

What's Yours Then?

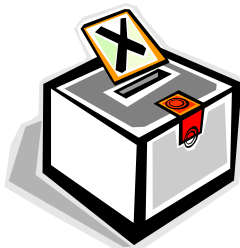
Highlands & Western Isles CAMRA **Free** Newsletter



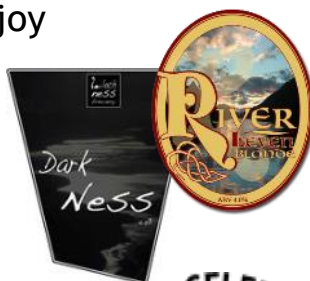
Contains Full List of Highlands & Western Isles Real Ale Outlets

New Highland Breweries come On Stream
and Real Ale Drinkers enjoy
ever More Festivals
in CAMRA's 40th Year

**Remember to *vote* for
your favourite *pubs*
and *beers***



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40
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OF CAMPAIGNING**



**CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE**

Winter 2011

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

- > Updated Branch Diary
- > Tasting Panel Update
- > Socials & Outings - Reports
- > Festivals Update
- > Focus on - Alistair and Elisabeth Jarvis
- > 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 Eric, Gareth, Steve, and Jack who keep us up-to-date with brews and what is happening in local pubs.

Please note that the editor reserves the right to edit contributions sent for publication. All marks and copyright are acknowledged.

Spring edition **deadline** is 1st March, with publication in time for the Easter holiday.

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.

3,500+ 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.

33 and Out! After 33 editions I am standing down from *editing What's Yours Then*. What started in late 2003 as a 16 page publication, one which I struggled to fill, has grown into a 44 page journal which takes up more time than I have to spare. I have much enjoyed bringing together all the news from the local real ale scene - breweries, beers, pubs, and festivals, plus all the positive feedback from visitors who have enjoyed visiting our pubs and sampling Highlands & Islands beers. We are frequently thanked for listing real ale and cider pubs, which visitors much appreciate.

I have regularly been able to bring you news of local brews winning national awards, and as we approach publication date for the Summer edition the Champion-Beer-of-Scotland result is always awaited with some expectation!

The Winter 2005 edition included details of a change of Branch name from Inverness & Highland to **Highlands & Western Isles**, this to better reflect Branch activities having grown from early days, when most real ale activities were focussed around Inverness, Aviemore and Fort William, to a scenario where there are breweries, real ale pubs and festivals throughout our massive geographical area, the largest in the UK. The number of Highlands & Western Isles real ale pubs has grown to 200+ if you include seasonal outlets.

As noted above, I struggled to fill my first edition, but we needed a newsletter and I was up for the challenge! Rarely has there been a problem since - there has been so much to write about and no shortage of contributors.

So a massive thank-you to all who have made publication of this newsletter possible - to all who have contributed articles or reports, or a bit of news about a pub, beer, or brewery.

A massive thank-you also to our advertisers who enable us to publish up to 4,500 copies and to all who help deliver to near and far.

I hope you will give as much support to the new editor - Gordon Streets. *Thanks, Ed.*

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

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Festival News

The Highlands & Western Isles hectic autumn beer festival season is getting busier as the years roll by and, as usual, the **10th Loch Ness Beer Festival** at the Benleiva Hotel in Drumadrochit got things off to a very good start indeed. This popular festival, one of the highlights of the Highland real ale calendar, now attracts visitors from all over the UK and accommodation is booked up well in advance. 47 Scottish beers included both old favourites and brews not seen here before from Tempest Brewery (Kelso), Traditional Scottish Ales (near Stirling), and the new River Leven Ales brewery (Kinlochleven). Festival organiser Steve Crossland has featured beers from one English brewery recently but this year offered fourteen brews from nine different ones!

The eagerly awaited Loch Ness Brewery beers - Hoppy Ness, Light Ness and Wilder Ness - all made a long overdue appearance and brewery tours were available throughout the festival.

The number of ciders on offer at this festival is ever-growing and this year were served from a dedicated cider bar - eight Gwatkin sweet, medium and dry ciders and perries, ranging from 4.5% to 7.5% abv, plus a traditional farmhouse cider and one matured in a rum cask from Ross-on-Wye Ciders.

Nightly entertainment offered pub quiz, pool tournament and live music nights; plus an informal beer and cider tasting session. For those keen to learn more about beers and beer tastes the local CAMRA Branch organised a tasting course - please see page 31.

- > Guess-the-Beer - Fyne Maverick
- > Beer-of-the-Festival - Highland Scapa Special
- > Brewery-of-the-Festival - Do you need to ask?

20p from each pint sold, plus money from a number of raffles, raised a fantastic total of £1,500 for Breast Cancer Care.

Where next? By the end of September/start of October festivals were coming thick and fast! Hot on the heels of Loch Ness came events in Ullapool, Nairn, and Torridon.

October is CAMRA's Cider & Perry month and a choice of the Annual Blues & Cider weekend at the Argyll Hotel in Ullapool or a first Real Cider festival at the Bandstand Bar in Nairn.

> Chairman Eric was in Ullapool: A selection of 38 Ciders and Perrys with a mixture of draught and bottles to suit all tastes. Ross-on-Wye Farmhouse Dry, Westons Traditional Scrumpy and 1st Quality, Thatcher's Heritage, Brothers Festival Strength Pear Cider, Mr Whiteheads Strawberry Cider, Brothers Ginger Cider, and St Hellier Pink Cider were some of the names available. Real ales on tap as usual for the beer drinkers - when I visited there was Jennings Cocker Hoop, Belhaven IPA and An Teallach Sail Mhor, all in excellent condition.

Blues from Beggars Belief (Friday) and Al Hughes (Saturday). After two busy nights our host and hostess Nigel and Franner, obviously gluttons for punishment, opened their adjoining 'Little Coffee Shop' for breakfasts, showing the World Cup rugby games between England and Scotland and Ireland and Italy. EM.

A **West Coast Beer Trip** had been scheduled to tie in with the Torridon Inn beer festival:

> Twelve on the bus, with new driver Gordon, and everybody on time - most unusual! One hour to the Kinlochewe Hotel through a typical



Scottish day - grey and damp but the scenery was showing through spectacularly. Once Andrew and Gail had got over the shock of a

dozen drinkers turning up at opening time, we were able to enjoy a choice of four beers on tap, three from the local An Teallach brewery, and one from Isle of Skye.

Beinn Dearg was the most popular choice - malty but also strongly hoppy - very tasty for a mild 3.8% beer. It tasted much stronger and the bitter aftertaste lasted for ages.

Scores of 3s and 4s were given for it. Suilven gained high praise from some (2), Red Cuillin (2) and An Teallach (3), and all for £3.20 a pint. After just ½ an hour and a good chat with our enthusiastic hosts, it was back in the bus and off to the Old Inn, near Gairloch.

A hugely popular tourist spot where the three beers on tap included their own (brewed on the premises) "Blind Piper" - a strong, Scottish style beer at 4.7% (2),

(Continued on page 8)

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Branch Diary (Meetings start at 7.30 pm)

Tues 10th January Committee Meeting Clachnaharry Inn, Inverness

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



Midnight, Tuesday 31st January Pubs-of-the-Year and Beers-of-the-Year

Deadline for voting for your favourite pubs and favourite beers

3rd February - 3rd March * Februaryfest Clachaig Inn, Glencoe

Tues 14th February Committee Meeting Snowgoose, Inverness

Tues 28th February Tasting Panel Meeting Blackfriars, Inverness

Tues 13th March Committee Meeting Station Hotel, Avoch

Saturday,
24th
March



Social/Outing to Badenoch & Strathspey district,
visiting Cairngorm Brewery and Real Ale Hostleries

April 2012 – Community Pubs Month 'Celebrating the Great British Pub'



Fri 6th - Sun 15th April * 4th Bandstand Beer Festival Bandstand Bar, Nairn

2 pm, Sat 7th April Branch Social Bandstand Beer Festival

Tues 10th April Branch Meeting Kings Highway, Inverness

Tues 24th April Tasting Panel Meeting The Anderson, Fortrose

May is National Mild Month - Celebrate Mild in May

1st - 31st May A Mild on Tap Every Day Benleva Hotel, Drumadrochit

Tues 8th May Committee Meeting Castle Tavern, Inverness

* Not all events listed are necessarily organised by CAMRA.

