

# What's Yours Then?

Highlands & Western Isles CAMRA  
**Free** Newsletter



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



**Bandstand Bar**  
Highlands &  
Western Isles  
Pub-of-the-Year



**Loch Ness Brewery**  
Brewing at last!



**CAMPAIGN  
FOR  
REAL ALE**

**Spring 2011**

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

- > Updated Branch Diary
- > POTY & BOTY Winners
- > Socials & Outings - Reports
- > Festivals Update
- > Focus on - Angus McGhie
- > 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.

Summer edition **deadline** is 1<sup>st</sup> June, with publication in time for the Summer visitor.

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 JPEG file, or Word document. We can help you 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.*

## Highlands & Western Isles

### Pub-of-the-Year 2011

Congratulations to all at the Bandstand Bar in Nairn on their being selected as our overall Branch Pub-of-the-Year for 2011.

Congratulations also to all the area winners. Full details on page 4.

## Highlands & Western Isles

### Favourite Local Ale

Cairngorm and Isle of Skye Brewery beers are again your favourites brewed on our patch.

### Beers of the Year 2011

Three from Highland Brewery, two each from Orkney, Cairngorm, and Fyne. Obviously something in the water on Orkney Mainland!

Congratulations to all brewers.

Full details on page 32.

### Sec's Spot

Having put 122 voting forms for our Pubs & Beers of the Year competitions, plus 122 sae (stamped addressed envelopes), in the Winter newsletter mail out I must say I was very disappointed to receive only 26 replies.

I cannot understand why the majority of our Branch membership did not want to vote for any particular pub? If not, surely they must have a favourite Highland ale that deserved a vote? Our brewers and publicans value these awards and are proud to win them. I presume that we enjoy their excellent ales and welcoming pubs - so why can't we vote for them?

When including the prize draw this sae voting exercise cost nearly £100 of Branch funds, or roughly £4 for every vote we got back. We will not repeat this next year. We hope to have online voting for next year, but is that any more likely to encourage extra votes?

I would be delighted to receive any ideas you may have for increasing participation in our annual Pubs and Beers of the Year voting.

Thanks, Gareth Hardman, Branch Secretary.

**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](mailto:consumer.advice@highland.gov.uk)  
[www.tradingstandards.gov.uk/highland](http://www.tradingstandards.gov.uk/highland)



*"In a country where some things are confusing . . ."*



*"Some things are clear . . . ."*

*A crisp golden ale with a citrus finish . . .*

*"Sweet FA"*



## **BREWERY AND SHOP**

Opening hours:

Mon – Sat : 10am -4pm Sun : 12.30pm – 4pm

Just off the A83 at the top of Loch Fyne

Tours by appointment - [www.fyneales.com](http://www.fyneales.com)

June 11/12 - FyneFest 2011 Beer Festival: real ale, real food, real music

## Highlands & Western Isles Pubs-of-the-Year 2011

We are very pleased to announce that our Pubs-of-the-Year for 2011, as selected by local members, are:

**Inverness & District North**  
**Inverness & District South**  
**South Skye & Lochalsh**  
**North Skye & Hebrides**  
**Fort William & Lochaber**  
**Aviemore & Cairngorms**  
(tied vote)  
**Wester Ross**  
**Caithness & Sutherland**

**Benleva Hotel, Drumnadrochit**  
**Bandstand Bar, Braeval Hotel, Nairn**  
**Plockton Inn, Plockton**  
**Stein Inn, Waternish**  
**Grog & Gruel, Fort William**  
**Cairn Hotel, Carrbridge**  
**Old Bridge Inn, Aviemore**  
**Argyll Hotel, Ullapool**  
**Scourie Hotel, Scourie**

### **Benleva Hotel, Drumnadrochit**

Popular, friendly village inn near Loch Ness. The sweet chestnut outside this 400-year-old former manse was once a hanging tree. Four handpumps, mostly Highlands & Islands ales, usually one from Isle of Skye Brewery. A fifth handpump dispenses Westons ciders. Evening meals, lunches and Sunday roasts are served all year. The pub, which hosts the Loch Ness Beer Festival in September, opened the Loch Ness Brewery in March 2011. Dog friendly.

### **Bandstand Bar, Braeval Hotel**

Seven handpumps plus one cask on gravity, serve local Scottish ales, mainly from Islands of Skye and Orkney, plus a changing selection of English brews. Real cider on handpump. Close to Nairn beach and the historic Fishertown with Thomas Telford harbour, this family-run hotel is renowned for its Scottish and seafood menu served in the sea view restaurant which boasts stunning views over the Moray firth. Spring festival with up to 60 ales.

### **Plockton Inn**

This popular village inn, set in the heart of the beautiful village of Plockton, has been owned and run by a local family for many years. Locally caught fish and shellfish take pride of place on the menu and the seafood platter includes fish smoked on the premises. Every Tuesday and Thursday there are live music sessions in the public bar and all present are very welcome to join in. A regularly changing selection of real ales includes locally brewed

Plockton Brewery ales.

### **Stein Inn**

Family-run eighteenth-century inn, nestling in a delightful setting on the shores of Loch Bay. Home-cooked local produce, including fresh seafood, is served from a menu that changes daily dependant upon season's availability. Bar and shore-side garden afford stunning views over the sea loch to the Outer Isles. An open central fireplace warms the cosy bar. Facilities for visiting seafarers include council moorings, showers, food supplies (by arrangement), and message relay services.

### **Grog & Gruel, Fort William**

In the shadow of Britain's highest mountain, this recently refurbished traditional ale house keeps up to six beers in summer. Owned by same family as the Clachaig Inn in Glenceo, it holds regular live music and beer festivals. Beers are predominantly Scottish, often from the local Glenfinnan Brewery, and the bar is busy with locals, outdoor enthusiasts and tourists. Home-cooked food in upstairs dining room plus light meals and snacks in the bar.

### **Cairn Hotel, Carrbridge (tied vote)**

Nestling in the centre of a traditional Scottish Highland village, just off the A9 and close to the Landmark Heritage Park, this busy, cosy bar is popular with both locals and visitors. Walkers and cyclists are welcome, and there is dry storage for bikes. Bar meals, soup and toasties are available all day. Two handpumps dispense mainly Scottish ales, usually from Cairn-

*(Continued on page 8)*

# CAIRNGORM

BREWERY COMPANY

Good things  
brewing  
in the  
Highlands



**SIBA  
Supreme  
Champion  
Beer of the  
Year 2009**

## PERMANENT BEERS



## SPECIAL ALES FOR 2011



Cairngorm Brewery based in the Cairngorm National Park develops ales using both old and new malt and hop varieties with a few new twists. With a full range of permanent and seasonal cask beers to suit all tastes, eight of its products are available throughout the year in 500ml bottles.

Visit our shop at the brewery, open Mon - Sat, Tours available Mon - Fri (booking essential) 10% discount when you bring this Newsletter along to the shop.



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

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

Fri 8<sup>th</sup> - Fri 15<sup>th</sup> April \* 3<sup>rd</sup> Bandstand Beer Festival Bandstand Bar, Nairn

Sat 9<sup>th</sup> April 14:00 Tasting Course  
16:00 Branch Social Bandstand Beer Festival 2011

Tues 12<sup>th</sup> April Branch Meeting Benleva Hotel, Drumnadrochit

Sat 23<sup>rd</sup> April  Minibus Trip around the Black Isle with stops at real ale hostelrys and breweries. 11.00 from Inverness or Clachnaharry Inn

Tues 26<sup>th</sup> April Tasting Evening Blackfriars, Inverness

### **May is National Mild Month - Celebrate Mild in May**

Sat/Sun 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> May \* Tent at the Trent Festival Trentham Hotel, Dornoch

Tues 10<sup>th</sup> May Committee Meeting Suie Hotel, Kincairaig

Tues 31<sup>st</sup> May Tasting Evening Cawdor Tavern

9<sup>th</sup> - 11<sup>th</sup> June (NEW Dates) Aberdeen Beer Festival Pittodrie Stadium

Tues 14<sup>th</sup> June Branch Meeting Cairn Hotel, Carrbridge

16<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup> June (NEW Venue) Scottish Beer Festival Adam House, Edinburgh

Sat 18<sup>th</sup> June Marymas Fair Real Ale Bar Northern Meeting Park, Inverness

