornie
 Loch Duich Hotel, Dornie
 Plockton Hotel, Plockton
 Plockton Inn, Plockton
 Saucy Mary's Lodge, Kyleakin (S)
 Isle Ornsay Hotel
 Ardvasar Hotel
 Stables Restaurant, Armadale
 Claymore, Broadford
 Dunollie Hotel, Broadford
 Hebridean 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)



Caithness & Sutherland

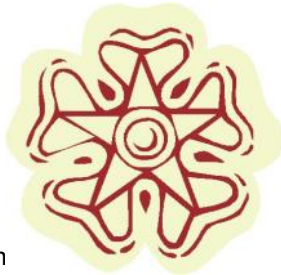
Inchnadamph Hotel
 The Caberfeidh, Lochinver
 Scourie Hotel, Scourie
 Altnacealgach Inn, nr. Ledmore Junction
 Castle Hotel, Dornoch
 Eagle Hotel, Dornoch
 Dunroamin Hotel, Bonar Bridge
 Invershin Hotel
 Sutherland Arms Hotel, Golspie (S)
 Sutherland Inn, Brora
 Belgrave Hotel, Helmsdale
 Bay Owl Restaurant, Dunbeath
 Tongue Hotel
 MacKay's Hotel, Wick
 Alexander Bain, Wick
 (*Wetherspools*)
 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 2011

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

of Skye Brewery - Based at Uig, next to the Western ßs ferry terminal, and has been brewing since December 95. Ales include Red & Black Cuillin, Hebridean Gold, ng Pretender and Blaven. Seasonal, House, and special it ales are regularly brewed.



alla Brewery - Most northerly brewery in the UK, started brewing 1 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 ales 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 Winter 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 March 2011.

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!

News of Brews

> **New Brewery I** - As we went to press **Loch Ness Brewery** ales were still eagerly



awaited, official opening is to be March 2011 we hear, but brewery owner Steven Crossland is happy in the meantime to show interested parties around the brewery plant.

> **New Brewery II** - Brewing is to return to the Black Isle town of Cromarty after a gap of around 160 years. A young entrepreneur, Craig Middleton (23), has plans to set up a micro-brewery at Davidston, just outside the town. The original brewery building has been restored and converted into a training centre.

Mr Middleton's plans were recently given a massive boost with a funding award from the Scottish Government's Rural Priorities scheme. Information about rural funding can be found at www.scotland.gov.uk - The **Cromarty Brewing Company** is to receive £128,442 of funding from Rural Priorities. The brewery, which will provide three full-time jobs, blends the traditional skills of the brewer with modern technology to produce innovative products, using local ingredients for distinctive characteristics. This project supports local processing, marketing and retailing in line with the Scottish Food and Drink Strategy. The brewery uses local wood fuel to generate heat, creating further demand for local material and supporting jobs in these sectors. It will also support the local tourist industry, contributing to the 'local produce' experience and providing a further point of interest in the vicinity.

Craig who currently works at the Cairngorm Brewery, was quoted in the North Star: "It's a big boost to receive this grant and we can now go ahead and seek planning permission, hopefully putting up a building at the start of next year. We also hope to use local products, such as herbs from the nursery just down the road and local fruit farms, to give our beer a distinctive flavour. Initially we hope to sell locally, but would also like to expand outwith the Highlands into cities like Edinburgh where there is a big market for real ale"

> **New Brewery III** - Neil Fuller recently lodged a planning application for demolition of an existing workshop and erection of micro-brewery at Sangomore, Durness. Neil Fuller is a craftsman who works in a broad spectrum of stonework, and runs Durness Stone Craft.

We understand that Neil enjoys real ale and is also a keen cyclist who participates in long distance rides to raise money for charity. We wish him well with his plans to start brewing.

> For the second time in three years **Black Isle Yellowhammer IPA** has scooped the top prize at the Annual Soil Association Organic Food and Drink Awards.

> In October **An Teallach Ale** was awarded a Bronze Medal in the Best Bitter category at the 33rd Norwich Beer Festival.

> I thought you might be interested in, so I have been told, the first ever Colonsay beer in cask. They are not fully geared up to cask beers and their brews usually go straight to bottles. Given some encouragement they might look at getting new equipment to make cask viable.

Colonsay IPA, 3.9% abv, golden in colour with a fruity, citrus, hoppy nose. Fruity, hoppy with a malt background taste and aftertaste. Initially more bitter but sweetness comes through a bit more in the aftertaste.