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

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

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Details

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



Eric Mills - 01456 459343

Gordon Streets

chair@highlandcamra.org.uk

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Cairngorm Trade Winds (1) and An Teallach Ale (2), each costing £3.30.

After some tortuous, small, narrow, Highland road driving, we arrived at the Badachro Inn. Two beers from An Teallach - Suilven (4) and Brewhouse Special\Sail Mhor (4) at £3.50 a pint - were enjoyed whilst admiring stunningly beautiful views across Loch Gairloch Bay to islands and promontories, and to the far sandy shore, reminding us locals why the Highlands and West Coast are such very popular tourist destinations. Lovely snacks were chosen from the menu by some to soak up the beer.

Then it was off to the main event of the trip – the Torridon Inn which was running it's now annual beer festival over three days. A big, modern but well designed and lovely hostelry. Six beers on tap out of the sixteen or so local beers they were serving over their festival: Blind Piper (2), Ben Damph (4), Cairngorm Gold (1.5), Crofters (1.5), Isle of Skye Heilan Coo (3), Plockton Ciste Dhubh (3) for about £3.64 a pint. The beers on were a balanced variety to cater for most beer palates leading to lively discussion and arguments on the tastes and preferences. A pleasant couple of hours were spent here tasting the beers, with several of the party having good helpings of tasty food. Very good service as well from the knowledgeable bar staff with the festival beers matched up with food recommendations.

Just a shortish drive to the Tigh an Eilean at Sheildaig to check out the pub there. There were two Skye beers on but sadly were in very poor form and refunds were given without problem. Red Cuillin and Young Pretender at £3.60 a pint. A shame as this is a cosy little bar located in an attractive waterside setting. After that disappointment we motored on to the Lochcarron Hotel. The knowledgeable barman had three beers on tap - two local brews: Cairngorm Sheepshaggers' Gold (3) and Isle of Skye Young Pretender (3.5), plus Shepherd Neame Spitfire (3.5). By now we were losing track so prices were not recorded! All three brews were enjoyed along with the changing views across the water with the mist and rain playing hide and seek with the hills. After a long but very pleasant day our patient driver delivered us safely back to Inverness. A

brilliant, relaxed day out getting taken from beer to beer - Roll on the next trip! GS.

Meanwhile at the Kings Highway in Inverness Wetherspoon's autumn festival was underway, featuring a massive 50 ales from near and far.

> The festival this year took place between the 5th and 23rd of October and again featured 50 ales in the festival programme. I did my best, again, to sample as many of the beers as possible by going in every day and taking advantage of the three thirds for the price of a pint festival promotion. I failed miserably, only reaching 24 compared to the Spring festival when I managed 30 plus. It was certainly not for the want of trying, it just seemed that the turnover of beers was a bit slower.

Also there was a blip in the availability of the festival ales as during the first six days there had not only been nine festival beers on but also five non festival ones.

Beers from international brewers featured again but this time round they all came from the USA. I managed to sample three out of the five available, with the first one tried being Kalamazoo Black Silk by John Mallet from Bells brewery in Michigan who had brewed it at Marston's Brewery in Burton upon Trent. This was a 4.0% abv speciality porter brewed with malted oats and, to be honest, wasn't very good. Although similar to a porter it was very thin in mouthfeel and flavour, and I could only give it 3 (out of 10) for its style. The other two fared better - Stone San Diego Session IPA was brewed by Mitch Stone at Wadsworth in Wiltshire and was like a hop juice IPA without the strength at 4.5%. Not overly bitter in taste it did have a long bitter finish and I scored it a (7). Odell 90 Shilling was brewed by Doug Odell at the Caley brewery in Edinburgh. As the name suggests it was a 5.3% strong ale and was full of malty caramel but with some considerable hop character due to the Perle and Cascade hops used and I gave it an (8). Now no Wetherspoon festival is complete without the weird and wonderful ales made with "non beer ingredients" and again they were here, but for me, happy days, as I only encountered two of them and looking at the festival brochure these were the only two this time round. The aptly

(Continued on page 12)



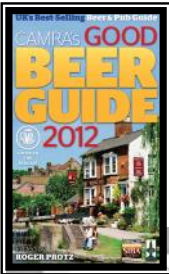
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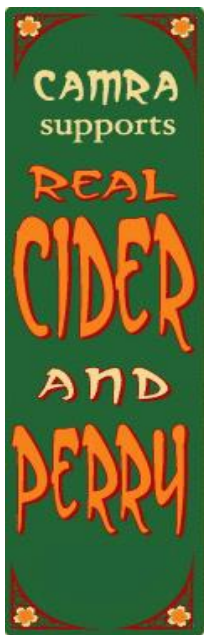


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Traditional Cider Matters

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.

Glen Hotel, Newtonmore - Westons Old Rosie or 1st Quality Cider.

Scourie Hotel - Two Westons Ciders on handpump.

Badachro Inn - Westons 1st Quality 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

Torrison Inn - Westons Ciders are served in the bar.

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

King's Highway, Inverness - Westons Old Rosie & Organic Draught Vintage Cider; Thatchers Heritage & Dry Cider..

Alexander Bain, Wick - Westons Old Rosie & Organic Draught Vintage Cider; Thatchers Heritage & Dry Cider

Benleva Hotel, Drumadrochit - Two handpumps serving ciders and/or perries all year round, plus a large selection of real ciders for their September beer festival.

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 are served from handpump. A first Real Cider and Perry festival was held in October 2011, in addition to a range of ciders at their Spring beer festival.

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.

Wester Ross Trip - Ed, a quick note on the recent outing. Only one cider drinker on the bus, and so very unlikely that your official report will include any feedback. A very good pint of Westons 1st Quality Cider was enjoyed at the **Kinlochewe Hotel**, and landlady Gail Staddon clearly knows the ins and outs of her ciders - favouring the drier 1st Quality ahead of some of the sweeter offerings.

1st Quality also on tap at the **Badachro Inn**, also in good form, but sadly that was it for the day from a cider standpoint. CVM.

Benleva Hotel now has two real ciders on tap permanently. Offerings for my last visit in early November were Westons 1st Quality 5%

and Gwatkin Yarlinton Mill 7%. EM.

Great to see the Gwatkin YM cider, CAMRA's cider of the year in 2009, on our patch. Ed.

Cider Pub-of-the-Year - please remember to vote, the deadline is 31st January.

Ye Olde Cider Bar in Newton Abbot, in Devon, is CAMRA's National Cider Pub of the Year for 2011. Not a pub, but one of the very few remaining cider houses, certainly a very worthy winner. Ye Olde Cider Bar sells a number of real ciders and perries, as well as a range of draught country wines and soft drinks - but absolutely no beer or spirits.

CAMRA have announced that over 1,000 pubs have signed up for cider pub accreditation.


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named Taking the Pith (2) from Traditional Scottish Ales was a 5% beer(?) enhanced(?) by lemon and lime pith. No beer flavours, it was just alcoholic juice. Wychwood Ginger Beard (7) was better. The ginger character of the beer was unmistakable, but it did not overwhelm the entire taste and so the beer flavours still came through.