Tues 28<sup>th</sup> June Tasting Panel Dores Inn

Sat 9<sup>th</sup> July Social/Outing Minibus Trip, A9 North of Inverness

Tues 12<sup>th</sup> July Committee Meeting Glen Hotel, Newtonmore

Sat 23<sup>rd</sup> July \*60<sup>th</sup> Sutherland County Show with Real Ale from Black Isle

Tues 26<sup>th</sup> July Tasting Evening Fort Augustus hostelrys

Tues 30<sup>th</sup> August Tasting Evening Clachnaharry Inn, Inverness

9<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup> September \* 8<sup>th</sup> Inverness Beer Festival at the Castle Tavern

Fri 9<sup>th</sup> September 3.00 pm Social & Tasting 8<sup>th</sup> Inverness Beer Festival

\* 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 our regularly updated on-line diary at [www.highlandcamra.org.uk](http://www.highlandcamra.org.uk)

#### **Contact**

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#### **Details**

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



Eric Mills - 01456 459343

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Mike Whittall - 01463 831259

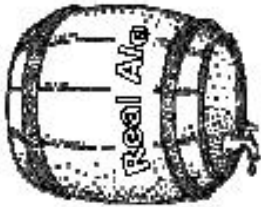
[news@highlandcamra.org.uk](mailto:news@highlandcamra.org.uk)



# BANDSTAND

## BAR & RESTAURANT, NAIRN

*CAMRA Inverness & District South  
(Joint) PUB OF THE YEAR 2010*



**7 Real Ale Pumps  
Scottish & English**  
from a wide selection of  
your favourite breweries



Check our website for live  
updates of ales on tap daily  
plus previous ales

See our beers live  
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**Bandstand  
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8 - 15 April 2011  
60+ ales at the  
same time  
live music**



Braeval Hotel, Crescent Rd, Nairn Tel: 01667 452341  
[www.braevalhotel.co.uk](http://www.braevalhotel.co.uk) email [info@braevalhotel.co.uk](mailto:info@braevalhotel.co.uk)

# WESTFORD INN

North Uist, Claddach Kirkibost  
Telephone: 01876 580 653

Small, traditional pub, part of a historic listed eighteenth century house set in its own grounds on the west coast of North Uist in the Outer Hebrides. Opposite Kirkibost Island on the A865, between the Kirkibost Centre and Balranald bird reserve, 15 minutes drive from Lochmaddy ferry terminal.

Real ale from the award winning Isle of Skye Brewery. Range of bottled ales and malts. Simple home cooked pub food. Accommodation available in small stone cottage in grounds (bed only).



Summer opening from Easter 2011, midday to 11:00pm. Kitchen open midday until 2pm, and in the evening from 6pm to 9pm.

Outside seating; real fires in inclement weather.

Dog friendly

Good Beer Guide Listed 2008-11

gorm, Isle of Skye, Black Isle, Orkney, and Atlas breweries.

## **Old Bridge Inn, Aviemore (tied vote)**

Originally a cottage and now greatly enlarged this busy Highland hostelry overlooks the River Spey and is a short stroll from the Strathspey Steam Railway. Scottish ales are served, often from the nearby Cairngorm Brewery, and the enticing menu contains local delights such as Aviemore mallard, Moray venison, and Alvie brown trout. Live music features regularly. The (next door) Aviemore Bunkhouse offers self-catering accommodation for up to 40.

## **Argyll Hotel, Ullapool**

Nigel and Franner have revitalised this popular Ullapool hostelry since taking over a couple of years ago. Real ales on tap regularly include local brews from An Teallach, and Westons Scrumpy and Old Rosie ciders are served from the box. An open fire warms the bar where traditional pub games are played. Regular entertainment includes live music, poker, quiz and Karaoke nights. Special events include theme nights and a cider week. Free wi-fi.

## **Scourie Hotel**

An historic coaching inn on the site of an old fortified house, the hotel is a popular retreat for fishermen and has 36 fishing beats held exclusively for guests. Overlooking Scourie Bay it is handy for the bird reserve of Handa Island and the peaks of Ben Stack, Arkle and Foinavon. In addition to the bar menu, the hotel dining room serves high quality meals featuring local seafood, the menu changing daily. Four handpumps dispense mainly Scottish beers, usually from Cairngorm in winter, plus one or two Westons ciders.

## **Highlands & Western Isles Pub-of-the-Year 2011**

Committee were now faced with the tricky task of selecting an overall winner. CAMRA guidelines were closely followed, and scores were awarded according the following criteria:

- A. Quality of Beer/Cider/Perry
- B. Atmosphere/Style/Décor
- C. Service/Welcome
- D. Clientele Mix
- E. Sympathy with CAMRA Aims
- F. Good Value





# *Blackfriars Highland Pub Great Beer*



*Traditional Highland Food*

*All meals are cooked to order using  
freshly prepared local produce*

**Real Ales and Real Cider On Tap**

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

**Open all day, every day**

**Food served every day**

**from 11am until 9pm**

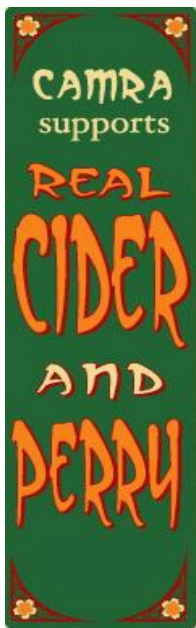


*Regular Live Entertainment  
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*Inverness IV1 1 LU*

*Tel 01463 233881*



## 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 1<sup>st</sup> Quality Cider

**Benleva Hotel, Drumnadrochit** - Westons 1<sup>st</sup> Quality Cider all year round, plus good 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 1<sup>st</sup> Quality

Ciders on handpump. Highlands & Western Isles **Cider-Pub-of-the-Year 2009/10/11.**

**Kinlochewe Hotel**, at the foot of Beinn Eighe, is serving Westons 1<sup>st</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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.

## **Cider Pub-of-the-Year 2011**

Congratulations to Del & Janette at Blackfriars on being voted your Cider Pub-of-the-Year for a second successive year. **Blackfriars** will once again represent the Highlands & Western Isles in the Scottish Cider Pub-of-the-Year competition, which they won last year.

> We hear that Fyne Ales are now distributing Black Rat Cider. Black Rat is a fine Somerset cider and, as much as we enjoy the ubiquitous Westons ciders, it is good to see that the range of ciders on offer in Highlands & Islands pubs continues to grow. We have also heard

that a local landlord is looking for a supplier for Roger Wilkins' farmhouse ciders.

> Inn Cider - We have heard that the recently re-opened Struy Inn is serving Thistly Cross.


> If you are reading this before 10<sup>th</sup> April you still have time to catch Wetherspoon's Spring Real Ale and Cider Festival at Kings Highway in Inverness or at the Alexander Bain in Wick. 10 ciders were due to be available during the festival, including the new Brothers Ginger cider (said to have a fiery ginger aftertaste) and the limited-edition Westons Cider Twist Raspberry - both at 4.0% ABV.

Real Ales  
Real Cider  
50+ Malt whiskies



Isle of Skye beers on draught  
– including our own  
“Beinn Eighe” house ale  
... dark and delicious

## We don't do fast food here!

As members of  Slow Food® UK we take care and pride in preparing our food. We are fortunate enough to have some of the best local produce in the world and we believe in letting the flavours of our food speak for themselves. No “jus” or “coulis” here! ... just plain, honest, wholesome and fulfilling food.

Take time to enjoy a pint or two of our Real Ales and savour the simple delights of a home cooked meal.

Kinlochewe Hotel,  
Kinlochewe, by Achnasheen  
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Tel: 01445 760253  
[www.kinlochewehotel.co.uk](http://www.kinlochewehotel.co.uk)



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---

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dalfaber@macdonald-hotels.co.uk**

### **Inverness Walkabout 2010**

Not quite as many as in 2009, but still a large party of twenty, including publicans Allan, Del, Gordon and Steve, plus a few new faces, met up in Blackfriars for our annual walkabout.

