

What's Yours Then?

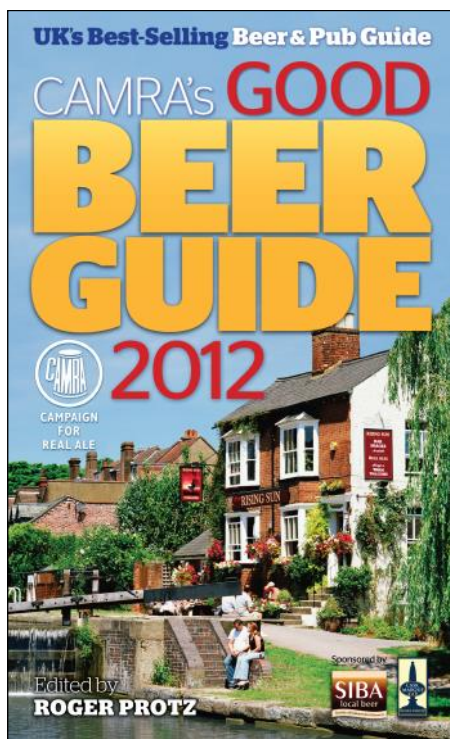
Highlands & Western Isles CAMRA
Free Newsletter



Contains Full List of Highlands & Western Isles Real Ale Outlets



So much to celebrate!



NATIONAL
Cask Ale
WEEK
1st-9th OCTOBER 2011



CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE

Autumn 2011

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

- > Updated Branch Diary
- > Tasting Panel Update
- > Socials & Outings - Reports
- > Festivals Update
- > Focus on - Craig Middleton
- > Your Letters and E-mails
- > Real Cider News
- > Pub & Brewery News
- > Updated Real Ale Pubs list

We welcome your letters, news, views and opinions. Let us know what is happening at your local, or tell us about pubs you have visited. Thanks to all who have taken trouble to send in pub and beer reports, or articles, but especially to regulars Bill, Eric, Gareth, and Steven, who keep us up-to-date with brews and what is happening in local pubs. Please note that the editor reserves the right to edit contributions sent for publication. All marks and copyright are acknowledged.

Winter edition **deadline** is 1st December, with publication in time for the festive season.

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.

Champion Beers of Britain

Mighty Oak Brewery's Oscar Wilde was crowned Supreme Champion at the Great British Beer Festival at Earls Court in August.

The Silver award this year went to Marble Brewery's Chocolate, whilst the Bronze award went to Salopian Brewery's Shropshire Gold.

The 3.7% abv Oscar Wilde, Champion Mild of Britain 2006, is described as a mellow, nutty, morish dark mild brewed using Maris Otter Pale, Crystal and Black malts, and gently hopped with Challenger.

Remarkably, for a style of beer which only a few years ago was in rapid and apparently terminal decline, this is the third mild to be crowned Supreme Champion in five years, following on from Rudgate Ruby Mild in 2009 and Hobsons Mild in 2007.

Congratulations to Houston Brewery Company on their 4.2% **Peter's Well** taking Gold in the Best Bitter category. Sadly this was the only award for a Scottish brew, so little recognition this year for brewers from north of the border.

CAMRA colleagues Mike and Vron Burningham visited the Highlands earlier this year and penned a report for the Darlington Drinker newsletter which Vron edits. They have kindly allowed us to publish their report which may be found on pages 36-38.

NATIONAL Cask Ale WEEK

1st-9th OCTOBER 2011

Please support your local pubs and brewers during National Cask Ale Week

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
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A crisp golden ale with a citrus finish . . .

"Sweet FA"



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To the End of the Road

It had been some while since our last visit to Caithness and so this long trip was a welcome opportunity to catch up with real ale pubs in the far north of our large geographical region, the largest (by area) of any CAMRA branch.

Just four on the minibus as we left Inverness Townhouse at 9am. Torrential rain had left local flooding but with the exception of one heavy thunderous shower, the old saying "Rain before seven, fine by eleven" came true on our scenic drive north on the A9.

Warm sunshine greeted us in Wick where we met up with our Social Secretary Allan who was up in the area for a few days holiday. We started off at Alexander Bain, a Wetherspoons pub, which had three ales on: Caley Deuchars, Titanic Iceberg, and the 6.5% Abbot Reserve. Missing out on the ubiquitous Deuchars, and sensibly sidestepping the Abbot, our opening beer was the Iceberg (£1.90 a pint after using a JDW 50p coupon). Although just slightly hazy it was a deliciously crisp and refreshing beer which all of us thought merited a CAMRA score of 4. A short stroll across the bridge took us to Mackay's Hotel and to Orkney Northern Light on at £3.60 a pint. Not quite at it's best it got mixed scores of 1's and 2's.

We left Wick and arrived at the Seaview Hotel just after 1pm. This John O'Groats hostelry is the most northerly mainland real ale outlet. Here we found Highland Scapa Special at £3.60 a pint and a rather quiet lounge bar for a Saturday lunchtime - a pity as it was very obvious that a lot of effort has been put in recently in upgrading this hotel and making it look comfortable and welcoming. The Scapa was a little tired and we gave it a 2 score.

Moving on to the Commercial Hotel in Thurso to rendez-vous with another of our members, Jack Drake. It was great to finally meet Jack face to face and to thank him for the excellent reports he has been putting in to us from his pub visits in this area. The ale on tap at the Commercial was McEwan's Cask Eighty Shilling at £1.70 a half and although not to everyone's taste it was on fine form scoring 4's. A short walk round the corner took us to the Central Hotel, with just Scapa Special at £3.10 a pint, Highland Island Hopping having finished the

evening before. The Scapa was a poor offering from this Good Beer Guide listed pub and the scores given were 1's, and also zeros from those who could not finish it. This is not what we would want to find at a GBG listed pub and this is why trips out and *regular reports from members are vital* to ensure that we only have pubs serving excellent quality ale featured in the guide. There are several GBG quality pubs knocking on the door and competition for entry is increasing. Hopefully this was a one off as reports before (and after) this visit have been good. We said goodbye to Allan here as we left to go to Helmsdale.

It looked as if we were going to be unlucky at the Belgrave Hotel but the landlord was just putting on Atlas Wayfarer. It was very good and scored an easy 4 but top-up was required as the large head on the beer dropped quite quickly leaving a short pint. It was good to see real ale is selling well here, with the locals enjoying it, and the hotel is getting through two or three casks a week. Sourcing Scottish ales is more of a problem for the landlord as it is hard to get Scottish ones from wholesaler Waverley TBS, and he has found that it is really only Sinclair Breweries who are willing to deliver to him.

A short drive to Brora where the Sutherland Inn had a good Atlas Three Sisters (3) on at £1.60 a half. This is a lovely cosy inn, packed with visitors who, like us, were amazed at the fantastic range of malts whiskies on sale from display cabinets at reception and in the bar.

We said our goodbyes to Jack before heading on to Golspie. What was the Sutherland Arms Hotel is now the Golspie Inn where we found Cuillin Brewery Pinnacle (3) being served at £1.50 a half, although I am sure the Isle of Skye Brewery would be none too chuffed to see it going through one of their handpumps! After Brora we called into the Trentham Hotel which had run a music and ale festival earlier in the year but sadly they do not stock real ale on a regular basis.