Of the remaining beers I tried all were OK to good on the flavour/style front, and got marks of 6's through to 9's and, I'll mention a few that stood out for me.

The Governor is an all malt British Ale created by chef Marco Pierre White, and brewed by JW Lees, an independent family brewer, in Middleton, Manchester. An excellent, well balanced quaffing bitter which I scored (8).




Rooster's Last Stand (9) was the last brew to be done by Sean & Alison Franklin who are selling the Rooster's Brewery they opened in October 1993 to retire to Canada. Last Stand is a 4.3% best bitter brewed with Cascade, Citra, Nelson Sauvignon and Styrian hops to produce a

great fruity bitter.

Butcombe Rare Breed (8) was a 4.2% best bitter which balanced a great biscuity malt background with juicy fruit hop flavours.

Adnams American Style IPA (9) had been made with five American hop varieties and had captured the style well. Although at 4.8% not as strong as its US counterparts it was full of hop flavour without being overly bitter.

Morland Old Crafty Hen (8) was in cask form for the first time. Usually just in bottles it is brewed with a blend of the rare 5X ale. This 5X ale is brewed by Greene King only for blending and is matured in huge 100 year old oak vats at Bury St Edmunds. The 5X is also used in their Suffolk Strong Ale and in the Old Crafty Hen imparts a sharpness to the beer which can be tasted through the malty raisin fruitiness which you would associate with the standard Old Speckled Hen.

Once again there was a good range of ciders and perrys which included the award winning Black Dragon from Welsh producer Gwynt y Draig, although I did notice an increase 

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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.

in fruit flavoured ones. The Thatchers Cheddar Valley 6% dry cider literally stood out on the bar as it was almost bright orange and I think it was this colour that made it hang around for a good bit of the festival.

Another good, if not the best, beer festival from Wetherspoon, with all the beers served in the good condition you would expect from the GBG listed Kings Highway. I must also note that a few more old favourites featured rather than the proliferation of "brewed for festival" ales. Roll on Spring! GNH.

JDW are advertising their next festival already, Wednesday 14th March - Sunday 1st April. Ed.

In Glencoe the annual Octoberfest was in full flow at the legendary Clachaig Inn. We noted in our Summer edition that Davie Orr from An Teallach Brewery would be hosting one of the tasting sessions, but due to some logistical problems Davie was unable to make it and so the Clachaig put their trust in 'an untested new act' from Drumnadrochit - Loch Ness brewer George Wetherspoon escorted by Benleva Hotel co-owner Steve Crossland.

> In George's words: And so it began - a rather rain soaked drive to Fort William for a courtesy stop off at the Grog and Gruel to see the wonderful Sarah Louise, and to judge for ourselves her declaration that Cairngorm Black Gold was in spanking form. Our efforts were not in vain and richly rewarded with a solid 4 for the wonderful milk stout and, of course, to be in the presence of such beauty!

Off to the Clachaig then and entering a cosy bar with a goodly ten ales on offer in the form of An Teallach Ale, Crofters Pale Ale, Suilven, Kildonan, Shenaval, and Hector - all from the An Teallach Ale Company - plus Orkney Dark Island (4), Glenfinnan Gold, Atlas Latitude, River Leven Traditional IPA, and - upon our arrival - a new ale from the longly awaited Loch Ness Brewery - DarkNESS made its first appearance outside Laboratoire Benleva.

We settled for a pint of Loch Leven (2) first, ordered some dinner, and set about writing a loose script for the evenings performance.

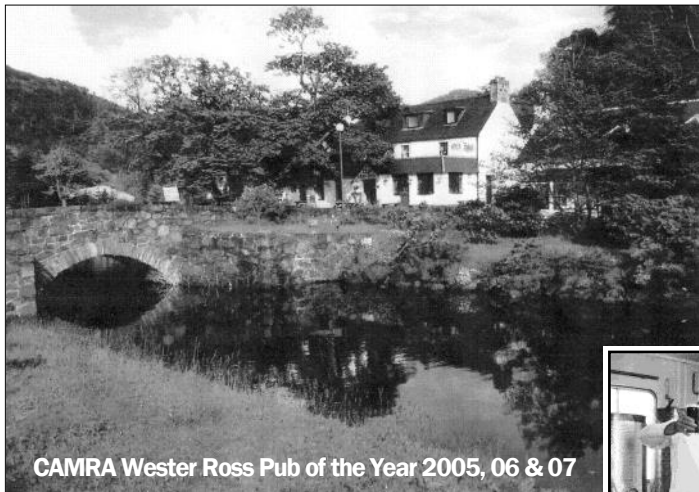
The ales we would be using for the tasting were of course An

*(Continued
on page 25)*

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Where good food and ales come naturally

Focus on Alistair and Elisabeth Jarvis



Alistair and Elisabeth are the owners of the Westford Inn, an eighteenth century listed building on the Island of North Uist in the Outer Hebrides, on the edge of the Atlantic, where the pub sign has to be brought in

each winter to stop it being blown away.

Q. Where are you originally from?

A. Elisabeth is from North Kent and Alastair is from South Wales although Alastair spent a great deal of his boyhood on Berneray in the Outer Hebrides where his family's Blackhouse is located.

Q. What are your backgrounds?

A. On a professional basis we both spent many years in the financial world.

Q. Why take over this remote property?

A. As we were spending a lot of time in the islands restoring the Blackhouse we got to know the Westford, which is a remarkable building probably dating from the early eighteenth century. It was a private house for the better part of 200 years before it had a licence in 1896; the pub part is actually built onto the side of the main house.

The building is listed and appears on the register of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Scotland. When we first knew it we were restoring another listed building and thought that also taking on the Westford would be a good idea. The building needed some love and work but obviously had great potential

Q. When were you introduced to real ale?

A. Alastair was introduced to real ale in Wales as a boy when it was the primary drink of the pubs, Brains being the local brewery, the introduction of keg lager was a long way off and keg beer was only starting to be introduced. Elisabeth coming from Kent knew Shepherd Neame and would visit country pubs with friends on the hunt for different ales.

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

A. Alastair is a straight forward best bitter man gravitating (no pun intended) towards the

darker winter ales as the nights draw in.

Having lived in Bristol for a few years Alastair also has a more than passing interest in cider. Elisabeth has a particular liking for porters and mild's and is particularly pleased with the recent increase in production and availability of those styles

Q. What is the worst part of your work?

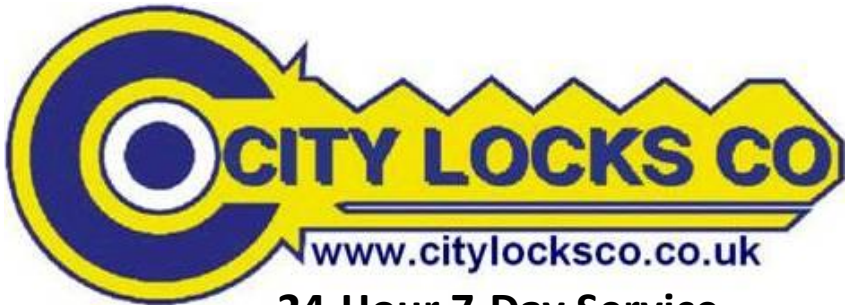
A. The last few years have seen great changes in regulation and bureaucracy and it just does not seem to stop, we spend so much time taking on board new directives and keeping up with paperwork. The most damaging piece of legislation has been the smoking ban which has fundamentally changed the nature of pubs across the whole of the UK and has had a profound impact on the profitability of pubs and the nature of the centuries old tradition they represented. With the best will in the world for the tradition of pubs to be able to continue they need to be able to make a profit and not be legislated and taxed out of existence. Ultimately pubs are businesses, albeit rather special ones and the individual character of each is a rich element of the history of the country.