As usual we split into smaller groups to visit the various real ale pubs, our paths crossing here and there as we went, and so you did not have to drink in every pub. At Blackfriars we could sample Caledonian Double Dark (4 out of 5, average group score), Highland St Magnus (3.5), Caledonian Escape Claus (3.5), Highland Christmas Light (3), Inveralmond Ossian (4), and Highland Dark Munro (4) was fresh on as we left. Across the road to the Phoenix for Arran Clyde Puffer (3), Orkney Dark Island (3), Isle of Skye Red Cuillin (3) and Cairngorm Stag (3) - the Stag sporting it's original Tomintoul Brewery pumpclip badge!

Along Academy Street next to the Exchange, a Greene King pub, which had Abbot Ale (3).

There were rumours of real ale at the City Bar, but the handpump was bare. The very helpful barmaid explained that they have Caledonian

Deuchars in the summer when trade merits.

The Ramada Hotel is now selling Cairngorm Tradewinds (4) on top pressure and very nice it was too. At the Kings Highway we sampled Adnams Broadside (3), Isle of Skye Red Cuillin (4) and Black Cuillin (3), Cairngorm Winter Flurry (4), and Caledonian Escape Claus (3).

Continuing to Hootananny for Black Isle Red Kite (2) which finished after one was poured, and Heather Honey (3). Across the river to the Waterfront where we enjoyed the Cairngorm Trade Winds (4) despite the Wombling songs.

Further up the north side of the River Ness the Palace Hotel usually has either Isle of Skye Red Cuillin or Caledonian Deuchars but tonight they had nothing at all! Unfortunately the walk bridge across the River was closed so we had to double back to the road bridge to get back to the south side of the river and to Johnny Foxes for Black Isle Yellowhammer (4) on top pressure. In Nico's Bar at the Glen Mhor Hotel we had Trade Winds (3) and enjoyed their Tuesday jazz session which was in full flow. The Caledonian with their jukebox was a far

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Monarch of the Glen Country

**Fine Food**

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Plus selected bottled ales



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noisier affair - two Cairngorm beers: Sheepshaggers (2) and Santa's Sledgehammer (3). Up hill to Number 27 for Orkney Dark Island (4) and Atlas Blizzard (3) on handpump, plus Orkney Cloutie Dumpling and Red MacGregor from party minicask. Minicask beers were not tasted as everyone went for the handpumps. At the top of the hill the Heathmount Hotel's single handpump had Houston Festival Ale (3). We all finished at the Castle Tavern where Houston Black and Tan (4), Tetley's Northern Cracker (4), Atlas Blizzard (3), An Teallach Beinn Dearg (3.5), and Cairngorm Santa's Sledgehammer (3) were enjoyed with some tasty nibbles. On tap but not tried - Abbot Ale. We did not get out to the city fringes, to the Clachnaharry Inn or Snowgoose, and the only other city real ale hostelry we did not visit was the Corner Grill, which is a restaurant. With 26 different beers in 13 bars and all in decent nick, a very good night out to finish our year.

## Festival News

### > Aberdeen Beer Festival - Rescheduled

Rod Stewart is playing at Pittodrie (singing, not football) on Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> June. This has made it impossible to run the festival on the originally planned dates. The festival will now be held on the following weekend, running from Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> to Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> June.

### > Festivals List

In our Winter edition we published a list of Highland Real Ale and Cider Festivals. This was simply a list of 2010 festivals which could be expected to run again in 2011.

A healthy list we thought, but 2011 was barely out of the blocks when additional festivals started appearing! In mid-January an e-mail arrived out of the blue announcing 'a little beer festival at The Anderson' - see report on page 40 - and in mid-February we were given 24 hours notice only of a four day event at the Suie Hotel featuring ten brews from Stewarts, Cairngorm, Inveralmond and Orkney! A raffle raised over £400 for Cot Death, Ski Disability and Macmillan Nurses charities. Mike at Suie Hotel is also planning a Cider Festival in the summer, and hopefully we may be given a little more notice. Watch out for dates.

We have also been informed that a real ale

festival - *Tent at the Trent* - is to take place on 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> May at the Trentham Hotel near Dornoch. We understand that Highland and Island brewers will be supplying a range of ales and ciders and that some brewers will be represented at the event. We have been told there will be live music "with musicians from all over Scotland flocking to the festival to sample the brews. So bring your beer goggles, singing voices and instruments of your choice for a truly unmissable weekend".

Website: [tentatthetrent.co.uk](http://tentatthetrent.co.uk)

01862 810551 Steven Mackintosh

So no shortage of opportunities to sample real ales in the Highlands in 2011. Make the most of it and support our pubs and breweries!

**Pint to Pint Reviews** in the Telegraph's Weekend supplement regularly feature pubs from the deep south of England or from the Midlands, sometimes from further north, but only rarely from north of the border, and so it was a pleasant surprise to see a very flattering review of the Bow Bar in Edinburgh.

Highlands & Islands Real Ale drinkers will, I'm sure, be familiar with this super bar where reviewer Jonathan Goodall suggests:

'Here you can drink your way through Scotland without leaving the bar'. He went on to say 'A strong Scottish contingent includes Orkney Porter, Brew Dog's Punk IPA and Innis & Gunn's spicy, toffee-ish Rum Cask ale with a hefty 7.6% alcohol.

Even the draft stout/porter option eschews omnipresent Guinness in favour of the rich, medium-dry Black Isle Organic Porter. I thought I'd died and gone to Beer-vana.'

The Bow Bar's two sister pubs - the Cloisters at Tollcross and the Stockbridge Tap - also regularly serve Black Isle Brewery beers, plus a selection from other Highlands & Islands brewers, and are well worth seeking out.

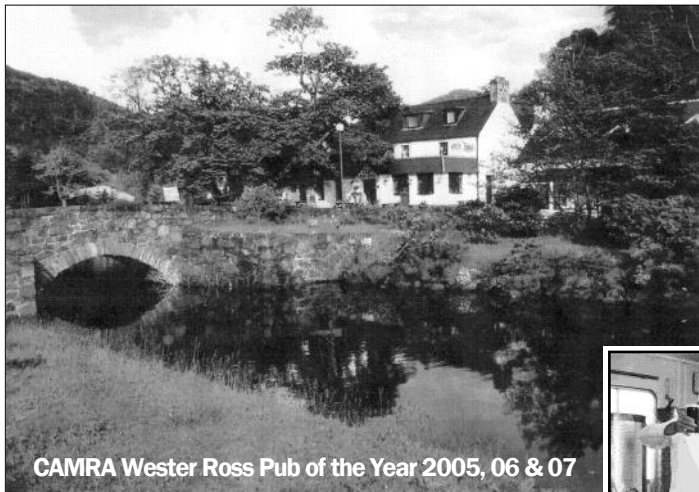
The Blue Blazer, close to the Usher Hall, and the Halfway House, handy for Waverly Station, are two more Edinburgh hostelries where ales from our local breweries are regularly on tap.

Edinburgh is a veritable real ale mecca and it is great to see brews from our local brewers available in these and so many other capital city pubs and hotels.

**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!**

**R**estling 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.

The Old Inn • Gairloch • Ross-shire • IV21 2BD

Freephone 0800 542 5444

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*Where good food and ales come naturally*

## A February Trip Out West

A decision was made despite a poor, and thankfully inaccurate, weather forecast to take a trip out west and so we departed Loch Ness mid-morning heading for the Torridon Inn.

We arrived at 12.15 and found an excellent Suilven Ale (4) from the An Teallach Brewery. The bar had just reopened after a brief winter shutdown. It would have been great to stay longer but, despite protestations from the unwilling MX5, we pressed on to Applecross.

The TomTom had severe doubts about our decision to approach by the coast road but it was a wonderful drive with fantastic views.

The Applecross Inn had both Red Cuillin and Young Pretender from Isle of Skye Brewery on tap and was fairly busy for the time of year. Our lunch was good and the beer was quite acceptable scoring a 3 from us both. Also very welcome were the 24 hour petrol pumps in the village - much needed as the Mazda was proving very thirsty indeed.



Up 'n' over the Bealach (na Bà mountain pass) we went to Lochcarron and the crossing was survived - just - without any major incidents.

The Rockvillia was closed for refurbishments but the Lochcarron Hotel was open and we were quite surprised to find 3 ales available - Bombardier, Young Pretender and Nessie's Monster Mash. The Highlands & Islands brews were sampled and only merited a 2 - possibly too many ales on tap for the time of year?