On to Dornoch for our final town of the trip. The beautiful looking Castle Hotel had two ales on from Orkney, £3.45 a pint and £1.75 a half. The Raven (4) was excellent, if just a tad cold. In my opinion it is

(Continued on page 12)

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Branch Diary (Meetings start at 7.30 pm)

30th Sept - 2nd Oct * Cider & Blues Festival Argyll Hotel, Ullapool
30th Sept - 2nd Oct * Real Cider Festival Bandstand Bar, Nairn

October is National Cider & Perry Month

5th - 23rd October * Wetherspoon Kings Highway, Inverness
Real Ale & Cider Festival Alexander Bain, Wick


7th Oct - 9th Oct * Real Ale & Music Festival Torridon Inn

Sat 8th Oct  Social/Outing to the 2nd Torridon Inn Festival and West Coast Real Ale Hostelries along the way

Tues 11th October Committee Meeting Bandstand Bar, Nairn

14th - 30th October * Octoberfest Clachaig Inn, Glencoe

20th - 23rd October * 7th Ullapool Beer Festival at Morefield Motel, Ullapool

Sat 22nd Oct  Annual Outing to the Ullapool Beer Festival and Real Ale Hostelries along the way

Tues 25th October Tasting Panel Meeting The Anderson, Fortrose

Tues 8th Nov Highlands & Western Isles CAMRA **AGM** Phoenix, Inverness



**CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE**

CAMRA Needs YOU!

Protect your pleasure!

Become actively involved with your local branch.

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

Tues 29th November Tasting Panel Meeting Castle Tavern, Inverness

Tues 6th December Committee Meeting Glenmhor Hotel, Inverness

Tues 13th December Walkabout & Social Meet at 7pm at Castle Tavern

* 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

Contact

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Details

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



Eric Mills - 01456 459343

Mike Whittall - 01463 831259

chair@highlandcamra.org.uk

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Working Two Real Ale Festivals

June is a month which finds me working as a Bar Manager at both the Aberdeen & North East Beer Festival and the Scottish Real Ale Festival in Edinburgh. Usually there is a couple weeks rest in between. Not this year as a Rod Stewart concert delayed Aberdeen by a week, and a change of venue brought Edinburgh forward by a week, and so no let up!



Off to Aberdeen on 6th June for the evening two hour load up of equipment from storage, and then to settle into my accommodation. A 7am start on Tuesday, loading up equipment stored at houses

for a 9 o'clock delivery to Pittodrie. All scaffolding, planks, pallets, glasses, bottles, beer, etc. arrive - hopefully at intervals - and the good news is that everything is on the same level and a concrete floor allows use of pallet lifters to get everything into place.

A busy day setting up the stillage, lifting casks into place, covering beers with cooling towels, putting pallets down for walkways, and finally erecting the bar. A 9am start on Wednesday but a much calmer day - beers were vented and tapped (all on gravity), cooling towels renewed, one group cleaning glasses and stuffing them with programmes, a couple of late beer deliveries, posters put up, entrance and products areas fitted out. Finally for Bar Managers the tasting of the stronger beers to make sure they are fit for sale. A full day again on Thursday - cider delivered and put on stillage, tasting the rest of the beers, and the Champion Beer of Scotland competition kept me busy during the afternoon.

The festival opened to the public at 4pm and serving beers and dealing with problems kept me busy until closing. Finally seal the casks, renew cooling cloths, a tidy up and home.

A midday Friday start, so a lie in. Check beers, open at 3pm. Little time serving as I was kept busy with beers nearing their end - tilting of beers, changing casks, venting & tapping, and leaving to rest before tasting ahead of sale. Another 11pm close, followed by the tidy up. Start at 10am next day with midday opening.

A slow day serving beers with little prep. A 9pm close but with 57 beers still available. A couple hours dismantling the bar and putting empty casks to one side before closing up.

Start at 11am on Sunday - pour away the unused beer and completely dismantle the stillage, piling everything in order for an easy pick up on Monday. Over to the bus station and the Megabus to Edinburgh (where stillage had been going up in Adam House at the same time as we dismantled at Pittodrie). Arrived in time for a Bar-B-Q with pals.



Monday morning and here we go again with a 9am start (meanwhile back in Aberdeen they were loading lorries, and removing all evidence of a beer festival at the stadium). Beers

arrive and are put on stillage, and an ancient CAMRA cooling system fitted (cold water is circulated through pipes around the casks and cloth jackets put on each cask to keep the coldness in). Leaks were repaired (so much for the promise of new equipment!). Others were delivering planks and scaffolding to each of the two bar floors (please don't mention the steps up to them); doing paperwork - signs, etc.; cleaning glasses; organising bar rosters; fitting music stage; setting up products and entry areas. We called it a day at 5pm.

Tuesday, in at 9am, checked the beers and cooling; vented and tapped the beers while teams built the bars; late beers arrive, put on stillage; fitted 23 hand pumps (most beers were on gravity), cleaned the lines, pulled through and tasted the beers. Others were setting up tables and chairs, putting up posters and banners, etc. until another 5pm finish.

Wednesday - as for Tuesday - in at 9am, checked beers and cooling. Cider arrived and was put on stillage. In the afternoon SIBA (Society of Independent Brewers Association) had their Scottish beer tasting competition, followed by a trade session where publicans and brewers could mix and talk. Closed at 9pm after the usual tidy up.

Thursday - as above (Tuesday & Wednesday) - before opening to the public at midday, and a busy day serving and preparing the beers as



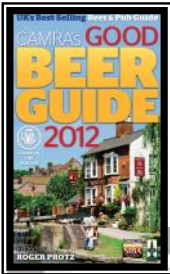
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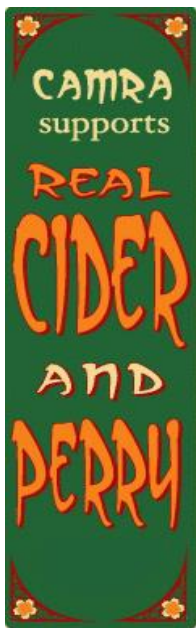


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Traditional Cider Matters

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, 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

Torriddon Inn - Westons Ciders are served in the bar.

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

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.

required until the 11pm closing time.

Friday and a lie in as the other bar manager covered, so in for 1pm. Closed at midnight.

Saturday - in again for 9am, open at midday, closed at... well we sold out at six and closed. We had a few hours for take down and then we settled down to pizza and a few beers to celebrate a successful festival.

Sunday - in at 9am (for the last time!) and continued the dismantling (those steps again) until everything was ready for pick up and the halls cleaned out. Down to the bus station for the Megabus back to Inverness.

As a Bar Manager I work long hours at the festival but there are other jobs to be had that

require much shorter hours, including several that do not require much physical exertion.

In Edinburgh a disabled member and another who was recovering from an operation were providing much-needed help in preparing and putting up labels and signage, filling glasses with publicity material, and other jobs. An octogenarian was helping at the membership stand. You can help behind the bar - doesn't have to be a long spell, just give someone a break for 20 minutes. If you can spare a few hours next year, look out for the dates and volunteer, manpower is always required.

Not forgetting the social aspect - sample a few beers and meet other real ale fans. EM.

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better a little cold, as it can warm up, rather than the other way around. The Dark Island was superb, scoring 4.5 - add a very knowledgeable bar manager and staff - this highlights my earlier point about GBG contenders. Popping across the road to the Eagle Hotel we found an Abbot Ale pump clip turned round. So it was back to Inverness, arriving for once ahead of schedule due to a couple of places not having real ale. Our thanks to Sandy from Fraser's Coaches for another safe journey. Sandy has been our regular driver for many years but on this trip he said that he may not renew his PSV licence as he now only drives occasionally. If that is to be the case then I will take this opportunity to thank him for his service over the years. Having Sandy as our driver has always been a pleasure as his good humour, patience and help over and above the call of duty has made these trips special. Even our frequent late home arrivals due to our inability to keep to schedule has not fazed him over the years. I can honestly say that trips without him will just not be the same. Cheers Sandy. GNH.