Q. What is the best part of your work?

A. The people we meet in the islands during the year. The Outer Hebrides attract some extremely interesting characters and as we are a real ale pub there are generally a lot of points of contact.

Q. What hobbies/interests do you have?

A. For the last few years we really don't have much time for hobbies. Do thatching and working on listed buildings count as hobbies? We are, however, both traditional longbow archers and conveniently Alastair is also a fletcher and bow maker, albeit, good bow timber is a bit difficult to find locally. Our Patterdale terrier (the pub's official "meeter and greeter") also takes us out on treks into the islands and the quite stunning landscape that we have. We are also trying to work out the best way that we can also take the dog out on the motor-bike. There is a company in California that we have heard of that makes 'doggles', a type of first world war flying goggles for



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dogs that would be hilarious as well as rather practical.



lager, no Alco pops or ready to drink pre mixed drinks, no deep fat fryer in the kitchen so sorry no chips. Predominantly real ale orientated, three hand pumps in the summer with Isle of Skye Brewery ales, and a range of bottled ales from the highlands and the UK, along with straight forward pub food made on the premises. So if that sounds like your kind of place you should be pleased to find us if you are out here.

Q. Plans for the future of the Inn?

A. Well it would be good to see even more ale drinkers so that we can put a fourth hand pump in and a couple of ciders would be good. Over last winter we started working on renovating the building and we have re-

stored the dimensions of several of the eighteenth century rooms. We will be doing more of the same this winter. Other than that we will continue to try and introduce the delights of ale to those who have previously known only industrial keg and cans.

Q. Favourite song/group?

A. Fairly eclectic tastes, sorry nothing stands out as a sole favourite - choosing a selection of 8 records for desert island disks would be a problem for us. Our tastes range across the spectrum from early music through baroque, blues and Bach (JS), taking in Gilbert and Sullivan, The Wurzels (what a poorer world it would be without The Wurzels, a Bristol reference again), Hendrix and Elbow as well as pretty much all points in between. Not too wild about boy bands or girl groups who simply sing other peoples songs and dance about a bit.

Q. Favourite film?

A. Again, sorry, a wide range of interest, silent films through to foreign language passing through most part in-between.

Q. Favourite book?

A. We have thousands of books; we would not be able to just choose one or even one each. We generally have several on the go at once, currently it's Richard Burtons 'Travels in Mecca and Medina' and John Russo's 'Undead', Dava Sobel's 'Galileo's Daughter' and Melvyn Bragg's 'In our Time'.

Q. Why should anyone visit the Westford Inn?

A. The Westford is a small traditional and dog friendly free house, no juke box, no piped music, no fruit machines, no pool table, no television, no super strength ice cold keg

AGM 2011

Our AGM, held at the Phoenix in November, was well attended by our - albeit small - core of active members. In attendance were the CAMRA Regional Director and Finance Officer. Chairman Eric and Branch Officers were able to report on a successful year for the Branch despite the economic downturn and the ever increasing costs of ingredients, the brewing processes, transport, etc. which are pushing up the cost of your pint at the bar.

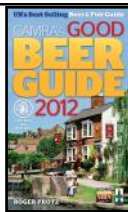
Happily our real ale pubs seem to be holding their own, the number of real ale festivals is growing every year, some local breweries are expanding, and new breweries are opening. Independent breweries are one of Scotland's biggest success stories of the last decade, but there are fears that we may inevitably arrive at a saturation point before too long.

The Branch continues to actively support pubs and brewers - via outings to brewers, pubs, and festivals, and by ringing the changes for Committee, Branch and Tasting meetings.

> Please check our diary for details.



The Torricon Inn



Great Accommodation



Great Food



Great Ale Selection

The Torricon Inn is proud to announce a new CAMRA member discount for 2011, save 10% on accommodation on stays of 2 nights or longer

Enjoy a selection of real ale and a delicious menu at The Torricon Inn

Keep an eye on our website for all the latest ale updates as well as information on our live music and Real Ale Festival 2012.

We hope to see you there!



Website: www.thetorricon.com
Tel: 01445 791242
Email: info@thetorricon.com

The Torricon Inn
Annat, By Achnasheen
IV22 2EY

Stronlossit Inn

at Roy Bridge

Freephone:
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food & drinks
available all day,
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inn-style Hotel of class and

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E-mail: stay@stronlossit.co.uk

Beers-of-the-Year and Pubs-of-the-Year 2012

Time to put your favourite beers and pubs on the map. The Highlands & Western Isles Pub-of-the-Year is selected from winners in each district (see pubs list opposite) by committee and then goes forward to be judged against other regions in national competitions. Similarly the Beers-of-the-Year are part of the early judging process for national champions. Please see our website for full details and for on-line voting forms. If you wish simply e-mail your votes to us.

Champion Beers of Scotland 2011

The winners in each category for 2011 are shown below. Seven Highlands & Islands winners from ten!. **Isle of Skye Brewery's Cuillin Beast** was crowned 'Champion Beer of Scotland' for 2011 at the Scottish Real Ale Festival which took place in Edinburgh in mid-June.

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

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 41), 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
Fiddler's, Drumnadrochit (TP) (S)
Poachers Inn, Lewiston (TP)
Loch Ness Inn, Lewiston
Glenmoriston Arms Hotel, Invermoriston
Steading Bar & Restaurant, Kilmartin (TP)
Glen Affric Bar, Cannich
Slaters Arms, Cannich
Struy Inn, Strathglass, near Cannich
Munlochy Hotel (TP)
Station Hotel, Avoch
The Anderson, Fortrose
Plough Inn, Rosemarkie
Cromarty Arms
Royal Hotel, Cromarty
Conon Bridge Hotel
National Hotel, Dingwall
Richmond Hotel, Strathpeffer
Inchbae Lodge Hotel, Garve
Aultguish Inn
Commercial Inn, Balintore (S)
Castle Hotel, Portmahomack

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

TP - Served using top pressure

"a beer drinker's 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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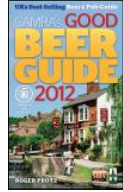
Invergarry Hotel
 The Eagle, Laggan Locks
(An inn on a barge on the Caledonian Canal)
 Loch Oich Restaurant/Bar, South Laggan
 Letterfinlay Lodge Hotel, Loch Lochy
 Roy Bridge Hotel
 Stronlossit Hotel, Roy Bridge
 Old Station Restaurant, Spean Bridge
 Tomdoun Sporting Lodge
 Moorings Hotel, Banavie
 Glenfinnan House Hotel
 Genuig Inn, Lochailort
 Genuig Village Hall
 Lochailort Inn (TP)
 Chlachain Inn, Mallaig
 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)

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.

Inverness & District South

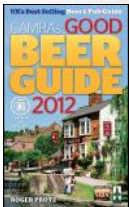
Blackfriars, Inverness
 The Caledonian, Inverness
 Castle Tavern, Inverness
 The Corner Grill, Inverness
 Steak Academy Bar & Restaurant, Inverness
 The Exchange, Inverness
 Nico's Bar, Glen Mhor Hotel, Inverness
 Heathmount Hotel, Inverness
 Hootananny, Inverness
 Johnny Foxes, Inverness (TP)
 Sammi's Bar & Restaurant
 Kings Highway, Inverness (*Wetherspoons*)
 Number 27, Inverness
 Phoenix Bar, Inverness
 Innes Bar, Inverness



Stein Inn

THE OLDEST INN ON SKYE
 1790

Magical places do exist ... just journey down a narrow winding road that leads to the sea and nestled in a charming hamlet is the very place of your dream: the Stein Inn.