On now to Plockton we went and first to the Plockton Hotel where we had (Cairngorm) Trade Winds (3), and Plockton Bay (3) from

the local brewery, before ending up at the Plockton Inn where Plockton Bay was again available, this time scoring a resounding 4 - a great beer on which to end our day out.

Cheers! Steve, Drumnadrochit.

## Inns & Things

> Paul Brown, formerly Operations Manager at the Dalfaber Country Club, has recently been appointed General Manager at the Duke of Gordon Hotel in Kingussie. Paul served a very good pint at Dalfaber, such that the Country Club was included in the Good Beer Guide.

Paul is now serving Cairngorm real ales at the **Duke of Gordon Hotel**, and we will look forward to a pint at this new real ale outlet!

> News of a new real ale outlet on the Isle of Skye. The **Edinbane Inn**, formerly Edinbane Hotel, was recently re-opened by new owners. Annabel Caldwell and Ronnie MacDonald purchased the Inn last year and, after extensive refurbishment and a rebranding, opened the bar for business on the 17<sup>th</sup> December 2010.

Isle of Skye Brewery beers will always be on tap, initially from a single handpump but plans are to increase the number of ales at times of the year when there is sufficient demand. The Inn is already hosting regular traditional music sessions, as well as less regular pub quizzes, and initial reports confirm that the real ale served is in excellent condition. Some of the bedrooms should be ready for occupation later this year and we wish Annabel and Ronnie every success with their new venture.

> A warm welcome to Richard & Lorraine Comfort who recently re-opened the **Station Hotel** in Avoch. Richard plans to serve two Scottish real ales, one from Cairngorm, along with homemade meals and live music. The Station was in the Good Beer Guide from 1994 until 2003, under the stewardship of David Graham - a real ale enthusiast who served a super pint. Perhaps the Station may again find its way into the guide? We hope so.

> Visit the Snowgoose at Stoneyfield to check out the appealing Vintage Inns Spring Cask Selection, which includes beers seldom seen in the Highlands: Thornbridge Kipling, Butcombe Old Vic, Leeds Midnight Bell, Acorn Barnsley Gold, Vale Special, and Brains Milkwood.

Great to see this Vintage Inns promotion.





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## Focus on Angus McGhie

Angus McGhie and his wife Teresa own and run the 18<sup>th</sup> century Stein Inn, the oldest inn on the Isle of Skye. Set in a peaceful hamlet on the remote Waternish peninsular, the Stein Inn is famed for it's seafood, some of which is caught in Loch Bay, which the inn overlooks.



The Stein Inn is a regular Branch North Skye & Hebrides region Pub-of-the-Year winner.

Q. What is your background?

A. We came to the Isle of Skye from Stirling-shire. I started work with summer jobs from school in the Fortingall Hotel near Aberfeldy, starting in the kitchens (pot wash) and then ending up as a barman. The hotel (late 70's) was a hunting/fishing hotel. We had lots of late nights with the shooters - how they could shoot straight the next day is a mystery. On one unforgettable occasion there was an undrinkable cocktail competition, the winner was Tomato Juice with Advocaat and coca cola, the loser had to drink it - the thought of it still haunts me to this day!

We also had to be up early to clean and stock the bar! Hard work but I learned a lot about people and drink. I then went to college in Edinburgh and got a job as a barman. I failed college and did bar work full time. I then got out of bar work, in those days it was a double shift and one day off a week. I moved around a bit after that, went to Australia for a while. Latterly being involved with Citizens Advice Bureau, before moving to here. It has crossed my mind that Citizens Advice workers would make good bar staff!! You have to be a good listener!

Q. Why did you move to The Isle of Skye?

A. We saw the inn for sale and thought it would be good to run such a place when we retired, but curiosity made us send for

the details. We had been here on holiday when it was like something out of the wild west - drinks being passed outside of the bar through the windows, people leaving voluntarily via the window. The bar closed when the last man standing left, etc.

We liked it's location and friendliness of the people, so it, alongside Applecross, became a favoured pipe dream. After looking at the particulars we were hooked and started working out all the if's, but's and maybe's. The place was very run down and needed a huge amount of work, but we figured we could do it.

With help from various sources we managed to put a bid in and frighteningly it was accepted - we were a bit shocked as we didn't expect it to be successful, but if we hadn't put a bid in we would have always talked about the 'what if'. The rest as they say is history - with a few hitches!

Q. When/where introduced to real ale?

A. I can't really remember, But I'm fairly sure it was in 'Gravediggers' in Edinburgh. There certainly wasn't a eureka moment, in those days it wasn't so much about taste and quality as how much and how fast!

Q. What real ale types/styles do you like?

A. I like most IPA's, I also like 80/-, not fond of very dark or bitter beers

Q. What is the best part of your work?

A. Sitting outside on a summers day watching the world and sea go past while drinking a pint of something refreshing (Deuchars maybe?).



Q. ..and the worse part of your work?

A. Being 'caught' doing the above.

Q. What are your hobbies/interests?

A. Rugby, fishing (if I get the chance), people, walking.

Q. Which are your most popular meals?

A. Battered Haddock, Sirloin steak, Langoustine - any sea food.

# Clachnaharry Inn

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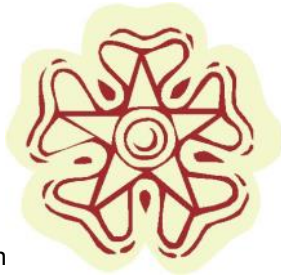
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Tel: 01463 239806  
[www.clachnaharryinn.co.uk](http://www.clachnaharryinn.co.uk)  
[enquiries@clachnaharryinn.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@clachnaharryinn.co.uk)**

**Real Ale  
Real Food  
Real Local**

# Stronlossit Inn

at Roy Bridge

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food & drinks  
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3 real ales on tap

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

'Real Ales, and a substantial Bar Meals Menu in "The Stronlossit Lounge.'  
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Your hosts: Maurice and Sandra Vallely

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

E-mail: [stay@stronlossit.co.uk](mailto:stay@stronlossit.co.uk)

Q. What is your favourite part of Scotland?

A. Isle of Skye or Murrayfield.

Q. Why should we visit the Stein Inn?

A. Stein Inn is a traditional Inn in our view and it should therefore offer good refreshment a filling and tasty meal and a comfortable bed for the night. We hopefully achieve this by having a good selection of real ales, bottled beers, malt whiskies (125+), an appetising menu featuring amongst other things ever popular seafood dishes which are home cooked, and clean comfortable rooms. Added to this we have a great location by the sea where you can sit outside and watch the glorious sunsets.

*As a Stein inn visitor for some forty years I can easily relate to tales of 'Wild West' times.*

*I will remember a customer coming into the*



*bar and turning to watch his lorry roll slowly past the window! No harm done fortunately. Folk singer/song-writer Donovan Leitch lived nearby, briefly, in the seventies, and would frequent the inn. The shore side Lochbay Boathouse, converted to a house by Donovan, is now a popular holiday cottage.*

*Donald Maclachlan was another who moved to Lochbay in the seventies to escape the London rat-race and founded Gaeltec, the medical device manufacturer, in one of the cottages. Wild West? West yes, always will be, but for 'Wild' read natural or untamed, rather than rowdy or disorderly. A truly magical place. Ed.*

## Inn Sign Society

The Stein Inn sign was the Scotland regional winner of Sign of the Year Award for 2010. The national winner is the Vulcan Arms, from Sizewell, Suffolk. Their Vulcan sign is a collage of the god of fire & craftsmanship, the Vulcan bomber, and Spock (the Vulcan in Star Trek). All 66 regional finalists, from 11 regions, were on show at the National Brewery Centre, in Burton-on-Trent, during March.