Real Ale Growth Creates Tricky Brew

Experts are warning that Scotland's resurgent real ale industry is in danger of overheating, according to an article in Scotland on Sunday in July by Perry Gourley.

Independent breweries are one of Scotland's greatest success stories of the last decade but, with new micro-breweries opening on a regular basis and with several more in the pipeline, there are concerns that the market is fast reaching saturation point as the number of outlets that sell real ale is limited.

Although the growth of real ale is a trend that has been seen throughout the UK, it has been most dramatic in Scotland where it previously struggled against the dominance of lager and spirits. CAMRA's latest annual Cask Report described it as an "incredible growth north of the border" in sales of cask ale last year.

An alternative view - Chris Mair writing on the Wort 'n' all Blogspot - is that as pubcos suffer and sell off sites in the thousands, more pubs are becoming free of tie and the demand is for local and niche products. *We hope so. Ed.*

BANDSTAND BAR & RESTAURANT



CAMRA Highland & Western Isles

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The Struy Inn is a traditional 19th century country inn situated in the heart of Scotland's Central Highlands, within an easy drive of both Inverness and Loch Ness. Located in the village of Struy, mid-way between Cannich and Beauly, the inn sits at the junction of the Farrar and Glass rivers, and at the gateway to the remote and spectacular glens of Affric, Cannich and Strathfarrar.

With characterful stone walls and warm open fireplaces, the Struy Inn's bar is the perfect place to relax for a meal or a drink. Possibly after partaking in one of the many activities on the doorstep, be it fishing the rivers, shooting game, or walking in the magnificent glens. In summer, outside tables offer the ideal spot to make the most of the light evenings by savouring the scenery together with your dinner or drink.

Accommodation is also offered, with comfortable and stylishly refurbished en-suite rooms available.

Real Ale in Ullapool

The Argyle: Excellent welcome from the bar man as I asked if the An Teallach Ale was on form: 'I'll give you a taste. There's no point paying for an ale you don't like'. And I liked it, scoring 4, the best of the weekend. Malty, lightly smoked (and not burnt!), in fact a bit of a toasted flavour, with a lightly hopped bite to the back of the throat. There was a nice buzz in the pub too. Landlord and Wadsworth 6X were also on offer. No (disabled) loo.

Seaforth Bar & Restaurant: Two pumps serving An Teallach Ale at £3.70!! A slightly astringent nose and taste. Very poor (1½), especially when compared to The Argyle. A loo, but with limited access.

Ferry Boat Inn: Serving Caley 80/- and Deuchars. I couldn't get in.

Morefield Motel (all the beers were on pins): Golden Amber (4) - fruity on the nose, hoppy and very bitter (carried into the after taste), and quite a 'syrupy' mouth feel; Trade Winds - a very tired 2. Foostie on the nose and very little fruit on the taste. An Teallach Ale (not

tasted). A fourth pump had a pump clip called 'Feck Ale Left'; with nothing on offer! I'm not sure I liked the joke! The best loo in Ullapool!

The Arch Inn: Just the one handpump. An Teallach Suilven (3½) - Very clear, bitter taste, with a thick mouth feel. A lively place with a very noisy groom from Glasgow dominating the sound waves! An accessible loo.

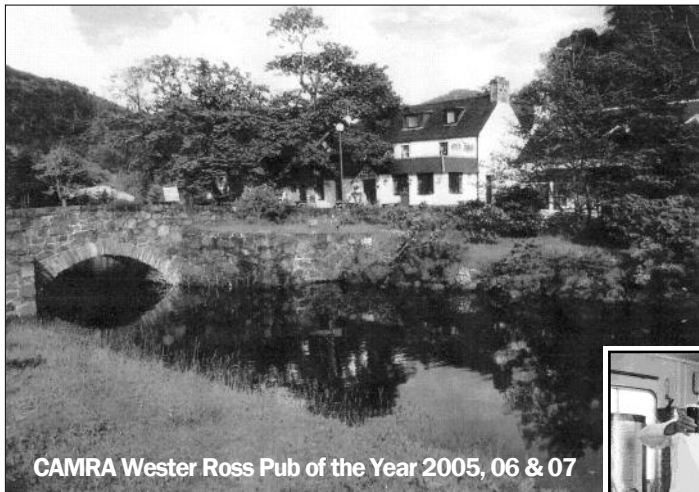
The Ceilidh Place: An Teallach Brewhouse Special (3). A thin feel, rounded hoppy taste with slight malty bite on the swallow. Service was poor! I witnessed three German bikers asking about the beer and the server was very short with them, showing real irritation at their broken English, and ended up recommending Carling! I interrupted to answer their question and recommend they try the local ale; they did and thanked me. As I left as they were finishing their second pint! No loo. Séamus.

As a wheelchair user a genuinely accessible environment is essential to Seamus being able to enjoy his pint. Sadly many pubs and hotels are not accessible without assistance, and a significant number do not have accessible toilets despite the Disability Discrimination Act.

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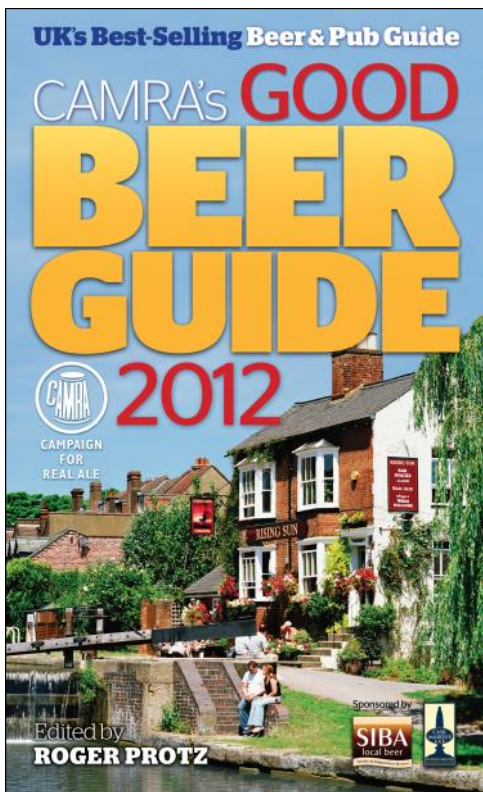
Restling at the foot of the Flowerdale Glen, with the river flowing under its charming old footbridge, The Old Inn is a traditional coaching inn set amid picturesque surroundings. Specializing in locally landed fish and shellfish, together with seasonal game, The Old Inn enjoys a reputation for a friendly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

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Good Beer Guide 2012

The 39th edition of CAMRA's Good Beer Guide 2012 has been fully revised and updated, and includes details of more than 4,500 pubs across the country serving the best real ale.

From country inns to urban style bars and backstreet boozers, all selected and reviewed by over 125,000 CAMRA members, this is your definitive guide to finding the perfect pint!

The unique brewery section contains a list of all UK breweries - micro, regional and national - that brew real ale, with tasting notes for hundreds of their beers written by trained CAMRA tasting panel members.

£10.00 (online members price)

£12.99 (online non-members price)

Buying direct from CAMRA, rather than other retailers, means we make more profit which is invested directly into campaigning for real ale, community pubs and drinkers' rights.