Carbonation was a bit low and the body a bit thin. I had a second pint served with sparkler on and it gave a better head and a bit more carbonation. A very good tasty brew at 3.9%.

As they say the proof is at the bar - the cask sold in 24 hours and was enjoyed by the locals at the Benleva Hotel in Drumnadrochit.

So watch this space, we may have to review

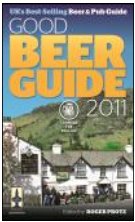
the Old Bridge Inn ~ Aviemore



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

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Tasting Panel Update

Our tasting panel meets once a month, usually on the last Tuesday, but sometimes meetings are arranged to coincide with real ale festivals in our locale. Meetings start at 7.30pm.

Tasting panel members will sample the brews on offer, with a view to completing tasting cards which are the linchpin of providing beer descriptions for the Good Beer Guide; but more importantly for nominating beers for the award of Champion Beer of Scotland (CBOS) and Champion Beer of Britain (CBOB).

Trained CAMRA tasters rate beers throughout the year on a scale of ten. The highest scoring beer in each beer category is then put forward to the regional rounds of these Champion Beer competitions. More trained tasters are always needed and we run training courses from time to time - the next one being at the Nairn Beer Festival in April.

Although there is obviously a serious side to the tasting meetings, these are primarily social events and all interested real ale fans are very welcome - a chance to seek out a variety of

brews in as many pubs as we can fit into our increasingly busy diary!

Come along and learn about the flavours that make up your favourite brews, or just look in for a beer and a chat.

September found us at the Benleiva Hotel for the Loch Ness Beer Festival, always a good place for a tasting session! Lots of Scottish beers to try. First up was **Beinn Dearg from An Teallach**, a 3.8% abv tawny coloured bitter/eighty shilling. A malty fruity aroma came through into the taste along with some late hop flavour and quite strong bitterness which lasted well into the aftertaste, making it great value for its strength, and scoring an average 7.5 (out of 10). A new beer from the **Isle of Skye Brewery** was up next. The 4.5% **Witchwand** specialty beer is brewed with rowanberries and despite the name of the beer there was some malt and caramel but not overly fruity which can happen with some fruit beers. More sweet than bitter it was well balanced and scored an average of 8.5. We followed this with the straw coloured **Jarl from Fyne Ales**. This 4.0% beer was

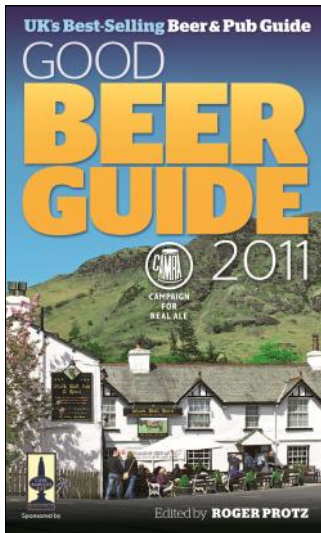
packed full of hops and fruit in the aroma, which transferred to a huge citrus/grapefruit hop taste with a strong bitterness which even increased into the aftertaste together with some mouth drying astringency which did not prevent it scoring highly with 9's. **Tryst Sherpa Porter**, a 4.1% ruby coloured beer, had lots of roasted malt in the aroma. Quite thin in mouth-feel and body, there was plenty of strong roast malt flavours which led to a fruity blackcurrant finish in this tasty porter. More bitter than sweet it scored an average of 8. Last beer of the tasting session was another one from **Fyne. Vital Spark** is a 4.4% porter style ale with plenty of malts, roast and fruit in the aroma. This increases into the taste and holds well in the aftertaste as well. More bitter than sweet it scored an average of 8.5 making our beer of the session the **Fyne Ales Jarl**. Well done to Steve at the Benleiva for a great range of ales in excellent condition. GNH.

Clachnaharry Inn was the venue for October and first beer up was a new one for all of us. **Number 3 from Williams Brothers** was a 4.3% brown/red coloured ale in the old ale/

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Guide
2011**

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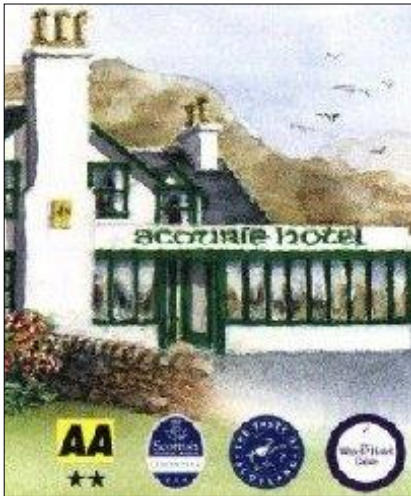
As well as beers from our 'regulars'
**Cairngorm Brewing Company, Houston Brewery
and the Isle of Skye Brewery.**

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

All ales served in an ale pot unless otherwise requested.