## **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 40), 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)  
Station Hotel, Avoch  
The Anderson, Fortrose  
Plough Inn, Rosemarkie  
Cromarty Arms (TP)  
Royal Hotel, Cromarty  
Culbokie Inn  
Struy Inn (S)  
Slaters Arms, Cannich  
Conon Bridge Hotel  
National Hotel, Dingwall  
Richmond Hotel, Strathpeffer  
Inchbae Lodge Hotel, Garve  
Aultguish Inn  
Castle Hotel, Portmahomack

## **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

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*Good Beer Guide 2005-2007*



real ale  
80 Belgians

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**Highlands & Western Isles  
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Johnny Foxes, Inverness (TP)  
 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)

Cairngorm Hotel, Aviemore  
 Dalfaber Country Club, Aviemore  
 Glenmore Lodge, Nr Aviemore  
 Old Bridge Inn, Aviemore  
 Winking Owl, Aviemore  
 Suie Hotel, Kincairn  
 Glen Hotel, Newtonmore  
 Lodge Hotel, Newtonmore  
 Duke of Gordon Hotel, Kingussie  
 Kingussie Golf Club  
 Silver Fjord Hotel, Kingussie  
 Topsy 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

### Wester Ross

Applecross Inn  
 Summer Isles Hotel, Achiltibuie (S)  
 Aultbea Hotel  
 Drumchork Hotel, Aultbea (S)  
 Dundonnell Hotel

# Stein Inn

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**Angus & Teresa McGhie,  
 Stein Inn, Waternish,  
 Isle of Skye, IV55 8GA**

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

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

Loch Maree Hotel  
 Kinlochewe 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)*

### *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](http://www.oldbridgeinn.co.uk)

Mamore Lodge, Kinlochleven (S)  
 Laroch Bar, Ballachulish (G&WS)  
 Clachaig Inn, Glencoe (G&WS)  
 Kings House Hotel, Glencoe (G&WS)

Please check [www.highlandcamra.org.uk](http://www.highlandcamra.org.uk) for latest real ale pubs list

Loch Oich Restaurant/Bar, South Laggan  
 Letterfinlay Lodge Hotel, Loch Lochy  
 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

### South Skye & Lochalsh

Kintail Lodge Hotel  
 Jac-o-bite Restaurant, Kintail  
 Clachan Bar, 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



## Highlands & Western Isles Pub-of-the-Year 2010



# The Castle Tavern

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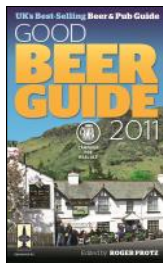
Kinloch Castle, Rum

### North Skye & Hebrides

Isle of Raasay Hotel  
Old Schoolhouse Restaurant, Dunvegan (S)  
Stein Inn, Waternish  
Edinbane Inn  
The Lodge at Edinbane  
Bakur Bar, Uig  
Ferry Inn, Uig  
Uig Hotel, Uig  
Flodigarry Hotel  
Bosville Hotel, Portree  
Isles Inn, Portree  
Royal Hotel, Portree  
An Lannair, 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 (S)  
Trentham Hotel (S)  
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 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 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 Spring 2011.

**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 10<sup>th</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 Spring 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!*



It's been over 150 years since Loch Ness last brewed real ale.

Using the finest quality ingredients, our 2 barrel brew plant and the famous waters of Loch Ness we produce real ale with all the majesty and mystery of the Loch itself!

The Loch Ness Brewery - Now there is something new in the water!



[www.lochnessbrewery.com](http://www.lochnessbrewery.com)



*Loch Ness Brewing Co Ltd - Benliva Hotel - Drumadrochit - IV63 6JH - Tel 01456 450080*

## Highlands & Western Isles Brewing

When I initially set out to write a short piece on brewing in our local branch area, I did not expect to find out as much as I have. I did some Googling and stumbled upon quite a few sites, including the Highland Council site Am Baile. I also visited the reference areas of Inverness and Glen Urquhart Libraries.

I talked to a few locals, notably (ex Branch Chairman) Bill and (Isle of Skye Brewery owner) Angus who gave me some pointers.

Some Breweries had more written about them than others, some just a couple of lines from a newspaper headline, document, or a comment in a book. Apologies if I have missed anything or made any errors but I hope there is enough to give you some idea of our brewing history.

Most of the brewing was done using local ingredients and the Black Isle was famous for its cereal growing. In the early years it is known that the Picts brewed their own Heather Ales and that several monasteries, estates and major castles had some sort of brewing. Evidence of brewing has been found in the monasteries on Kinloch and Rum.

When John Grant of Freuchie was given the Lordship of Urquhart in 1509 King James IV ordered him to build a brew house as part of the renovation of Urquhart Castle. When the MacDonalds and Camerons took the castle in 1545 part of the plunder consisted of brewing vats or cauldrons. Near the castle in the 16<sup>th</sup> century there was a brew house at Kilmichael which was so important that it was mentioned in the grant of Achmonie to the MacKays; it had probably yielded valuable revenue for the church. In the 1550's a significant proportion of townsfolk were involved in brewing. Ale was the more common drink costing around 8d a quart. Beer brewed with hops sold at around 10d a quart. Also brewed was a malt liquor called 'Brogat' which was sweetened with honey and resembled what we would call mead. The 1572 Inverness Burgh Records list 55 'unfree' and 19 'free' brewers, only three of whom were men. Brewing in the Highlands and Western Isles (in these times) was the job of the womenfolk, as part of their kitchen duties. During the 17<sup>th</sup> century whisky began to take the place of ale as the popular drink. It was not until the 18<sup>th</sup> century that large;

purpose built breweries were built, often by a group of local merchants. These were usually large three storey buildings entered from a courtyard with possibly stables attached, as they used horse and dray for deliveries. They employed one or two skilled brewers and a number of unskilled low paid workers turning their hand to all the jobs needed and working long hours. In 1713 the Treaty of Union extended a Malt Tax to Scotland, although this was not enforced until around 1725. In 1718 the Burgh of Inverness received Parliamentary sanction to levy a tax of 2d (Scots) on every pint of ale brewed. This revenue was to pay for repairs to the Parish Church and harbour improvements. In 1738 at Morangie Farm, near Tain, Messer's McKenzie and Gallie started to brew beer. This brewery continued until 1831 and the buildings were converted to the Glenmorangie Distillery in 1843. Quite a few present day distilleries are on the site of a former brewery. By the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century the quality of beer was a concern as there were quite a few reports of yeasty, cloudy warm beer for sale. Burgh authorities started to implement quality control. Fort George was completed in 1769 and had a brew house but in 1824 they put their brewing utensils up for sale. The Inverness Brewing Company was started in 1771 by Kingsmills merchants and was built in New Street (present day Academy Street). In 1790, a new partnership of Imray, Young, Fraser and company acquired it. In 1809, the Inverness Brewery requested that any casks bearing their mark, washed ashore from the wreck of a boat off Helmsdale, be returned. The brewery building was up for sale in 1810 as it was moving to the Haugh (just down from present day Castle Tavern). In 1790 George and Alexander Ross started a brewery in Cromarty, in anticipation of being able to use ships in the harbour to export their beer. They brewed a roasted ale or porter. This brewery seems to have gone on until around 1871. A plaque above the door on the north west side of the building still bears the inscription 'Thanks be to god 1901', believed to have been put there by the Temperance Society. The Temperance Society formed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and urged reduced use of alcohol. This beautifully restored building is

now a training centre, café and music venue.

In 1793 there were twelve registered brewers of ale in Inverness. In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, on the Isle of Skye, MacLeod of MacLeod granted his tacksman MacAskill the right to brew and distill in the parish of Bracadale. Alex Manson set up a brewery in Thurso in 1798.

In 1815 a small brewery was built near Brora harbour, the cost (£200) being advanced by Lady Stafford. Businesses in the area were growing, the harbour was being enlarged, and it was said that she wished to encourage the drinking of beer instead of whisky, but one report suggests the miners got a taste for beer and alcoholism actually increased!

In 1818, at a cost of £380, the Stafford Arms Inn was built nearby. It was demolished in 1950. In 1819 the Clynelish distillery was built at a cost of £750 by the Earl of Stafford (later the Duke of Sutherland).

*I'm not sure that members of this family were all pulling in the same direction! Ed.*

The brewery, eventually converted into a place for kippering herring, no longer stands. Also in the north, Alex Millar set up a brewery in the Pulteneytown area of Wick. There are also references to a Gartymore Brewery in Helmsdale, advertised for let in 1842, and another at the west end of Invergordon in 1850, possibly part of or near the Royal Hotel. Further south, there may have been a brewery on Linnhe Road in Fort William, but we do know that a licensed brewery was set up in Lewiston, in 1830, producing beer and porter, and another was opened at nearby Balnain.