Highlands & Western Isles

A total of 34 pubs in our Branch area are listed in the guide. New for 2012:

Torriddon Inn - Lying close to the shore of Loch Torriddon the inn enjoys spectacular views of the Torriddon mountains. One ale from An Teallach is served in winter, with up to six in summer, including brews from the Isle of Skye and Cairngorm breweries. An excellent base for outdoor activity enthusiasts and families alike, the inn serves very good food from locally sourced ingredients. Traditional music is featured weekly in the summer and the inn runs a beer festival in September.

Congratulations to **Benleva Hotel** and **Cobbs at Nevisport** who both celebrate their tenth successive entry in the guide.

Long term successive entries, under the same ownership or stewardship, in the Highlands & Western Isles include the **Old Inn** at Gairloch (23), the **Grog & Gruel** in Fort William (16), the **Old Forge** at Inverie (16), and the **Stein Inn** (13) at Waternish on the Isle of Skye.

Blackfriars and **Clachnaharry Inn** are able to boast 17 consecutive entries, albeit under a number of owners or tenants. David Irvine at Clachnaharry and Dougie Fraser at Blackfriars placed these Inverness hostelries firmly on the Highlands real ale map in the nineties, and today Del & Janette Graham (Blackfriars) and Mark Kilby (Clachnaharry Inn) continue to serve real ales in the very best of condition.

Good Beer Guide E-Book

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Focus on Craig Middleton

Craig is near to completion of his new brewery at Davidston, near Cromarty, on the Black Isle. He plans to use a variety of local and worldwide ingredients in his brews. Craig had previously worked at the Cairngorm Brewery.

Q. Where are you originally from?

A. Born and bred Black Isler – My family home is next to the brewery site

Q. What is your background?

A. Keen home brewer – HND in Mechanical Engineering from Strathclyde uni – First class BSc in the science of Malting, Brewing and Distilling from Heriot Watt uni – Worked in various breweries, Cairngorm in the main, and even managed to clock up some hours with a few US breweries.

Q. When were you introduced to real ale?

A. Did a few homebrews prior to going to uni, however it was probably not until I got to Glasgow when I was 18 when I first drank real ale, possibly Wildcat in Wetherspoons for £1.50 a pint!

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

A. I like all types of beer, from a nice malty Scottish ale to a big resinous American IPA, and even the sourness of a Belgium Lambic, just depends on the day.

Q. Why set up a brewery near Cromarty?

A. It's where my family home is. A beautiful area which has a great brewing history and great people!

Q. What style of beer recipes are you intending to brew?

A. Starting with a nice core range of three to four beers, including a very malty Porter, a big hoppy IPA, a locally "spiced" ale and a session pale.

Q. Where would we get any of your beers?

A. We're going to sell to the pubs in the local area and hopefully get some bottled beers into restaurants shops next year.

Q. What hobbies/interests do you have?

A. Other than brewing and beer - Trials biking, fishing, guitar & trumpet.

Q. Favourite song/group?

A. Probably Nite Klub by The Specials or I'm



goin' down by Springsteen.

Q. Favourite film?

A. Possibly Planes, Trains and Automobiles or Anchorman
- I like any good comedies really.

Q. Favourite book?

A. I enjoy reading various books on beer styles/brewing traditions, and 'Brewing up a Business' by Sam Calagione was a good read too.

Q. What are your plans for the future for the Cromarty Brewery?

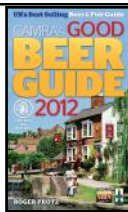
A. To expand our market further afield and to get our on-site shop up and running.



Dores Inn News - The lease holders have unveiled plans to build a major new tourist development in the adjacent car park. The historic inn is in need of repair but will not be pulled down; it may be adapted for residential use. They have plans to construct a new pub and restaurant, and a shop selling local meat, preserves and souvenirs as well as community essentials, in a single storey stone building overlooking Loch Ness. A planning application is not expected to be lodged until later this year. The Dores Inn is still open as normal.



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Keep an eye on our website for all the latest ale updates as well as information on our live music and Real Ale Festival 2011.

Festival Dates are Friday 7th - Sunday 9th October



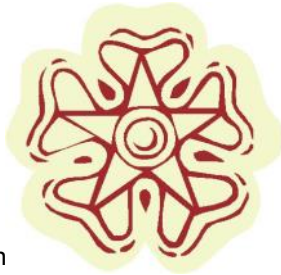
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Tel: 01445 791242
Email: info@thetorricon.com

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Double Win for Orkney Brewery

Orkney Brewery is celebrating after securing double honours in a prestigious national food and drink competition. The brewery's 4.6% Dark Island beer scooped two much sought after **Great Taste Awards** gold stars, while the (limited edition) 10% speciality Dark Island Reserve ale received the highest three gold star classification.

Regarded as the industry Oscars, the Guild of Fine Food's annual Great Taste Awards are the UK's largest independent evaluation of fine food and drink.

Each product entered into the competition is subjected to rigorous tasting by a panel of over 300 judges. For a product to win two or three gold star classification, up to 20 judges must unanimously agree that it has achieved "absolute perfection".

Only 114 products (*seven only in the Bottled Beer class*) achieved the top triple gold star status this year, out of a record total of over 7,000 entries. The three gold star winning Dark Island Reserve has been nominated as

the Best Speciality product from Scotland and will now go forward to the Great Taste Awards grand final, which will be held in London's Royal Garden Hotel this September.



Norman Sinclair, managing director of the Orkney Brewery, said: "We're absolutely over the moon about these awards, which are recognised as the most important and trusted in the UK food and drink industry. Whilst we continually strive to ensure our beers are second to none, it's heartening to receive such well-respected and independent recognition of their quality. We look forward to taking Dark Island Reserve to the grand final in London later this year and hope we can do Orkney and Scotland proud."

Dark Island Ale is matured for three months in old oak casks formerly used to mature Orkney malt whisky, and gives this limited edition ale a new dimension. Each 75cl bottle is hand-bottled and labeled with the individual Gyle number, and finally each label is finished with the signature of Head Brewer Andrew Fulton. *A super beer, Ed.*

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
Struy Inn, Strathglass, near Cannich
Munlochay Hotel (TP)
Station Hotel, Avoch
The Anderson, Fortrose
Plough Inn, Rosemarkie
Cromarty Arms
Royal Hotel, Cromarty
Struy Inn (S) (TP)
Slaters Arms, Cannich
Conon Bridge Hotel
National Hotel, Dingwall
Richmond Hotel, Strathpeffer
Inchbae Lodge Hotel, Garve
Aultguish Inn
Commercial Inn, Balintore (S)
Castle Hotel, Portmahomack

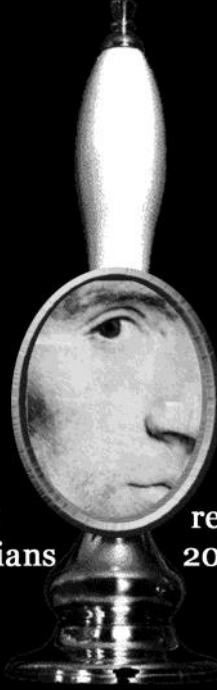
Inverness & District South

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

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mecca”

Good Beer Guide since 2005



real ale
80 Belgians

real cider
200 malts

**Highlands & Western Isles
Pub of the Year 2008**

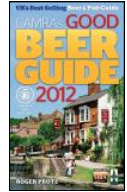
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Hootananny, Inverness
 Johnny Foxes, Inverness (TP)
 Kings Highway, Inverness (*Wetherspoons*)
 Number 27, Inverness
 Phoenix Bar, Inverness
 Innes Bar, Inverness
 Ramada Jarvis Hotel, Inverness (TP)
 Snowgoose, Inverness
 Dores Inn
 Whitebridge Hotel, 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)

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 barge on the water*)
 Loch Oich Restaurant/Bar, South Laggan
 Letterfinlay Lodge Hotel, Loch Lochy
 Roy Bridge Hotel
 Stronlössit Hotel, Roy Bridge
 Old Station Restaurant, Spean Bridge
 Tomdoun Sporting Lodge
 Moorings Hotel, Banavie
 Glenfinnan House Hotel
 Glenuig Inn, Lochailort
 Glenuig Village Hall
 Lochailort Inn (TP)
 Chlachain Inn, Mallaig



Fort William & Lochaber

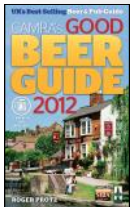
Alexandria Hotel, Fort William
 Grog & Gruel, Fort William

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.