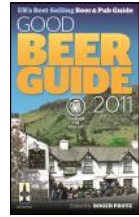
Rooms available too - from £32 - best deals online

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 patrick@scourie-hotel.co.uk
 www.scourie-hotel.co.uk



Cask Ales and Real Cider are served

An ideal base for game fishing, hill-walking, bird watching (Handa Island is nearby), or exploring the famed empty quarter of Western Sutherland, a lunar landscape of lochs and mountains.

Overlooking Scourie Bay and with views to the distant tops of Ben Stack, Arkle, and Foinaven.



To connoisseurs of game fishing there is simply nothing to compare to the 25,000 acres of Loch, River and Hill Loch fishing held for the guests of Scourie Hotel. The Hotel has 36 fishing beats held exclusively for guests, plus 3 beats on Loch Stack and Loch More for sea trout and salmon. Additional salmon fishing is taken on local salmon rivers.

strong mild classification. We all agreed that there was virtually nothing to be found in the aroma, but strong roast and malt flavours dominated the taste, accompanied by some caramel and fruit in the beer which was slightly more sweet than bitter. These flavours disappeared very quickly into the aftertaste leaving us all a bit disappointed, resulting in scores that averaged 5.5.

Orkney Dark Island was next and this 4.6% old ale was not at its best, condition wise, probably coming to the end of its stay on the bar. None of the normal dominant roasted flavours in the aroma, although these were present in the taste to some degree, but it was the astringent vinous fruit flavours that scored the beer down, only managing 3.5.

Cairngorm Wildcat was next, a 5.1% tawny coloured strong bitter. Caramel dominated in the aroma and this carried through to the taste along with a good balance of malts, roast and fruit in this complex beer. Just slightly more sweet than bitter, all the flavours carried well into the aftertaste giving the beer an average score of 7. Last beer of the ses-

sion was **Inveralmond Lia Fail**. This popular tawny coloured strong bitter is 4.7% and is a classic Scottish malty ale. Faint aromas of malt, caramel and fruit just give a hint of what is to come in the taste which is a complex full bodied mix of malts, roast, caramel and fruit, with a hint of hops. Again more sweet than bitter, which is the character of traditional Scottish style ales, it scored an average of 8 giving it the beer of the evening status.

Most of us finished the evening with a pint of Lia Fail, and Clachnaharry co-host Liam brought us out some delicious samples from their menu. The homemade pate, pie and pickle went down very well. Thanks Liam!

Heavy snow and poor driving conditions threatened November meeting but three of us made to the Bandstand Bar in Nairn to join membership secretary Seamus who much enjoys having the Bandstand as his local.

A fine array of five Scottish and two English ales greeted us on the bar. We started with a beer from our branch area, the 4.7% copper coloured seasonal brew **Blizzard** from **Atlas**. It was different from how we remembered it

Highlands & Western Isles Pub-of-the-Year



The Castle Tavern

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with ginger being very prominent in the aroma. Ginger was also very evident in the taste along with some malt and tangy spices. It had a good lasting bitterness but did finish with some mouth drying astringency. Being a slightly acquired taste it scored an average 6.

The other four Scottish ales were from **Fyne Ales** and we tried the 4.5% **Avalanche**. This straw coloured golden ale gave away all its intentions in the aroma which was just hops and citrus fruit. A slight hint of malt in the taste but other than that it was all hop and citrus grapefruit flavour, producing a good strong bitterness which held into the aftertaste alongside the hops and fruit. Enjoyed by all it scored 8. Next up was **Vital Spark** which we had enjoyed in September. The interesting comment from most of the tasters was that it did not seem to have as much roasted malts in it as the one at Benleiva. Checking back on the tasting notes this was indeed the case with all tasters marking the roasted malts down for this latest tasting. All other flavours were similar in strength but the reduced roasts had also reduced the bitterness. Still a tasty