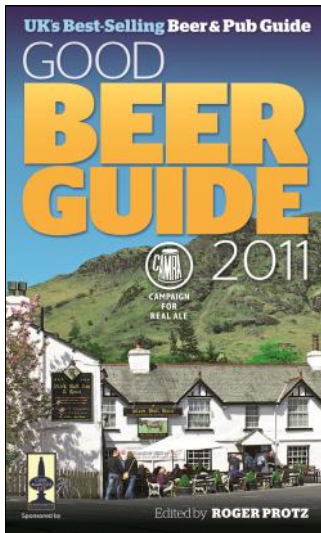
Now a name you will recognize - Caledonian - but not the well-known Edinburgh brewery. On 4<sup>th</sup> March 1831 we find a William Grant and company taking orders for liquors at the Caledonian Brewery in New Street, Inverness. On 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1831 there were complaints in the local papers about the reduction in strength of their beer, and by 1836 it was up for sale.

The Haugh Public House and Brew House was set up by James Robertson on 6<sup>th</sup> May 1808 and used some equipment from the soon to be closed Inverness Brewery. The Haugh brewery was advertised for sale in 1821 and again in 1828. In 1844 Fraser and company had taken over the premises on the Haugh to

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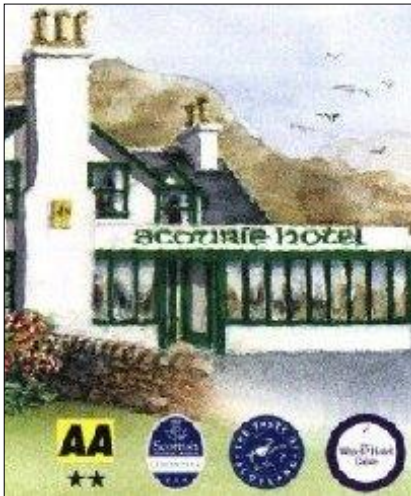
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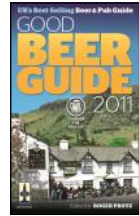
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use as the Caledonian Brewery. On 10<sup>th</sup> January 1845 the Caledonian brewery went into dissolution. In 1850 it was known as Ross's Caledonian Brewery and during that year he shipped 50 large barrels of porter to London. It was up for sale again in 1855 and in 1858 John Buchannan bought it. The brewery seemed to keep going until the First World War. The Haugh Brewery site was developed as flats. Alex Fraser was a brewer and corn merchant and set up the Muirtown Brewery in 1826. This was eventually converted to the Glen Albyn Distillery in 1846, which was then demolished in 1980's.

Thornbush Brewery (pictured) was built on the South Kessock quayside in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century.

It was purchased by George Black in 1853 and following a major refurbishment in 1869 brewing continued until the First World War. The building is now part of a steel workshop.



In 1841 there were 30 registered breweries in our area: 17 in Inverness, Ross and Cromarty 8, Caithness 3, Nairn 1, and Sutherland 1.

It is said that the St Columba Church on Bank Street in Inverness was built in 1851/2 on the site of a brewery. After the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, brewers began to invest in their own retail outlets and tied houses. Tenants, running these tied houses had to work very hard under strict rules for little money.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1857 the Glenurquhart Brewery was up for sale or let; it may have been the original Lewiston Brewery.

According to Slaters directory of Scotland, Thurso had three breweries in 1860: William McPherson in Bank Street, David Steven in Cowie Lane, and John Swanson in Durness Street. By 1860 Nairn had two breweries: Nairn Brewery run by George Hayward in Mill Lane and one run by John Carlier Tweedie.

At the turn of the century, because of more legislation, high raw material costs, a growing number of larger companies, mergers (or take-overs), and higher taxes, most of the breweries were closing. One

*(Continued on page 36)*

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## Beers-of-the-Year 2011

Dark & Light Mild -	Highland Dark Munro
Bitters -	Fyne Ales Piper's Gold
Best Bitters -	Highland Scapa Special
Strong Bitters -	Highland Orkney IPA
Golden Ales -	Fyne Avalanche
Speciality -	Cairngorm Trade Winds
Stouts & Porters -	Cairngorm Black Gold.
Old Ales & Strong Milds -	Orkney Dark Island
Barley Wines & Strong Ales -	Orkney Skullsplitter
Real Ale in a Bottle -	Black Isle Porter
(tied vote)	Tryst Carrondale Pale
	Hilden College Green Molly's Chocolate Stout



As selected by local CAMRA members. Beers from all Scottish breweries qualified for your vote, but great to see that so many from the Highlands & Islands were your favourite brews.

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

The nine category winners will now go forward to the 'Champion Beer of Scotland' and to the 'Champion Winter 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.

### Favourite Local Ale

<b>Gold</b>	<b>Cairngorm Trade Winds</b>
<b>Silver</b>	<b>Isle of Skye Black Cuillin</b>
<b>Bronze</b>	<b>Cairngorm Black Gold</b>



As selected by local CAMRA members.

Eligible Local Ales are beers from –

An Teallach Brewery	Black Isle Brewery	Cairngorm Brewery
Cuillin Brewery	Glenfinnan Brewery	Hebridean Brewery
Isle of Skye Brewery	Old Inn Brewery	Plockton Brewery

Congratulations to Cairngorm and Isle of Skye brewers. A clean sweep again for Trade Winds, Black Cuillin and Black Gold - last year Trade Winds and Black Gold tied for Gold, with Black Cuillin taking Bronze, and clearly these brews continue to be brewed and served in the very best condition. Interesting to note once again, in an age of increasing popularity (it seems) for quaffable light golden ales, that results indicate local members clearly favour the darker brews.

### Tasting Notes

**Trade Winds** - 4.3% - Light golden in colour, with high proportion of wheat giving the beer a clean fresh taste. The mash blends together with the Perle hops and elderflower providing a bouquet of fruit and citrus flavours.

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

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







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**e-ALE**

> Hello Again Gareth,  
It is my intentions to visit all of the pubs/hotels listed under Caithness & Sutherland as well

as the local ones listed under Inverness & District North, but will leave most of it until the beginning of May.

However, I can give you an update:

1. Inverness & District North - The Edderton Inn is rarely open even in the summer and does not have real ale. The Castle Hotel in Portmahomack sells Cairngorm Trade Winds, and I would give the beer a rating of 3, but the ale is over-priced.
2. Caithness & Sutherland - The Eagle Hotel in Dornoch is not selling real ale at present and tell me that they hope to have it in again in the spring. It is, therefore, an (S) for seasonal. I enjoyed the ale there towards the end of last year and consider a rating of 3 to be fair and reasonable although, once again, the ale is over-priced. The Sutherland Inn, Brora has one hand-

pump and sells ales from Cairngorm and Orkney. The quality is consistently good and merits a rating of 4.

My wife and I visited the Bandstand Bar in Nairn a couple of weeks ago and were most impressed. We met a friendly, polite young man who is a CAMRA member and knows you. His name escapes me at the moment.

Cheers and beers, Jack

> **Loch Ness Brewery** - Seen the brewery, got the T-shirt, but where's the beer?

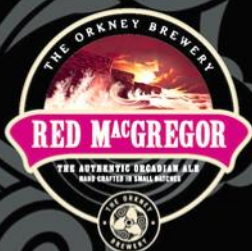
I've been to many breweries where I have drunk the beer, and seen the brew plant, but have not been able to buy a T-shirt. I can't remember visiting a brewery, seeing the brew plant, getting a T-shirt but can't find the beer? Hurry up Steve! Cheers, Big G. (9<sup>th</sup> March)

*In March Loch Ness Brewery co-owner Steve Crossland was sporting a very handsome shirt with brewery artwork. Although the brewery was not officially open a number of 'test' brews had been served in the brewery tap (Benleva Hotel). Clearly brand marketing and merchandising are at an advanced stage. Ed.*

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*(Continued from page 30)*

such legislation was the Carlisle Scheme during the First World War, whereby the British Government took control of pubs and breweries around the Cromarty Firth area and limited production, opening times and off sales. This area was a navy base and full of ammunition factories and stores and they thought it was dangerous to let the workers have too much to drink.

This legislation did not cease fully until 1971. By the end of The First World War I could find no evidence of any breweries in our area.