An eighteenth-century inn on the sea shore that will have you yearning to visit again and again to experience the warm Scottish welcome, fine food, superb accommodation and traditional highland bar offering real ales and over 99 malt whiskies.

The finest and freshest seafood and local produce is readily available and is transformed at the Stein Inn into mouth-watering, home-cooked dishes.

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

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)

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, Kinraig
 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
 Seaford 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 (TP)
 Glendale House, South Erradale (S)
 Millcroft Hotel, Gairloch

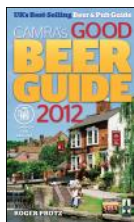
the Old Bridge Inn - Aviemore



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



Myrtle Bank Hotel, Gairloch (S)
 Steading Cafe & Restaurant, Gairloch (S)
 Old Inn, Gairloch
 Lochcarron Hotel, Lochcarron
 Rockvilla Hotel, Lochcarron (S)
 Strathcarron Hotel
 Tigh-an-Eilean Hotel, Shieldaig
 Arch Inn, Ullapool
 Argyll Hotel, Ullapool
 Ceilidh Place, Ullapool
 Ferry Boat Inn, Ullapool
 Morefield Hotel, 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



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



The Castle Tavern

Taigh-òsda à chaisteil

Open all day, food served all day, a great range of Real Ales
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Sconser Lodge Hotel
Sligachan Hotel (S) *Closed October - March*
Old Inn, Carbost
Taigh Ailean Hotel, Portnalong
Kinloch Castle, Rum

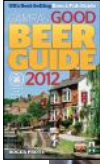
North Skye & Hebrides

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
Tongadale Hotel, Portree (S)
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 (*Wetherspoons*)
Central Hotel, Thurso
Commercial Hotel, Thurso
Seaview Hotel, John O'Groats



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We are in the Good Beer Guide 2011/12*

- Local Ale
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- Meals served 12-9 Daily
- Stables Restaurant available for functions/events

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Festival News *(Continued from page 14)*

Teallach, but we exercised our voting majority and sneaked DarkNESS in there also.

On my realising that I was to do a little bit more talking than I had originally bargained for I then sought out some Dutch courage in the form of Scottish Beer. Firstly the Shenaval (4) and then the DarkNESS (4). We were a little uncertain about it to start with and we would rather it did not feature, however were strongly over-ruled by the powers that be behind the bar, and to be fair they were right - after all, what do we know about beer?

I think that possibly the nerves were settling in a touch. Steve chose a Latitude (3) as I had yet another DarkNESS, but purely for scientific purposes you understand. And so the talk began - Fourteen in attendance - all having parted with a hard earned £10 note in exchange for a marvellous Clachaig Official Beer Tasting Glass and a night they would never forget (unless they had money to pay for therapy after the evenings drinking).



A brief introduction to the history behind the An Teallach Ale Company and

the formation of the Loch Ness Beer Company led us to our first beer of the night - Suilven - chosen as we had a good number of first time ale drinkers with us who had previously been exploited to drink possibly the best fizzy rubbish in the world. Suilven scored (3). Next were Crofters (3), An Teallach (4), and Hector (4) as we examined the brewing process - introducing the main ingredients of malts and hops for sampling, and reviewing the methods brewers employ to market their products.

Around two hours later and after plenty of questions from the audience we finished with DarkNESS. It received a very warm welcome and one member of the audience had been on it from the start of the talk and had stuck with it all night - a strong (4). Even our beer loathing champagne swigging audience member declared it as a beer she would happily drink thanks to its rich roast coffee notes.





Highlands & Islands Brewers in 2011

Isle of Skye Brewery - Based at Uig, by the Western Isles ferry terminal, brewing since December 1995. Ales include Red & Black Cuillin, Young Pretender, Hebridean Gold, and Blaven. Seasonal, House, and special event ales brewed.



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

Black Isle Brewery - Started brewing in December 1998 in converted buildings. Organic ales include Red Kite, Yellowhammer, and Porter.

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 and Aviemore breweries, which they own. Ales include Trade Winds, Wildcat, Stag, Highland IPA, and Black Gold. A range of 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).



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

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. Beers currently brewed in Oban.



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 - 2 barrel micro-brewery in a converted bothy behind the Benleiva Hotel in Drumnadrochit. First brews - Hoppy Ness, Light Ness, Dark Ness - were on tap for their annual Loch Ness Beer Festival (2011).

River Leven Ales - Set up in Autumn 2011 in the old smelter buildings in Kinlochleven.

Cromarty Brewery - Under construction. Expected to be brewing by Christmas 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 Leven,



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



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

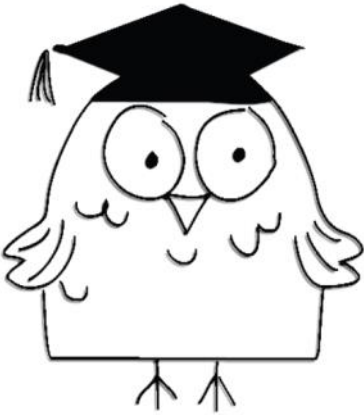
So a great night all round. The morning alas was somewhat foggy, and that was just inside our heads, but a new act has been formed. So watch out The Chuckle Brothers - the fuggle brothers are coming to a town near you! GW.

> Another trip - **Ullapool & North-West** - had been planned to take in the Ullapool Beer Festival and despite heavy showers being forecast the sun shone for much of the day. A quick stop at the Arch Inn in Ullapool, for a good pint of An Teallach Crofters Pale Ale, before moving on to our furthest north pub for this trip, the Scourie Hotel. Mostly closed up for the winter but the public bar is kept open for locals. A very good Cairngorm Trade Winds on tap in this fishing themed bar. Rain came as we went back down the road to Ullapool, with a slight diversion from Ledmore Junction to the Altnacealgach Inn where we settled down by the warming stove to a very good Caledonian Deuchars before heading back to Ullapool for a stroll around the pubs. At the Seaforth, which overlooks the harbour, there were two very good An Teallach Ales; The Hector and An Teallach Ale. The very popular open plan café/bar at The Ceilidh Place had

An Teallach Kildonan. Tasty but a bit warm as there is no cellar and the casks are kept under the bar. The Ferry Boat Inn had a very good Caledonian 80, a good Caledonian Deuchars, and a poor An Teallach Hector. We enjoyed four very good beers on tap at the busy Argyll Hotel - Inveralmond Ossian, An Teallach Shenaval, Belhaven IPA and Fullers London Trade - before the minibus picked us up and took us the short distance to the Morefield Motel at the north end of town for a visit to their annual weekend Beer Festival. Eight ales on tap and all in very good condition, with more waiting in the cellar, including Light Ness from the new Loch Ness Brewery. An Teallach Shenaval, Atlas Latitude, Black Isle Organic Porter, Cairngorm Sheepshaggers and Nessies Monster Mash, Harviestoun Bitter and Twisted, Highland Scapa Special and Orkney Corncrake were all tasted. Most settled down to eat here as owner Tony had a Festival menu running all afternoon. The restaurant was open as usual and there was live music in the evenings. Dates for next year are 18th - 20th October.

All too soon it was time to return to Inverness. This really is a very scenic





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day out with views of spectacular mountains, lochs and coast, and with no shortage of real ales. A thank you to Fraser's minibus driver Gordon, and to An Teallach owner Davie Orr who co-ordinated the pubs to give us a very good selection of his brews.

> News of a new event, a first Hebridean Real Ale & Cider Festival, arrived via an e-mail from Hebridean Brewery owner Andy Ribbens.