Stein Inn

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 Isle of Skye, IV55 8GA
 Tel: +44 (0)1470-592362
angus.teresa@steininn.co.uk**

Steam Inn, Mallaig
 West Highland Hotel, Mallaig
 Loch Shiel Hotel, Acharacle
 Old Forge, Inverie
 Corran Ferry Hotel, Onich
 Four Seasons, Onich
 Ice Factor, Kinlochleven
 MacDonald Hotel, Kinlochleven
 Mamore Lodge, Kinlochleven (S)
 Laroch Bar, Ballachulish (G&WS)
 Loch Leven Hotel, Ballachulish (G&WS)
 Clachaig Inn, Glencoe (G&WS)
 Kings House Hotel, Glencoe (G&WS)

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
 Loch Insh Boathouse, Nr Aviemore
 Old Bridge Inn, Aviemore
 Winking Owl, Aviemore
 Suie Hotel, Kincairg
 Glen Hotel, Newtonmore
 Lodge Hotel, Newtonmore (TP)
 Kingussie Golf Club
 Topsy Laird, Kingussie
 Silver Fjord Hotel, Kingussie
 Duke of Gordon Hotel, Kingussie
 Ben Mhor Hotel, Grantown-on-Spey
 Craig Bar, Grantown-on-Spey
 Seafield Lodge Hotel, 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)
 Aultbea Hotel
 Drumchork Hotel, Aultbea (S)
 Dundonnell Hotel
 Loch Maree Hotel
 Kinlochewe Hotel
 Torridon Inn
 Badachro Inn
 Glendale House, South Erradale (S)
 Millcroft Hotel, Gairloch
 Myrtle Bank Hotel, Gairloch (S)

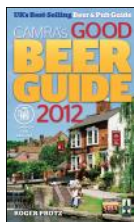
the Old Bridge Inn - Aviemore



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

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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
 Ceilidh Place, Ullapool
 Ferry Boat Inn, Ullapool
 Morefield Motel, Ullapool
 Seaforth Bar & Restaurant, Ullapool

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
 Claymore, Broadford
 Dunollie Hotel, Broadford
 Hebridean Hotel, Broadford
 Sconser Lodge Hotel





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Sligachan Hotel (S) *Closed October - March*
Old Inn, Carbost
Taigh Ailean Hotel, Portnalong
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 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
Dunroamin Hotel, Bonar Bridge
Castle Hotel, Dornoch
Eagle Hotel, Dornoch (S)
Trentham Hotel (S)
Invershin Hotel
Achness Hotel, Rosehall, Lairg
Golspie Inn (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



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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, by the Western Isles ry terminal, brewing since December 1995. Ales include 1 & Black Cuillin, Young Pretender Hebridean Gold, and ren. Seasonal, House, and special event ales are brewed.



Valhalla Brewery - Most northerly brewery in the UK, brewing on Unst December 1997. Ales include White Wife and Auld Rock.

e 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 late in 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 expected at their annual beer festival (2011).

Cromarty Brewery - Under construction. Hope to be brewing by Autumn 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!



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

Tasting Panel Update

The June meeting was held at the idyllically located Dores Inn, situated on the south bank of Loch Ness. Seven met to try the three Scottish ales on offer - might have been four but Cairngorm Trade Winds had just finished.

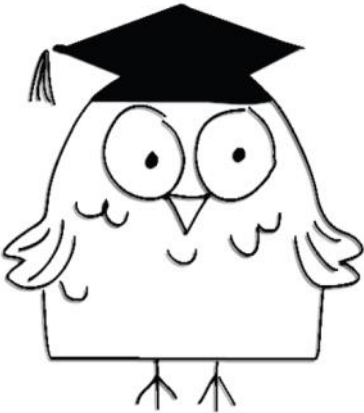
Our opening ale was the 3.8% abv Orkney Raven. This amber coloured bitter had very little in the nose apart from some faint hop and fruit aroma, but this changed in the taste where these two characteristics produced strong flavours. Along with a hint of caramel this was a very tasty beer with a good bitterness that increased into the aftertaste. Scores of 7's out of 10 plus one 8 were awarded.

Next up was Inveralmond Ossian, a 4.1% golden ale. This had hints of malt, caramel, fruit and hops on the aroma which usually go on to give a smooth, faintly malty, fruity taste where the sweetness edges out the bitterness. The beer today though had that soft malt, sweetish start in the flavours but ended up with a hoppy, bitter finish - with the bitterness increasing into the after taste. Despite the bitterness levels being more than the norm it

scored 7's all round plus one 9.

The last beer sampled was the 4.2% Highland Scapa Special which had poured quite flat, with little head, and produced fruit, hop and caramel aromas in the nose giving it an almost honey smell. The slightly syrupy taste was dominated by sweetness and caramel which led to a honeyed orange marmalade flavour. Classed normally as a best bitter this was more like a golden speciality ale; consequently the scores, which are always given on how the beer reflects its style classification, were an average of 4. Highland ales often get our beer of the evening status at tasting meetings but not today as, by the narrowest of margins, it was secured by Inveralmond Ossian.

For our July gathering it was a trip down the A82 to Fort Augustus where we started at the Caledonian Hotel. Owner and ale enthusiast Chris has managed to move to three ales by using half firkin size "pins" as well as standard casks. Orkney Red MacGregor, a 4.0% brown/red bitter was first to be tried. Malt, hops and fruit in the aroma turned into a well balanced taste of malt, roast, caramel with a woody fruitiness and spicy hop character. More bitter



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than sweet, which increased into the lingering aftertaste, resulted in average scores of 6.5.

Next beer was Cairngorm Stag. A 4.1% dark brown best bitter brewed very much in the Scottish Eighty Shilling style, it had good amounts of malts, roast and caramel in the aroma. Very well balanced with malts and roast dominating but not overpowering the caramel, hop and fruit flavours. Sweet to start off with, it became more bitter in the long lasting aftertaste and got 7's from all round.

We followed with another Cairngorm beer, the very popular 4.3% golden speciality ale that is Trade Winds. Unmistakably Trades Winds in the aroma, full on elderflower and passion fruit nose, the flavour was not as intense as it can be but was still nearly all hop and fruit along with some caramel. This lasted into the aftertaste with the strong bitterness. A good example of a speciality ale, scoring 7.5.