beer with scores of 8 only slightly down on September. Our last taster of the session was **Highlander**. This 4.8% copper coloured strong bitter was our beer of the festival when featured on our Marymas Fair bar in June. Faint malt, caramel and fruit in the aroma was followed by a good balanced bitter taste, with all components of malt, roast, caramel, hops and fruit present to some degree. You could feel the natural carbonation sparkling on the tongue which is quite unusual. The complex flavours faded quite fast in the aftertaste and consensus was that it was not as good as we enjoyed in June. It scored 7.5 making Vital Spark and Avalanche beers of the evening. After we finished the (official?) tasting session it has to be noted that we did enjoy the 5.9% Jaipur IPA from Thornbridge, and indeed the fourth ale from Fyne which was the very tasty 6.8% Sublime Stout, along with a few nibbles which had been left over by the football crowd who had enjoyed the 4-0 Carling Cup drubbing of Manchester United by West Ham.

Thanks to Bandstand Bar landlord Gordon for his welcoming hospitality on this wintry night.

Pubs-of-the-Year (POTY)

The roll of honour for 2010: Benleva Hotel, Castle Tavern (tied vote); Bandstand Bar; Plockton Hotel, Plockton Inn (tied vote); Stein Inn; Grog & Gruel; Cairn Hotel; Applecross Inn; Scourie Hotel. Blackfriars was your favourite cider pub. These were your top pubs for 2010, but a lot of real ale and cider has flowed under the bridge since you last voted for your favourite pubs.

Have these pubs continued to serve real ales in tip-top condition? Is the welcome and service as good as last year? Are new publicans challenging the old guard ***Please vote now!***

All members voting for their Pubs-of-the-Year will be entered in a prize draw.

Highlands & Western Isles Branch of CAMRA 2011 Pub of the Year Voting Form

Inverness & District (N)

Inverness & District (S)

Aviemore & Cairngorms

Wester Ross

South Skye & Lochalsh

North Skye & Hebrides

Fort William & Lochaber

Caithness & Sutherland

Your Favourite **Cider** Pub

Member's Name/No.



Closing Date - 31st January

Please check the pub lists on pages 21-24 if you are unsure in which area a pub is located.

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

Alternatively you can either e-mail your selection to the secretary or use the on-line voting form. Further information at **www.highlandcamra.org.uk**

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

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

All entries must serve real ale.

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

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

The overall Highlands & Western Isles CAMRA Pub-of-the-Year - The Castle Tavern in 2010 - which will represent the Branch in the annual Scottish Pub-of-the-Year competition, will be selected by committee (using CAMRA judging guidelines) from the eight area winners.

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



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Cawdor Tavern

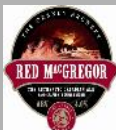
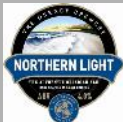
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e-ALE

> Good to see 4 to 5 ales on at **Number 27** as part of their St Andrews week event. Although beers were served from mini

casks behind the bar, the Red Macgregor, Cloutie Dumpling and Dark Island (all from the Orkney Brewery) were in very good form at a value £2.50 a pint. Blizzard from Atlas was also available, and Atlas Golden Amber was on handpump. 'Nips of malt whisky were only £2 and I could not resist a 16 year old Lagavulin to go with my half pint of Dark Island.

Five Day Tour of Scotland (with a Party of Twelve)

Saturday 4th September - **Day One**

We left Walsall at seven am and headed north up the M6 to Glasgow. After a couple of stops we arrived at the Clockworks (pub with micro brewery) at about half twelve. During the hour we stayed we tried a couple of the beers, one being The Ginger (*Hazy Daze Ginger 5.0 %*) which I thought was a bit over pronounced. I scored both beers a 2. We left the Clockworks

and arrived at Fyne Brewery at about three pm. We were given a warm welcome by Tug-gy, (this was not the first time we had been here) and thoroughly enjoyed the nice home-made spread she had put on for us.

It was then down to the serious point of drinking. I tried the Hurricane Jack and the Jarl, both were on form but I preferred the Jarl as it had got a refreshing citrus taste. I scored both beers a 3. We left for the final part of the journey for day one to the Glencoe Valley where we stopped at the Clachaig Inn for an overnight stop. I tried the Suilven and Beinn Dearg which were both from An Teallach and gave them both a 2.