Andy has wanted to put on a real ale festival for a number of years and he advertised the new festival as the **Wild West Beer Fest**, a celebration of Scotland's Highland and Island award-winning breweries.

A social event, scheduled to coincide with the Royal National Mòd (Scotland's premier Gaelic festival), with folk and fiddle music during the evenings, and a series of Gaelic drama sketches on festival afternoons.

Up to 54 real ales were planned, mostly from island breweries - but all from Scotland - and including Andy's own An Gael Ur (The New Gael), a limited edition 5% honey coloured golden ale brewed especially for the Mòd.

The festival took place at Tong Community Hall, some four miles outside Stornoway, but a free shuttle bus was laid on throughout each day from Stornoway to Tong and back.

That leaves just one more festival for 2011 - George MacLean, at the Castle Tavern, will be running a Christmas Real Ale Festival, from 16th to 24th December, featuring Christmas beers and ciders. *We have seen the beer list and there are some treats in store. Ed.*

Looking forward to 2012, festival dates are appearing, and note that the **Scottish Real Ale Festival** will be at another new venue, the Edinburgh Corn Exchange near Slateford, and later than usual - 28th/29th/30th June.

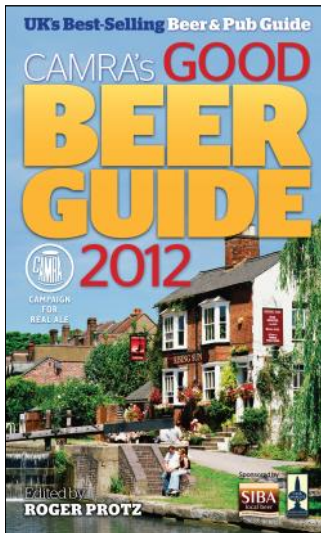
There will be at least two new festivals next year, a **Loch Ness Spring Beer Festival**, at the Benleva hotel, which will feature beers from new breweries from near and far which have been established over the last couple of years, and **Fèis Bheag na Leanna** (The Wee Beer Festival), which will be held on Friday 8th and Saturday 9th June on the Isle of Skye.

Please see our on-line diary for festival dates.

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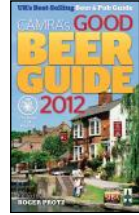
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To connoisseurs of game fishing there is simply nothing to compare to the 25,000 acres of Loch, River and Hill Loch fishing held for the guests of Scourie Hotel. The Hotel has 36 fishing beats held exclusively for guests, plus 3 beats on Loch Stack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

News of Brews



River Leven Ales - launched in the autumn with three 4% brews - IPA, Blonde, and Dark.

The brewery is housed in the former Aluminium Smelter building, at the head of Loch Leven in the Highland village of Kinlochleven, the brewery is close to the West Highland Way. Buildings and land were transferred from Alcan to the local Community Trust to use for regeneration projects following the factory closure.

Isle of Skye Brewery - Look out for their winter seasonal ales - 4.7% Old Pretender, 4.6% Nollaig (Christmas) Ale, and the 2011 Champion Beer of Scotland, 7% Cuillin Beast, will also be on the loose again!

There was a very rare sighting of the 4.9% **Colonsay Porter** in cask form, at the Benleiva Hotel in October, and very good it was too. Almost all of Colonsay's beers go into bottles.

Loch Ness Brewery - Benleiva Hotel owners Steve and Allan Crossland have got together with George Wotherspoon to set up the Loch

Ness Brewery in a small bothy in the hotel grounds. No previous brewing experience in the team, and so a steep learning curve.



Numerous setbacks delayed the brewery opening and locals were beginning to think there was more chance of seeing the Monster than a Loch Ness beer.

A number of brews have been on tap in the hotel - Hoppy Ness, Light Ness, Wilder Ness, Dark Ness and Mild Ness. These are early brews which will inevitably alter slightly over the coming months as they tweak the recipes to arrive at desired taste and abv. Watch out for Festive Ness at Christmas.

Two new brews from **Plockton Brewery** - a very hoppy Fiddlers Fancy, and Ciste Dubh, a darker, less hoppy brew.

Black Isle Brewery has secured a contract to supply real ale to a pub chain in London. New head brewer Colin Stronge has produced a stout for Christmas, at around 7.5%, which will go into Bruichladdich malt whisky casks. The first crop of organically grown barley from the brewery's own farm has been harvested.

At **An Teallach Brewery** the newly installed 10 barrel brew plant is nearly operational and will make life easier with less brew days. The new Shenaval is a 4.5% abv dark, hoppy ale.

The Bavarian brewing kit arrived at the new **Cromarty Brewery** in October and was bolted together in November. Progress can be followed on the brewery's Facebook page and it looks as though trial brews, at least, are in the pipeline. One Facebook picture shows a mountain of casks stacked in readiness.

Tasting Panel Update

As well as much informal tasting and sampling during our Branch outing to the Loch Ness Beer Festival in September we also held a formal CAMRA tasting session where Eric Mills (Chair of Highlands & Western Isle Tasting Panel), with assistance from Ian Brocklebank (Chair of Scotland Tasting Panel), conducted a full tasting course, demonstrating the flavours and aromas, good and bad, to be found in a variety of beer styles. A number of different hops and malts were available for showing the tasting novices how they influence the taste and aroma of a beer. Beers sampled were

Loch Ness 'Light Ness', Inveralmond 'Lia Fail', Tempest 'Into the night', Highland '770 Wheat Beer', and a full blind tasting (yes, blindfolds on) of Fyne 'West Highland Black IPA'.

Hopefully, the twelve participants in the course now have a better idea of what they smell and taste in a real ale.

Afterwards we went through to the Benleva Hotel bar where they could use their newly acquired tasting knowledge on the other beers available, as we joined other members and non-members for the Branch Social. EM.

A very good crowd gathered for our October meeting at **The Anderson** in Fortrose. As well as the three beers that Jim always has on tap on the bar here, there are always a few more in waiting which he will dish up straight from the cellar. First up was Harviestoun Bitter & Twisted but, despite the beer not even having completed its third day on the bar, sadly it was already on the turn. As usual this 3.8% abv golden ale was dominated by hop and fruit in both the aroma and taste, although there was also some caramel in the taste. Bitterness dominated over sweetness and this was accompanied with some astringency.

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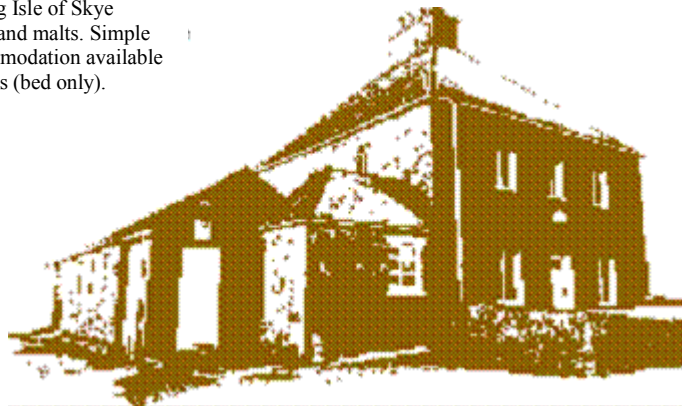
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Despite the beer not being at its best scores (for the beer style) from the eight tasting panel members varied from 4's to 7's to give an average of 6 (out of 10). It was also the end of it on the bar as Jim took it off.

Second beer of the evening was a new one to all of us, Yates Green Hop Bitter, a 4.3% abv yellow coloured golden ale (as per CAMRA style classification). Made with new crop hops, the name threw us a bit, as despite hops and fruit in the aroma, the predominant flavours in the beer were malt and caramel rather than the hops. Also confusing was the fact the sweetness outweighed the bitterness due to the predominance of the malt over the hops.