We then popped across the road to see what was on tap at the Lovat Hotel. Sadly the Trade Winds there had to be returned, as it was undrinkable, but was readily exchanged for

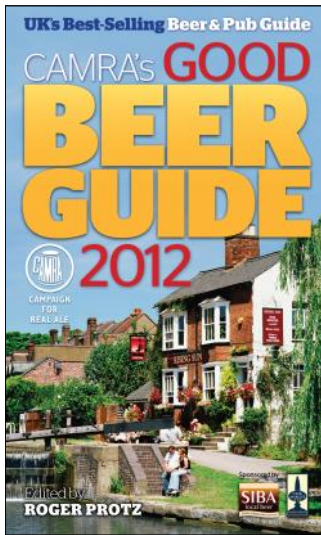
Cairngorm Wildcat. To be honest, this was not in the best of form and although drinkable it would not have been fair to fill in a tasting card for it. With the Lock Inn only having its mystery house ale Gill Chuilmein, and the Bothy stowed out with diners, we headed back towards Inverness via the Benleiva Hotel in Drumnadrochit where we finished the evening on Isle of Skye Red Cuillin. This 4.2% tawny coloured best bitter is again very much styled as an Eighty Shilling. Caramel and malts in the aroma intensified in the taste together with some fruit and a little hop character. Noticeably more sweet than bitter, although the sweetness tailed off slightly in the aftertaste, this was a lovely supping pint and it scored an average of 7.5 - giving us a tie for beer of the evening status between Cairngorm Trade Winds and Isle of Skye Red Cuillin.

August found a total of five tasters plus two casual observers (would have been six plus one had the Singing Landlord from Blackfriars remembered his glasses) closer to home at the Clachnaharry Inn. The first beer tried was Inveralmond Thrappledouser. Gaelic for throat

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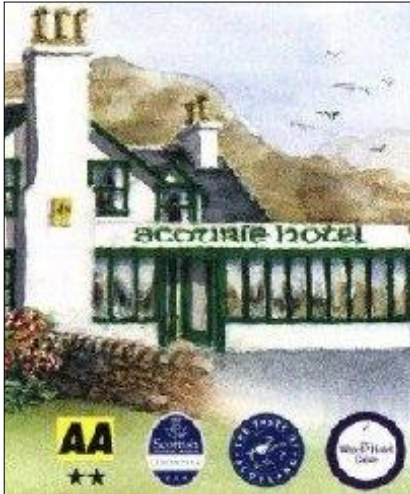
**Cairngorm Brewing Company, Houston Brewery
and the Isle of Skye Brewery.**

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

All ales served in an ale pot unless otherwise requested.

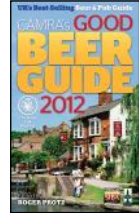
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To connoisseurs of game fishing there is simply nothing to compare to the 25,000 acres of Loch, River and Hill Loch fishing held for the guests of Scourie Hotel. The Hotel has 36 fishing beats held exclusively for guests, plus 3 beats on Loch Stack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

quencher this 4.3% amber coloured ale is strangely classified by CAMRA as a golden ale, but is really more like a best bitter.

Malts and fruit in the aroma are repeated in the taste along with hops and caramel. A smooth easy drinking Scottish style ale, its initial bitter/sweetness moves more to bitterness in the aftertaste. Not quite as crisp in taste as it can be, it averaged a score of 6.5.

Our second beer was the relatively new one from Belhaven, Golden Bay. A 3.8% gold/amber coloured golden? bitter? ale, this only had some fruit and hop on the nose. The taste was disappointing. A really "nothing" sort of beer that you could see being easily passed over for other offerings on the bar if you had drunk it before. Even with the Thrap below its best you could still tell it was a better crafted beer than this Golden Bay. Not well balanced it just had hop and fruit flavours and, despite its bitterness, managed to come across slightly cloying. What taste there was faded quickly and it just about managed an average of 4.5.

This was a score as usual for the beer style, and not for its condition which was fine and

would have merited a 3 - 4 CAMRA score.

If this was bad then the next, Greene King St. Edmunds, was even worse. Having drunk this beer before - should be a tangy fruity golden ale - I could not fill in a card as it was just not right. Not sure what was wrong but it seemed to have outstayed its time on the bar as it was very flat with a phenolic, cloves taste. Slightly sour with a hint of orange fruit it didn't even score an average 2 from tasters that did fill in a card, and tasting samples were returned unfinished. Happily our last beer - Cairngorm Wildcat - made up for it. The 5.1% tawny coloured strong bitter had just gone on and was superb. This taste festival had its usual toffee/caramel nose which dominated the malts and roast. More balanced in taste it had something of everything with hops and fruit along with the malts, roast and caramel. Sweet over bitter in the taste, this changes in the long lasting aftertaste and although slightly thinner in body than usual this served only to make it more dangerously drinkable.

An easy winner for beer of the evening it scored an average of 8.5. GNH

Inns & Things

> Bucking the trend of pub closures, the **Struy Inn** has recently re-opened following extensive refurbishment.

> The annual Octoberfest at **Clachaig Inn** always features beer tasting evenings. This year Davy Orr from the An Teallach Brewery will be hosting a tasting session on Thursday 20th October. Davy's links with the Clachaig include his live music performances in the bar. There is every prospect of a lively, informative and entertaining evening - not to be missed. Cairngorm Brewery will be in the chair for the second beer tasting evening on Thursday 27th October. A chance to sample and learn about their wide range of award-winning brews.

> Following their Winter refurbishment the **Westford Inn** on the Isle of North Uist has been enjoying a busy season and recently installed a third handpump.

> Hi there, on reading the Spring 2011 edition of the 'What's Yours Then?' newsletter, we noticed that the **Old Station Restaurant** at Spean Bridge is missing from your listings for Fort William and Lochaber. We would like to

reassure you that we are still serving Real Ale on draught. We serve Glenfinnan Standard Ale and our own house beer 'Rail Ale' from the Cairngorm Brewery. In fact we are the only establishment in Spean Bridge serving real ale on draught. We also have just extended our bar facilities so that guests can just pop in for a pint and do not need to dine.

Ben and Vanessa Martin.

> I called in at the **Plough Inn** in Rosemarkie recently, the first time for a few months. It is now under new management. The barman (Andrew?) that has been there for the last couple of years has taken over the lease. The two ales that were on were Cairngorm Trade Winds (not tried) and Orkney Red MacGregor (3). He is intending to sell Cromarty Brewery ale when it become available next month.

The dining room has been completely refurbished and the small lounge bar is to be refurbished and opened later in the year. Allan.

> The **Edinbane Inn** on the Isle of Skye is another to have enjoyed a busy summer and a second handpump has been installed. Check their website for out-of-season opening times.

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.

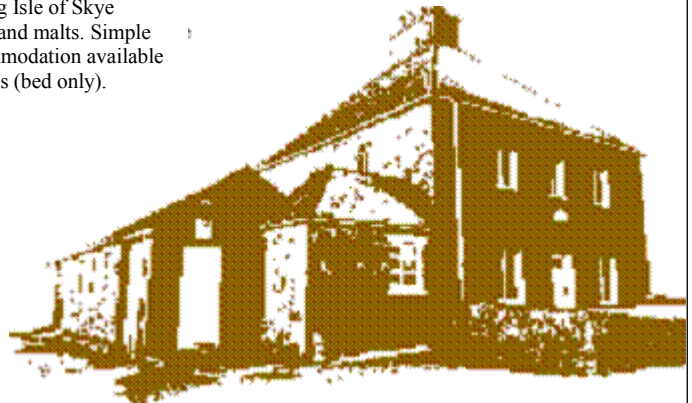
Real ale from the award winning Isle of Skye Brewery. Range of bottled ales and malts. Simple home cooked pub food. Accommodation available in small stone cottage in grounds (bed only).