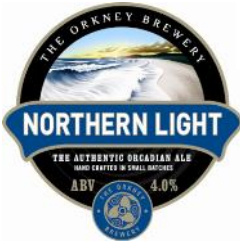
Day Two - We departed Glencoe to make our way to Mallaig where we waited for the ferry to take us to the UK's most remote inn, The Old Forge at Inverie. On tap was Isle of Skye Hebridean Gold and Glenfinnan Gold. I chose the Glenfinnan and was impressed by the standard of this beer and scored it a 3. We returned to Mallaig and left about half one for

(Continued on page 38)



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

Time again for you to vote for your Beers-of-the-Year. The nine category winners will now go forward to the 'Champion Winter Beer of Scotland' and to the 'Champion Beer of Scotland' competitions respectively; and finally the winners of these two competitions will join all the other National Regional competition winners in the 'Champion Beer of Britain' and the 'Champion Winter Beer of Britain' competitions. See page 40 for Champion Beers of 2010.

The Champion Beers of Britain system involves beers being chosen by a roughly 50/50 combination of Tasting Panel recommendations, and a voting system at CAMRA Branches level.

You may vote for any Scottish real ale, not just local brews, which you have enjoyed during the past twelve months. The list of eligible beers in each category may be found on our website (www.highlandcamra.org.uk).

Although you can vote for any Scottish beer, we will still be able to award our own Beer-of-the-Year to the your favourite beer locally brewed in our Branch area!

Real Ales brewed at the following Highlands & Western Isles breweries qualify for your favourite local brew:

(Alphabetical order) An Teallach, Black Isle, Cairngorm, Cuillin, Glenfinnan, Hebridean, Isle of Skye, Old Inn and Plockton.

Your locally brewed favourites last year were:

Gold (tied vote)	Cairngorm Black Gold
	Cairngorm Trade Winds
Bronze	Isle of Skye Black Cuillin



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

Highlands & Western Isles Branch of CAMRA 2011 Beer-of-the-Year Voting Form

Mild
 Bitter
 Best Bitter
 Strong Bitter
 Stout / Porter
 Old Ale / Strong Mild
 Barley Wine
 Golden Ale
 Specialty Beer
 Real Ale in a Bottle

Your Favourite Local Ale

Member's Name/No.



Closing Date - 31st January

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the long journey to Elgin. We broke our journey at the Stronlossit Inn at Roy Bridge where there were four ales on tap. I went for the Isle of Skye SkyeLight scoring it a 2.

We then made our way towards Newtonmore and Kingussie before a cut across country towards Granton-on-Spey. Our second stop was at the Highlander Inn, Craigellachie, where I had a Cairngorm Trade Winds giving it a 3. We continued on to Elgin arriving at around half six at the Sunningdale Hotel where we were staying.

We visited the Wetherspoon pub, The Muckle Cross, where we had a pint (2) and on to the Thunderton also (2) before returning to the Sunningdale (*Sunninghill Hotel?*) for Golden Sheep (3) from Black Sheep Brewery.

Day Three - Departed Elgin for Frazerburgh to visit Brewdog Brewery. Not impressed with this visit where we were given small samples of their beers from bottles which I did not score. They gave me the impression they liked to be bigger and better than anybody else.

We left to go on to Deeside Brewery where we arrived mid afternoon. We tried the Macbeth (3) before departing to Broughty Ferry for our overnight stop. We visited the Fisherman's Arms (2) and Royal Arch (2).

Day Four - On to Angus Ales in Carnoustie. When we arrived they were brewing Gowfers Gold and showed us two parts of the process while we all enjoyed bottles of Mashie Niblick. We left Carnoustie for Larbet arriving early afternoon at the Tryst Brewery. Here we tried Drovers 80/- (3) and during our time here Davy Orr from AnTeallach Brewery turned up and we had a laugh and a joke with him before leaving for Paisley which was to be our last overnight stop.

We decided to visit Glasgow by train and started at the Three Judges (2), onto the Bon Accord (3) and to the State Bar where the Williams Harvest was superb (4) before finishing at the Pot Still (2). Returning to Paisley we visited the Last Post (2) and Wee Howf (2).

Day Five - Our final day, we departed to Strathaven Brewery. This was my favourite brewery of the trip, set in wonderful surroundings. We tried the Aleberry Ale (3) before

leaving Strathaven and arriving home around half seven in the evening.

Overall a great tour with fine weather, mostly welcoming brewers, and a good standard of ales found. Ken Timms, 84324, Walsall CAMRA

Inns & Things

> A number of pubs and hotels in our list of real ale outlets rely upon passing trade for sales and are only able to serve real ale during the busy tourist season. We indicate these outlets with **(S)** for seasonal.