Do green, freshly harvested hops contribute less in the bittering of beer? Maybe a question for the tasting panel to investigate further.

The aftertaste faded quite quickly with malt again being the easiest flavour still to pick up. Not too much enthusiasm for this beer amongst the tasters it scored an average of 6.

Last beer on the pumps was Coniston Special Oatmeal Stout. This 4.5% stout had good malt and roast aroma which was then pretty full in the taste. Accompanied by some caramel and fruit it was more sweet than bitter but then reversed in the aftertaste as you were left with a good lingering malt/roast bitterness. Maybe a bit harsh for some in the aftertaste, nevertheless it scored an average of 7.5.

Having tried all the beers on tap, Jim popped down to the cellar. The less said about the offering from Broughton, the better. Flat, no condition and bland, it was destined to go straight back to the brewery.

Much better was the Kelburn Brewery's Pivo Estivo. This 3.9% golden ale had a good hoppy, fruity aroma. These flavours were very evident in the taste producing a zingy fruity beer with loads of grapefruit and lemon. The fruit sharpness gave it a good bitter bite with a hint of astringency and with its sub 4% abv made it a good quaffing pint. With quite a large group and close scoring it would be a shame to go down to decimal points for Beer of the Evening status so a tie between Pivo Estivo and the Coniston Stout seemed a fair result, considering the different styles.

Just as we thought we were done, a treat

from Jim. He had got hold of a beer from Rogue Ales in the USA called Dead Guy Ale. A very tasty 6.5% strong ale. This was not a keg beer, and had not been pasteurised, but just cold filtered. The secret of a non fizz ale from the States is the "KeyKeg" in which the beer is kept in a poly bag in the keg and then CO₂ is forced into the keg where it then pushes the bag to dispense the beer.

Most of us finished the evening with a pint of our favourite beer before heading home. Many thanks to Jim at The Anderson for another splendid tasting evening. GNH.

KeyKeg looks to be an interesting concept, more information here - www.keykeg.com

Inns & Things

> Some great publicity recently for Judith Fish and the **Applecross Inn** - an article in the Observer magazine by Tim Hughes, head chef at Le Caprice in Piccadilly, who had gone 'to Applecross because I had heard great things about the food it was serving in such a wild place'. Tim highlighted the fresh shellfish on offer - langoustine, scallops, lobster, razor clam - noting that some local fishermen fish just for the inn. Sadly nothing about the beers on offer, just that 'You can go in and have a pint and some simple food and, to me, that makes it the perfect place to be.'

> A major refurbishment was planned for **Clachaig Inn's** Boots Bar during November. It was obviously important not to lose the very special character of this famous bar, and the owners promised they would not compromise on the scope and the quality of the work.



> We understand that the **Bothy Bar** in Fort Augustus has been sold by British Waterways and S&N to an unknown private investor.

British Waterways (BW) got together with S&N Pub Enterprises in 2005 to form the Waterside Pub Partnership (WPP). At its height WPP was in charge of 44 canal and riverside venues but despite massive investment the partnership folded earlier this year. BW have purchased ten of the top performing outlets but up to twenty pubs are being sold off.





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Orkney Brewery's **Dark Island Reserve** has been named the world's best strong dark, dark ale in a major international competition.

Already judged Europe's best, the 10% abv speciality ale beat off stiff competition to take the global "strong dark, dark ale" title in the World Beer Awards 2011.

Judging in the competition is blind, with regional style heats held in Europe, the USA and Asia under the careful eye of a regional chair-

man. They choose the style winner in each region, which is tasted against the other regional winners to select the World's Best Style.

News of the highly prestigious award was greeted with jubilation at the Orkney Brewery in Quooyloo, and with company boss Norman Sinclair hailing it as the most important accolade ever won by his experienced team.

"This is an outstanding and hugely important result for us and we're immensely proud to

have produced an ale that has gained this level of global recognition," said Mr Sinclair.

"We put a lot of care into the creation of all our beers, but we've always known that Dark Island Reserve is something truly unique.

"This award reflects the brewery team's commitment to crafting a superb ale that has come to epitomise everything we stand for in terms of quality, taste and innovation. It also further strengthens Orkney's reputation as a key player in the international high quality food and drink market. Suffice to say, this is a fantastic milestone for the Orkney Brewery."

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Full results at www.worldbeerawards.com

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Scotland Trip

Hi Mike, Sorry about the delay in getting my thoughts to you, but her indoors tidied my notes away and promptly forgot where. I finally found them tucked into the Camping & Caravanning Big Sites book. Obvious place really - strange thing a woman's mind.

Anyway, here are my thoughts on the pubs visited. I've written them in the order visited and used the CAMRA beer scoring system: Balloch House @ Balloch - Harviestoun Bitter & Twisted (3). An OK pint in an OK pub. Nothing special about either beer or pub. Also pub doesn't allow dogs in or out. Disappointing.

Village Inn @ Arrochar - Fyne Ales Highlander (4). Very good even at £3.90 a pint. Also Fyne Ales Avalanche, plus two from Caledonian. Lovely old hotel with excellent beer garden overlooking Loch Long. This turned out to be the most expensive pint of the holidays, but still well worth visiting.

Inverbeg Inn @ Inverbeg - Orkney Raven (4.5). Excellent pint from one of my favourite Breweries. Also Orkney Northern Lights plus Atlas Wayfarer and Belhaven IPA. Smart well

appointed hotel, but still fairly welcoming.

Clachaig Inn @ Glencoe - An Teallach Suilven (4) very good bitter. An Teallach Hector (4), a very good sweetish 4% stout, Houston Mighty Midge (4) very good 3.6% light bitter, the only time the midges really attacked me was sat outside drinking this beer. Houston Tartan Terror (4) another very good 3.8% bitter, Cairngorm Trade Winds (4.5) simply excellent. The two pint carry out of Isle of Skye Cuillin Beast at 7% was also excellent (4.5), Isle Of Skye Tarasger (4) a slight whisky taste, very good indeed, TSA Bannockburn (2) a 4.2% beer that drank more like 3.2, very thin.

I can only assume that this was just a naff brew as all the other beers we tasted in the Clachaig were on very good form. Cairngorm Stag (4.5) excellent, I remember this when Tomintoul brewed it (Wildcat was to die for) and it's still superb. The Clachaig is still in my top three, if not my Number One.

Plockton Hotel @ Plockton - A Hebridean beer, I forgot the name (2). A naff beer plus as we had the dog and it's an eaterie, we had to go in the back room. Here we found a group



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of noisy young people in the middle of a drinking game, friendly enough, but they would have put a lot of people off. Disappointing.

Plockton Inn @ Plockton - Plockton Brewery Hitched (3.5). A good pint of locally brewed beer in a dog friendly pub, even though there were people eating. A few of the group from the previous pub came in, but were quiet, and clearly knew that noisy behaviour was not tolerated in the "Inn".

A much friendlier, far more inviting pub.

Sligachan Hotel @ Skye - All Cuillin Beers here, not surprising really. Skye Ale (3.5) good 4.5% ale, Black Face (4) a very interesting liquoricy and creamy beer, very good indeed. I think we'll be staying at the campsite across the road next year.

Applecross Inn - Isle Of Skye Blaven (4) a very good 5% stong bitter, our first visit, but not our last in spite of the drive over that pass!

Strathcarron Hotel - Orkney Dark Island (4.5) Another of my favourite beers, superbly kept, and the first time we'd seen a bloke in a skirt.