It was not until the 1980's that real ale started to emerge again as a few pubs started taking brews from the south, and Dixie Taylor started working his sales magic around the Highlands, converting pubs to real ale and encouraging brewers to produce real ale.

The Alice Brewery, based at Harbour Road in Inverness, was started up in 1983 by Ollie Griffin and was named after his daughter. The brewer was Roger Duncan. They brewed a 60/-, 80/- and Alice Ale, which (founding Branch Chairman) Bill Tring says was straw coloured and fruity. They used to deliver on a horse pulled dray. Alice was too soon for the area, the brewery closed in 1988, and the equipment was shipped to America. Also in 1983, over on the Isle of Lewis, Jim Hughes and his son Gregory set up the small scale Borve Brewery with it's flagship Borve Ale. In 1988 they moved to an old school in Ruthven, near Huntly, where they continued until 2002 when they closed due to ill health.

The ten-barrel Isle of Skye Brewery was started by two teachers, Angus MacRuary and Stephen Tinney, in December 1995, in new buildings near the pier in Uig. One of their first brews was Extortion Ale, brewed in support of the SKAT (Skye and Kyles Against Tolls) anti (Skye Bridge) toll campaign, and two dozen or so casks were carried across the bridge by hand, in prams and wheelbarrows, led with a degree of ceremony by the Skye Pipe Band. Mr Tinney left the Brewery in December 1996, and was bought out by Mr MacRuary in March 1997. Output of this award-winning brewery is now 100 barrels a week and they have a small bottling plant. Current brews include

Young Pretender, Red Cuillin, Black Cuillin, Blaven, Cuillin Beast, and Hebridean Gold.

The Iris Rose Brewery, named after the brewer's wife, was built at the back of The Royal Hotel in Kingussie in 1997 by landlord Bernard Justice; beers included Roseburn Bitter, Gynack Glory and Black Five. Bernard started a very popular Beer Festival, possibly the first pub based beer festival in our Branch. Brewing stopped in 2001 and the premises were put up for sale. In 2002 the brewery was re-named 'Newtonmore and Kingussie' by the new owners. Their Piper's Brew, Just for You, and Third Son were sold locally. In 2004 the hotel and brewery were sold to developers who demolished the buildings and built flats.

Also in 1997 the 10 barrel Aviemore Brewery was established in an industrial unit on the outskirts of the town. Ales with local historical names were brewed: Ruthven Brew, Wolfe's Brew, Cairngorm Brew and Red Murdoch. In 2000 the Aviemore Brewery acquired the Tomintoul Brewery and added the Tomitoul brews to their portfolio: Stag, Nessie's Monster Mash and Wild Cat.

In 2001 the name was changed to the Cairngorm Brewery, and the brewery has expanded to the current 140-barrel capacity.



Their beers are regular award winners, and Trade Winds and Black Gold have won top CAMRA and SIBA awards. They plan to have their new bottling plant open in Spring 2011. David Gladwin established the 5-barrel Black Isle Brewery in 1998 in a converted farm building. Their first beers were Red Kite and Yellowhammer (pump clips originally showed a kite and a hammer, rather than the birds). The brewery has now moved next door into a new 'green' 30-barrel brewery with bottling plant. They are well known as purveyors of good organic brews and specialise in bottled beer sales. Yellowhammer and Hibernator are among their award winning brews in CAMRA, SIBA and Organic competitions.

In 1999 we had the most northerly brewpub in Britain. Peter Martin, owner of the Melvich

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Hotel bought a 2-barrel Russian Doll style brewing kit. He brewed Real MacKay and Old MacKay amongst others. With the closure of nearby Dounreay power station, and with the workers moving away, he lost a lot of custom and eventually stopped brewing. He sold his equipment when he sold the hotel, in 2007.

In 2001, Andy Ribbens moved back to his family's homeland on the Isle of Lewis. Andy set up the 14-barrel Hebridean Brewery in an old warehouse near the Stornoway sea front which had a small bottling plant. Clansman Ale, Celtic Black Ale, Islander Strong Ale, and the award winning Berserker, are produced. Davie and Wilma Orr also came 'home', this time to Wilma's family croft, and started the An Teallach Brewery in 2002, named after a famous local mountain. It is set in a beautiful location near Dundonnell, on the shores of Little Loch Broom. After switching to live yeast the beers are very popular and An Teallach Ale won bronze at the Norwich CAMRA Beer Festival in 2010. Their other regular brews include Beinn Dearg, Brewhouse Special, Crofters Pale Ale, and Hector Stout.

In 2004 a brewery was set up in the Sligachan Hotel on the Isle of Skye, and named after the Cuillin mountain range beneath which the hotel sits. This 5-barrel plant was built in the old public bar and they supply a few local outlets, as well as the hotel, with Eagle Ale, Pinnacle, Skye Ale and Black Face. Hotel and brewery are closed during the winter.

Plockton, made famous by the TV programme Hamish MacBeth and its palm tree shoreline, had its first brewery opened in April 2007. Andy Will was based in Plockton while in the navy, married a local girl, and retired there. He converted his chicken shed into the one barrel Plockton Brewery (now enlarged to two and a half barrel) where he brews Starboard Ale, Craggs Ale, and Plockton Bay.

Three schoolteachers, John Fish, Dave Leckie and Donald Robertson, started the 4-barrel, Glenfinnan Brewery in a converted garage in the north west Highland village of Glenfinnan in May 2007. Brews available, mainly in their local vicinity, are Gold Ale and Standard Ale, plus their new winter brew Dark Ale.

The Old Inn in Gairloch installed a 100-litre microbrewery in February 2010, with Michael Longley as brewer, to brew for the Inn and to give visitors an extra incentive to stay there. The first brew was Erradale, to be followed by Flowerdale and Slatterdale.

So what of the future? Well it looks promising: in 2010 our breweries had a very productive year and expansions have taken place to cope with the demand. For 2011 we hear that three more breweries are due to open.

Steve and Allan Crossland, owners of the Benleva Hotel in Drumnadrochit, are building the new two barrel Loch Ness Brewery in a converted bothy in the hotel grounds. It is expected to be up and running in March.

Soon to follow is the new Cromarty Brewery, not in the original building but at Davidston, just outside the village. Craig Middleton is planning to blend the traditional skills of the brewer with modern technology to produce innovative products, using local ingredients, including fruit and herbs from a local nursery, to give distinctive characteristics.

In the far northwest near Durness, Neil Fuller, a local stone mason and photographer who runs an arts and craft studio, has got planning permission to demolish a workshop and build a four barrel micro-brewery at Sangmore. This should be up and running in May.

*A fascinating look at the history of brewing in the Highlands & Western Isles. Well done to Chairman Eric for his research.*

*Let us know if you find beers from the new breweries on your travels. Thanks, Ed.*

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# the loch ness inn

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



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## Out of the Blue!

An e-mail flyer in my inbox, on Friday, 14<sup>th</sup> January, announced:

Hello, Beer Geeks!

It's about time we had a little beer festival at The Anderson, don't you think?

Join us on Saturday & Sunday 29-30 January from 1-5pm, when you can expect to find - as usual - the unexpected in cask ale & cider at our Burns Weekend Real Ale Festival.

The beer list will include several breweries never before seen in the Highlands.. ..the format is pay-as-you-go, with third, half and full-pint portions available, plus free haggis, neeps & tatties and musical distraction for all!

For a constantly-updated list of confirmed beers, see:

<http://www.theanderson.co.uk/real.htm>

A quick look at the website revealed a short list of brews: Crouch Vale Brewers Gold, Little Valley Ginger Pale Ale, Bowman Quiver Bitter, Roosters Juniper I.P.A., and Summer Wine Resistance Dark Mild.

The list was updated as promised and by 24<sup>th</sup> January Quantock Stout, Tomlinsons Liquorice Stout, Highland St. Magnus Ale, Brew Dog Alpha Dog, Oakham Vintage 2009 Oblivion, Weston's Cider Twist Winter Spice, and Woody's Medium Dry Cider had been added!

In an ideal world one would have taken advantage of The Anderson's two nights for the price of one Winter offer to CAMRA members, but all those jobs at home and an early Monday start left Sunday afternoon as the only option. Others were similarly placed and so we managed to arrange a lift to Fortrose and shared a taxi back to Inverness (much) later.