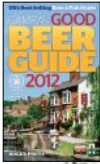
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Good Beer Guide Listed 2008-12





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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.



e-ALE

Hello Gareth, we are just back from a weekend on the far north-west coast. Our destination was Scourie, but we have driven the Ullapool road often enough and so decided to take another route. We headed north-east (!) from Inverness and enjoyed the scenery on the hill road over to Ardgay. A left turn at Bonar Bridge, and then left again into Strath Oykel. We stopped at Oykel Bridge to admire the views of the falls which must be spectacular in flood. Salmon were leaping out of the water beneath the bridge. Deepest huntin-fishin-shootin country this, and the beats on the river were mown as neatly as most lawns! A real shame that the hotel by the bridge does not serve real ale. We continued on to Altnacealgach - please don't ask me to pronounce that - what a treat! On one side of the single track road a lovely little inn, and on the other a loch-side table with views of mountains - Cul Mor I think? Orkney Red Macgregor and Deuchars IPA both scored 4 on your scale. An unexpected gem, and one to go back to - we should have asked

if they allow overnight parking!

On now to Scourie campsite which overlooks the bay and is but two minutes walk from the hotel. Goats Toe, a house beer from the Isle of Skye Brewery, scored 3. Basic pub grub in the back bar, but the Kinlochbervie haddock does not come any fresher. Back at the campsite we were treated to views of minke whales regularly surfacing off the headland. The following day we again went the pretty way, this time the arduous (in a campervan) single track coast road around the Quinag mountain range where formidable buttresses dominate the skyline. Further on there were views over the Minch, of empty sandy beaches at Clashnessie and Stoer, and of Suilven. We visited Lochinver some years ago, hoping to buy fresh fish at a place we were told was a busy fishing port, but not a fish shop in sight! No real ale either, but at least we were able to enjoy one of the best fish & chips meal ever from a van in the car park near the harbour. The Caberfeidh has surfaced since our last visit, a friendly little bar and restaurant in the middle of the village, offering two





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(regularly changing we understand) real ales. Deuchars IPA (3.5) and Caledonian Nectar (not tried) were on tap today. Still no fish shop, most of the fish landed here goes abroad apparently, and as for the van in the car park - it now sells paninis!

We drove back a few miles to Achmelvich, surely one of the best campsites around. No pub, but worth a night on the bottled beer stock to enjoy the stunning views.

The weather was glorious again on Sunday morning, and so we again took the longer distance option and headed back towards Inverness via Inverewe Gardens and Gairloch. Gairloch's Old Inn boasts seven handpumps and has been a 'brewpub' for a little while now. Only three taps in service and I asked for Flowerdale, one of their own brews, but the barmaid did not think it was ready and offered a taster - sadly she was correct. So a choice of Cairngorm Nessie's Monster Mash or Atlas Three Sisters (2.5) to wash down a shell-fish lunch. All in all an enjoyable weekend. Cheers, Camper Van Man.

Rip-off the Tourists

Hi Eric, Have just returned from a long trip down south and popped into the Glen Mhor's Nicos Bar to catch up with some of my old buddies in the Mountaineering Club. I was gobsmacked to be charged £3.90 for a pint of Trade Winds which the barman finished off continental style with a paddle to remove some, but not all, of the excess head.

In my travels I have been to some expensive pubs in southern England but none have come anywhere close to £3.90. The price at Nicos before I went away was £3.30, expensive but 5p less than the Castle Tavern. I don't think that they even display a list of drinks prices unless that is in the restaurant side of the bar. The only reason that I can see for the rise is to take advantage of the tourists to Inverness who probably won't know any better. Where this leaves regular local trade such as the Inverness Mountaineering Club and the Jazz aficionados who have frequented Nicos for years, I really don't know.

Regards, Pete Collin.

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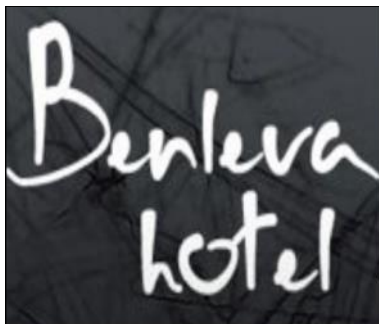


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A Highland Journey (and Pub Crawl)

Back in April Vron and I decided it was time to exercise our campervan and a good time to 'beat the midges' if we wanted to go to the west of Scotland. Accordingly, one sunny Thursday afternoon saw us settled in our first campsite at Balloch, at the southern end of Loch Lomond, which is clearly a Glasgow commuter village if ever there was one.

Welcome to Scottish pub prices! A pint and a half of Fyne Avalanche at the Tullie Inn cost £5.53. (V. gave me a rather reproachful look. Did I *need* to order a pint?). At the Balloch Hotel (GBG) the beer wasn't Scottish, and a half each of Acorn Barnsley Gold and Brain's SA Gold was a slightly more reasonable £3.30 (it's all relative!).

Friday took us up Loch Lomond and as far as Tyndrum. No sign of real ale, though we weren't looking that hard, being more intent on reaching the Highlands. Next day we were 12 miles down Glen Etive at the head of the loch. No more drinking, then, until Oban, where we normally head for the Lorne Bar (GBG), famous for its large traditional central

island counter. Only Caledonian Deuchars IPA at £3.15 a pint. Oban currently has two Good Beer Guide pubs, the other being the Tartan Tavern, a small one-room pub in the town's main street, with Bateman's Hooker at £3.20. Sadly the Oban Inn, another traditional venue, was closed and shuttered.

In Fort William the Ben Bar at the Ben Nevis Inn (GBG) had Deuchars IPA and Orkney Dark Island at £2.80 a pint. The CAMRA award-winning Grog and Gruel had several ales plus an excellent menu, including the improbably named vegetarian haggis, which turned out to be very tasty. Two beers from An Teallach, namely An Teallach (pronounced 'An Challack') and Beinn Dearg ('Ben Jurag'), the pronunciation helpfully displayed on the pump clips.

The former a chestnut-coloured, full-flavoured ale with a rounded flavour of malt, fruit and hops, the latter a golden ale, dry and hoppy. Others were Cairngorm Trade Winds, pale and citrusy with grapefruit on nose and palate, and TSA Glencoe Wild Oat Stout.

From Fort William our route took us up the Great Glen to Inverness. Fort Augustus

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gained the distinction of providing our most expensive pint, at the Lock Inn, alongside the flight of five locks on the Caledonian Canal. The beer was Cill Chuilmein, a house beer, so provenance unknown, at £3.80 a pint. It proved perfectly drinkable, but grateful that we'd only ordered two halves we quickly moved on to the Bothy Bar and Isle of Skye Red Cuillin (a particular favourite of Vron's) at a more reasonable £3.30.

We stayed on a site near Inverness and bussed into the city to explore some of the city's pubs, starting with a late breakfast at Wetherspoon's, washed down with Strathaven Clydesdale. On to the Blackfriars (GBG); a good choice of beers, including ones from Deeside and Inveralmond, but uncomfortably noisy with loud conversation, and so we only stayed long enough to sample An Teallach and Caledonian Chocolate Drop, before crossing the road to the Phoenix, not currently a GBG pub but one that *is* listed in CAMRA's Scottish Regional Inventory of Historic Pub Interiors, with its original island counter. Beers were Cairngorm Black Gold, Orkney Dark Island and Skullsplitter, and Wells Bombardier. The Skull-splitter cost £3.70, the others £3.40.