We are delighted to be able to report that the **Slaters Arms** in Cannich is now serving real ale throughout the year and we have removed the seasonal indication from their listing.

> We understand that since last winter the **Torrison Inn** is also open all year - all day every day from Easter until 31st October, and then all day Thursday, Friday and Saturday, plus Sunday lunchtimes in winter. Four ales on tap in summer dropping to one in Winter.

> Seasonal with a Difference!

Readers who regularly use a word processor will be familiar with the 'Find and Replace' function. Any *What's Yours Then?* newsletter forms the outline for the next edition and our editor uses the Find and Replace function to change instances of 'Winter' to 'Spring', 'Spring' to 'Summer', and so on. Included in our Real Ale Pubs list is the **Summer Isles Hotel** at Achiltibuie (S). Our proof-readers missed the Summer Isles Hotel becoming the Autumn Isles Hotel, but fortunately this was picked up before it became the Winter Isles Hotel or even the Spring Isles Hotel!

Apologies to all at the Summer Isles Hotel.

> The Lochaber News reported in November that work on a £7.5 million hotel, pub and shops scheme in Fort William town centre is expected to get under way in the New Year. The development, on the site of the Grand Hotel and former McTavish's Kitchen at the west end of High Street, will see three shops and a **JD Wetherspoon** pub on the ground floor with a 60-room Travelodge on the upper two floors. The 71-year old Grand Hotel will be demolished to make way for the complex.

(Continued on page 41)

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).

Scottish Champion Beers for 2010

Award	Brewery	Beer
Barley Wine/Strong Old Ale	Isle of Skye	Cuillin Beast
Best Bitter	Houston	Peter's Well
Bitter	Orkney	Raven Ale
Golden Ale	Inveralmond	Ossian
Mild	Highland	Dark Munro
Old Ale/Strong Mild	Isle of Skye	Black Cuillin
Real Ale in a Bottle	Islay Ales	Single Malt Ale
Speciality Beer	Atlas	Wayfarer
Stout/Porter	Cairngorm	Black Gold
Strong Bitter	Tryst	Raj IPA

Champion Beer of Scotland 2011

The first placed beer in each category above will go forward to the Champion Beer of Scotland Competition 2011, currently held at the Scottish Real Ale Festival in Edinburgh in June. Champion Beer of Scotland 2010 was Highland Brewery Orkney Blast.



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> Riverside Tavern Update

We were delighted to learn that the Riverside Tavern has re-opened, but under its original name of the Drouthy Duck Tavern.

Customers of the 200-year-old Drouthy Duck Tavern, believed to be the oldest building in Conon Bridge, petitioned to save the pub when it was threatened with demolition to make way for new flats. The pub was closed after owner George Nixon's application was unanimously rejected by councillors from the Ross, Skye and Lochaber planning committee. John and Evelyn Proudfoot, owners of the Conon Bridge Hotel across the road from the Duck, have taken on a long lease for the pub and it is now open on Fridays and Saturdays, from 6pm to 1pm, and from 2pm on Sundays. Good news indeed, and well done to the loyal customers who campaigned to save the Duck,

but spare a thought for former landlord Scott McLean who was refused an extension to his lease by Mr Nixon. We believe real ale is being served, but please let us know if you visit.

> All Change at the Cairn

A warm welcome to Gareth and Michelle Paschke who have taken over at the Cairn Hotel in Carrbridge. Gareth has been in the hotel business in Ayrshire for many years and has experience of dispensing real ale.

We understand that he intends to continue to serve one Black Isle and one Cairngorm beer, with a further handpump for a guest beer.

Coming from Ayrshire, his favourite beer is Arran. He also plans to have a beer festival, with outdoor marquee, possibly in May.

We wish Andrew and Susan Kirk, who ran the Cairn for 18 years, all the very best and we hope they are taking a well-earned rest.

We hope you have enjoyed reading our Winter newsletter. Unless you intend to keep it for some reason, please **DO NOT** throw it away. Why not pass it on to a friend, or just leave it in a pub somewhere for others to read. Newsletters are often found many miles from source! The next edition will be out in April 2011. *Cheers! Ed.*



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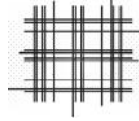
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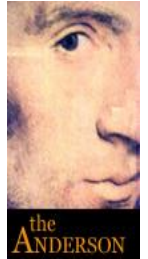
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