We made every effort to sample all brews on offer and the favourite at our table - close to the warming log stove - was the Juniper IPA (just), closely followed by Quiver Bitter. The Resistance Mild we found difficult to classify - definitely not a typical mild we thought, more of a specialty brew, but most enjoyable.

(Sean) Tomlinsons Liquorice Stout found much favour with one of our party and, as a result, appeared on tap at a popular Inverness real ale watering hole a few days later! Liquorice is not favoured by all, your correspondent

included, but I had to agree that this was a very smooth and tasty brew. Whilst the local real ale drinkers enjoy their regular favourite brews, it was nevertheless great to see a number of ales on tap in the Highlands for the first time, and a chance to try something new. (Free) haggis, neeps & tatties were served throughout the afternoon, and a couple of local musicians stoked up a party atmosphere which was enjoyed by young and old. An unexpected treat, and our party has no objection whatsoever to this event being added to the list of regular local festivals!

## News of Brews

### > Fynbridge Black IPA

In January Fyne Ales delivered a new brew called Black IPA. At 5.9% ABV and black in colour, you did not expect to get the burst of flavours that it gave. Now there is a clue in the name 'IPA' but black IPA? well...

Very hoppy and giving your palate a buzz of fruits (cranberries? rowanberries?), bitterness with a slight roasted malt background and loads of hops. This is the sort of beer that is just great to settle down to by a fire in a pub on a cold winter night, with some friends and have a natter until closing time - which I did.

This beer was under the name Fynebridge and was brewed by Kelly Ryan, ex-Thornbridge who, on his way home to New Zealand, popped into Fyne Ales to do the brew.

Rumours are that the recipe has been left with Fyne, so watch out for it in the future.

> Congratulations to **Black Isle Brewery** on winning a bronze medal for Hibernator in the CAMRA Champion Winter Beers of Britain competition in the Barley Wines classification.

Black Isle have secured an order to supply Sweden's state controlled off licences. About 100,000 bottles per year will be supplied to Sweden, with the importing company Galatea also distributing Goldeneye to Norway and Finland. The order represents around a 10% increase in production for the brewery.

### > Ardmore Beast

Isle of Skye Brewery are once again maturing Cuillin Beast in Ardmore Whisky casks and the 'Ardmore Beast' will be out in May.



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Real Ale in the Real Highlands



### > Orkney Corncrake Ale

A 4.1% abv straw gold coloured brew with a white creamy head, soft citrus fruit and gentle floral notes. A new seasonal ale for May/June but featured in the Wetherspoons Spring festival.



### > SIBA National Beer Competition 2011

Congratulations to Cairngorm and Highland breweries on winning awards at the Society of Independent Brewers annual competition.

Highland Brewing Co **Dark Munro** won silver in the Mild category and Cairngorm Brewery **Black Gold** won Bronze in the Porters, Strong Milds, Old Ales & Stouts. Interesting to note that a Mild, Cotswold Spring Brewery's Old Sodbury Mild, was Supreme Champion of the Year. Confirmation of the continuing and very welcome resurgence of Mild style beers.

> Fyne Ales are well-known for their range of award-winning brews but recently they

scooped an award of a different kind:

A rebrand of their beers won a prestigious gold at the Design Business Association's awards for design effectiveness, in February, beating campaigns for household names like Cadbury's Buttons and Diageo's Guinness.

Judges decided that labels produced by design agency Good Creative, for Fyne Ales' bottled beers, delivered more bang for bucks involved than work done for much bigger players!

Fyne Ales directors said the redesign has led to a massive rise in sales, and their products are now stocked by retail giants like Waitrose and Oddbins, and in the Wetherspoons pub chain. Fyne Ales has also signed export deals in Sweden and Hong Kong.

> **Marymas Medieval Fair** - This year's Fair, is on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> June and marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this popular event which last year raised £15,000 for Crossroads Care. As usual we will be running a real ale bar.

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



*Cheers! Ed.*

## Tasting Panel Update

January found us at the Heathmount Hotel in Inverness for our first meet of 2011. Just one real ale, Black Isle Yellowhammer. Possibly nearing the end of the cask, this 3.9% abv golden ale was not at its best but still carried some of its usual characteristics. Hop, fruit and some caramel in the aroma, also evident in the taste but slightly more sweet than bitter which is a reverse of the norm. This changed in the aftertaste where the normal bitterness took over from the sweetness. The condition dulled down its normally tasty fruity, citrus bitterness, and it scored an average 5 (out of 10).

We then spotted Black Isle Red Kite on a keg font. This was a (worrying) first for us as this excellent eighty shilling style beer is usually only available on cask. Purely out of dedicated research and curiosity, you understand, we tried this keg offering and we can report that it was a dreadful imitation of the cask version.

Loads of fizz and very little beer flavour. We hoped some of the craft brewing skills would be evident in the keg version but it was not to be. We appreciate that keeping cask beer in good condition can be difficult at times, but is going down the keg route the way forward for a cask ale brewer? Presumably time will tell.

A short walk to Number 27 and two Atlas ales from Sinclair Breweries, who now brew everything on Orkney. First to be tried was Latitude which is classed as a specialty ale, brewed as a cask pilsner. Pale straw in colour, this 3.6% beer had some fruit and hop in the aroma, magnified in the taste, giving a full on flavour of pink grapefruit with a strong and clean cut bitterness. Great taste value for its strength and it would have scored more apart from the unwanted astringency in the aftertaste which left a dryness in the mouth resulting in an average score of 6.

The second beer, Three Sisters, is a 4.2% tawny coloured eighty shilling style best bitter. In great condition, it had hints of liquorice malt in the aroma which carried on into the taste, combining with roast, caramel, a hint of hop and some berry fruit flavours giving a complex tasty beer with slightly more sweetness than bitterness. The flavours carried well into the aftertaste giving it a score of 8.

We finished at the Castle Tavern where a

choice of six ales were on tap. We went for a new winter seasonal, Isle of Skye Brewery Old Pretender. Hints of cinnamon and cloves in the aroma of this 4.7% specialty ale, and the spices in the flavour were well balanced with malts, roast and caramel. Although this faded quite quickly in the aftertaste it did make for a good Christmas beer and it scored 7.

Lastly another seasonal, Cairngorm Winter Flurry. A copper coloured 3.8% bitter, with some faint malt, hop and fruit in the aroma. A balanced lightly malted, hoppy, fruity beer, its bitterness increased into the aftertaste giving it an average score of 7. Also on tap were Arran Puffer, Wildcat, the Tavern house beer Flora, from Isle of Skye - a fine selection of Scottish ales. Well done to Number 27 for our beer of the evening - Atlas Three Sisters.

February tasting, which was combined with a Branch meeting, started at Hootanannys where we found cask-conditioned Black Isle Red Kite. This 4.2% tawny coloured best bitter was quite carbonated, with a fairly large head which lasted as the beer was drunk, and made us wonder if top pressure (applying a blanket of carbon dioxide to the ale) had been used.

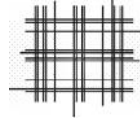
Aromas of Ovaltine malt and some hop and fruit led to quite a well balanced taste of malt and orange citrus hop and fruit flavours with sweetness leading the bitterness. Not quite as good as usual it scored an average of 6.

Over to Kings Highway where Isle of Skye Black Cuillin was sadly off form. A 4.5% Old Ale/Strong Mild class of beer it was thin and carried a metallic taste. Dulled down in its normal malty roast and caramel aroma, these flavours were also less evident in the taste and faded very quickly. Slightly more sweet than bitter it did carry some fruit flavours. Normally a favourite it scored 5 this time.

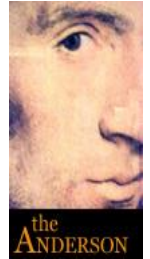
Last beer of the night was Cairngorm Nessies Monster Mash, a 4.4% Best Bitter class, eighty shilling style beer. Full of complex flavours from aroma through to aftertaste, it started with malts, roast and caramel in the aroma. These intensified in the taste giving coffee, toffee and an almost boiled sweet fruitiness. More sweet than bitter as is the case for this style of beer, all these tasty flavours lasted well into the aftertaste. With an average score of 8 it secured our beer of the evening status.



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