Our last pub was the Castle Tavern (GBG), with six ales including Deeside Beltane (a golden easy-drinking bitter), Orkney Raven and Dragonhead and, once again, An Teallach. A lot of this about in the Highlands, as we'd find still further on. Then back to the Phoenix for me to down some more Skullsplitter before getting the bus back to the campsite.

The following day we turned south again by way of Fort Augustus, Glen Moriston, Glen Shiel, and Loch Carron to Applecross; via the Bealach na Ba, or 'Pass of the Cattle', very steep and full of hairpin bends, not suitable for large vehicles or the faint-hearted, but with spectacular views behind us and south towards the Isle of Skye.

The GBG listed Applecross Inn delights all those who visit it as it sits overlooking the shore, facing across the Inner Sound to Raasay, and beyond it to Skye. Beer comes from the Isle of Skye Brewery, and we were fortunate to find both Red Cuillin and Black Cuillin on the bar. Perfect for a Sunday afternoon.

The food is good (seafood dominates) and accommodation is also provided.

Monday saw us setting off on the coastal route to Shieldaig and then via Loch Torridon and Loch Maree to Gairloch, and thence by Loch Awe and Gruinard Bay to Ullapool.

Both the Argyll Hotel and the Morefield Motel are Good Beer Guide listed, the former being the most expensive, at £3.70 a pint, and the latter the cheapest, at £3.10. Both of these also had beer from An Teallach, as did the Arch Inn (Brewhouse Special), and the Ferry Boat Inn (Beinn Dearg). The latter also had Caledonian 80/- as an alternative. The biggest surprise came at the Morefield – a Scottish sweet cider, "Thistly Cross" at 4% abv, from Belhaven Fruit Farm. Best described as 'dangerously drinkable'.

Besides four years in the Good Beer Guide, the Morefield also has the distinction of staging the Ullapool Beer Festival in October (see www.ullapoolbeerfestival.co.uk).

Ullapool marked the limit of this year's foray into the Highlands, as we turned south again at Laxford Bridge, crossing over to the A9, and just managing to fit in a visit to the Black Isle Brewery before heading back to Fort William. At the Grog and Gruel the An Teallach ales were still on, but variety was provided by Isle of Skye Hebridean Gold, plus Williams Red and Scottish Joker.

Finally, a plug must be given for the Highlands and Western Isles Branch of CAMRA, whose quarterly magazine "What's Yours Then?" accompanied us from Inverness, a mine of information including an up-to-date list of Highlands and Islands brewers and a list of ALL pubs within (and a few without) the branch area known to stock real ale some or all of the time.

Go to www.highlandcamra.org.uk for further information. Mike Burningham.

Sounds like a great trip! A whistle-stop tour of some great locations and with a good mix of beers. Thanks to Mike for his comprehensive report. Feedback such as this is invaluable for our keeping up-to-date with real ale matters in our very large and far-flung Branch area.

Thanks also for the WYT? Plug. Cheers, Ed.

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Real Ale in the Real Highlands



Crawl Around Inverness

Hi Gareth, here are the findings of the Max and Jacqui jury - unfortunately, can't remember many of the beer names but here goes -

- > Bandstand Bar at the Braeval Hotel, Nairn - very pleasant and six beers
- > Slaters Arms, Cannich (where we stayed): - 1 beer - Cairngorm - very good condition
- > Anderson, Fortrose - completely mad landlord from the USA - but very keen on his beer - four types - unfortunately three were English - heard about the legendary Barley Wine fest in the winter - one customer got the bus from Inverness to go to this pub - 200 Belgian beers - bottled
- > Fiddlers - Drumnadrochit - Two Cairngorm beers - very nice but pricey
- > Clachnaharry Inn - nr Inverness - had one pint of very dubious quality - nice location but not too friendly - could be as we were in the graveyard shift - 4-5 pm
- > Benleva - sorry to not have Loch Ness beers yet - need to spruce up the garden - beer ok
- > Nico's bar at Glen Mhor Hotel - closed at 3.30 pm
- > Castle Tavern - wonderful - met a CAMRA member - Bill - typical real ale drinker - middle aged, large and very friendly - it was difficult not to stay talking to him! He knows you
- > Number 27 - only Greene King - didn't stay > Caledonian - nice pint of Cairngorm
- > Jonny Foxes - ok - very busy > Hootananny - great pint of Black Isle Golden
- > The Exchange - only one beer - didn't go in
- > Kings Highway (Spoons) - good pint and range of Scottish beers

Rate our Beer

Highlands & Western Isles CAMRA would welcome your help in surveying the pubs in our massive Branch area. To help us decide which pubs in the Highlands & Western Isles are worth considering for the Good Beer Guide, we are using CAMRA's 6-point NBSS (National Beer Scoring Scheme) to record Beer Quality.

What do the scores mean?

- 0 - Undrinkable.** No cask ale available or so poor you have to take it back or can't finish it.
- 1 - Poor.** Beer that is anything from barely drinkable to drinkable with considerable resentment.
- 2 - Average.** Competently kept, drinkable pint but doesn't inspire in any way, not worth moving to another pub but you drink the beer without really noticing.
- 3 - Good.** Good beer in good form. You may cancel plans to move to the next pub. You want to stay for another pint and may seek out the beer again.
- 4 - Very Good.** Excellent beer in excellent condition.
- 5 - Excellent.** Probably the best you are ever likely to find. A seasoned drinker will award this score very rarely.



Your regular input will help ensure that pubs consistently serving good quality real ale make it into the next Good Beer Guide. Please send pub reports (good beer, poor beer, no beer) plus any real ale and real cider news to our Branch Contact (Please see page 6).

News of Brews

Isle of Skye: A large demand for Cuillin Beast, their Champion Beer of Scotland 2011.

A mild was brewed for the first time, the 4.0% abv Ruby Ale, in celebration of CAMRA's 40th birthday. Ruby has been well received and we are hoping it becomes a regular 'Mild in May'.

A second new brew, Tarasgeir (Gaelic for Peat Iron), is a 4% beer brewed with peat roasted barley. Plans are that Tarasgeir will be an addition to their permanent range.

An Teallach: Sail Mhor, a new amber beer packed with malt and hops, has replaced Brewhouse Special. Lighterman's Hitch, a new blonde ale brewed especially for the Tall Ships Race, has proved to be a big hit around the Highlands this summer. Hector stout is now a permanent rather than seasonal offering, and another new brew, Shenaval, is due to be

launched in the autumn. We understand that a new 10 barrel brew plant is on order.

Black Isle: Welcome to Chris Mair and Colin Stronge. Colin is the new head brewer and production manager, and Chris, formerly at Brewdog, is the sales and marketing manager.

Great Glen Way Brewery Ltd: A one barrel brew-plant has been set up in Ian Putman's shed. Ian, along with fellow owners Brian & Caroline Wright, and John Davidston, is doing trial brews and they hope eventually to sell their ales along the Great Glen Way route.

We have heard that the new brewery being set up by ex-Atlas brewer Harry Heskey, in the old Atlas brewery building in Kinlochleven, is to be called the **River Leven Brewery**.

The **Old Inn** Hotel & Brewhouse has recently introduced a fourth ale, and named it after the legendary Blind Piper of Gairloch.

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



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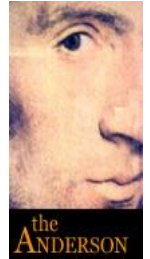
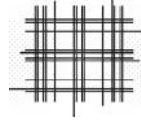
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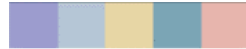
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