Old Inn @ Gairloch - An Teallach Crofters Pale Ale (4) very good pale ale, almost as good as Trade Winds and that's a serious compliment. Orkney Dark Island (4) Very good, but not quite as good as in the Strathcarron Hotel. Sadly they didn't have any of their own brew on - maybe next year then. A superb pub allowing very wet dogs in (as they said, "it rains a lot up here, everything gets wet!"), even though people were eating in the bar.

Badachro Inn - Caledonian Nectar Summer Ale (3) and Deuchars IPA (4). I'm not a great fan of Caledonian these days, I think they're a shadow of their former selves, but the Deuchars was very good - the best I've tasted for a long, long time.

Millcroft Hotel @ Gairloch - Millcroft Ale brewed by An Teallach (3) nothing special and neither is the bar.

Cromarty Arms @ Cromarty - Trade Winds (4) a touch on the cold side but, once warmed up, as good as always. Looks like a recent refurb and is a nice friendly pub. We had a look in the Royal while in Cromarty, but they just had Old Speckled Hen on and I'm sorry, we walked out. We haven't come all the way up here to

sample what used to be a good beer, but is now a really naff beer ruined by Greene King. Plough @ Rosemarkie - Orkney Raven, (3.5) fairly good, plus Trade Winds. Under new management since July and certainly a vast improvement on last year.

The Anderson @ Fortrose - An Teallach Crofters Pale Ale (4) very good beer, but we were in on Sunday and Tuesday nights and the other two beers on were English, from Adnams and Summer Wine. These are both good breweries, but hell we're in Scotland and we want Scottish beers. Good job we liked the Crofters. I've no problem seeing English beers in Scotland, we're the same down here, when we see a good Scottish beer, the word soon gets round and we all flock to the pub.

Certainly The Anderson still has the easy going laid back ambience it always had and it is still in my top five.

Village Inn @ Milnathort - Deuchars IPA (3.5) fairly good, plus two English ales. Cracking little village pub, extremely friendly.

My idea of a GBG pub.

Balgedie Toll Tavern @ Wester Balgedie - Inveralmond Ossian (4.5). Another favourite beer from a superb brewery kept in excellent condition. Wonderful. Also another wet dog friendly pub even though there is an emphasis on food.

Lomond Country Hotel @ Kinneswood - Sadly closed down, although in that location, you would hope not for long.

We really enjoyed our time up there and we are already looking forward to going back next year, no doubt a few new places, but equally so, several of the same places again.

I hope you enjoyed your time in the Ribble Valley as much as we did Scotland, and would appreciate your thoughts on any of the pubs you and your group visited. Cheers, John.

Sounds like a wide-ranging and enjoyable tour of the Highlands. A comprehensive report and great feedback on some pubs in our Branch.

John is East Lancs CAMRA Chairman, and he provided some very useful local information which helped me plan what turned out to be an enjoyable weekend in the Ribble Valley. Ed.

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Real Ale in the Real Highlands



e-ALE: Real Ale in Dingwall?

Thanks for your pointers Gareth.

Unfortunately I had no luck in Dingwall! I had a couple of hours

to kill so had a good walk round town and popped my head into every pub I found. Only the National had any handpumps, three in total, but two didn't have clips on, and the one that did was turned round!

Inverness - Castle Tavern and Blackfriars were both excellent. Never made it to Elgin.

Thanks again for your help. Ian.

Oz and Hugh Drink to Christmas

Hello Ed, I thought you might be interested in an Oz Clarke TV programme I spotted, quite by chance, with a bit of local interest? I had ten minutes to spare on Friday night, before something I wanted to watch, and so was idly channel hopping when I came across 'Oz and Hugh Drink to Christmas'. First shown in 2009 apparently. A lot of less than interesting and irreverent alcohol related nonsense until they pitched upon our patch at the Cairngorm Brewery, at which point I sat up in my chair! The TV celebrities announced themselves to our award-winning champion brewer, Sean

Tomlinson, with a statement somewhere along the lines of "Hello, we've come to get some of that beer you make just for Christmas - Santa's Sledgehammer?"

Sean welcomed the duo, confirming that he was brewing that day, before the scene quickly moved to Oz and Hugh clearing used grain from the mash tun, as Sean looked on somewhat bemusedly. The pair then fuffed about the brewery, with no great purpose, until they appeared in the hospitality suite where Sean poured a pint of Sledgehammer.

Oz asked Hugh how it tasted - Hugh replied "A strong bronze coloured ale, with a traditional hop bitterness and a warming after taste." Oz had spotted that Hugh was reading from the tasting notes! Oz - one of the world's leading wine experts - thought "Dark, rich, that kind of full mid-winter warming me up flavour". Hopefully find in Inverness soon! Cheers, TV.

*Santa's Sledgehammer is, I think, one of the beers originally brewed at Tomintoul Brewery, certainly it was initially stronger at 6.3% than the current 5.6 % abv. I think I remember David Irvine serving an even stronger brew. Perhaps **you** have a better memory? Ed.*

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).

Visiting Pubs in your Region

Dear CAMRA Branch, I read your newsletter while on holiday in Northern Scotland recently and thought it might be helpful if I sent you a quick note on the pubs we visited.

We first hit your region in Fort Augustus. We had a reasonably decent meal in the Bothy there, but were disappointed with the beer: they offered Caledonian Deuchars IPA and Isle of Skye Skye Light, and we tried the latter. Apart from being too cold (Cask Marque accreditation strikes again!) it seemed to be kept well but was very bland - perhaps it was just past its best. We moved on to the Lock Inn, which had a single hand pump advertising Cull Chuimein (I understand this is the Gaelic name of the village) Best Bitter (3.6%) which the landlady said was brewed 'out the back' of the pub - if so, a brewery not on your lists as far as I can see. It had quite a full body for its stated strength, and an agreeably bitter flavour, but given the zero transport costs we were unimpressed by the price of a pint - £3.70 - and even less so by £2 for a half.

En route north the following day we stopped for lunch at the Inchbae Lodge Hotel, but they said the real ale (An Teallach Ale and Crofters Pale) had run out the night before so I had a bottle of the Ale which was very tasty for a non-bottle conditioned beer.

We stayed for a week in Scourie and sampled the beer at the Scourie Hotel on a number of occasions. There were consistently two real ales available, all at £3.30/£1.70. On the plus side, the one that changed rapidly was always in good nick - successively Black Isle Yellowhammer, Cairngorm Trade Winds and then two seasonal Cairngorm ales, Brochan (a 4% ABV malty heavy) and Caillie (at 3.8% more like a northern English bitter with a higher hop rate). The other hand pump, however, offered Isle of Skye Lord of the Ales (4.5%) all week and apparently from the same barrel. We tried it once when it may already have been kept on a bit long, although it was drinkable enough, but it was still advertised three days later. When we arrived, there was one Thistly Cross cider on the third pump (4.2%) and

another (7.2%) appeared in a polypin later in the week, but not being cider drinkers we can't comment on the quality.

Sadly, we didn't have a chance to try any other beers in the Scourie area - not that there are very many - as our aim was largely to walk some of the nearby paths. We can say that neither the bar in the middle of Durness nor the Rhiconich Hotel has real ale though. We set off across the north coast and stopped for coffee at the Ben Loyal Hotel in Tongue, which had a hand pump with an Orkney Red MacGregor clip, but as it wasn't beer drinking time we didn't find out any more.

In Thurso, we visited the Central Hotel on a Saturday evening, a noisy experience. They had two real ales available, both at a reasonable £3.10/£1.55. The first was Caledonian Nectar, a honey beer with a vague sweetness but no other discernible characteristic, and a rather stale taste, and so we moved on to Highland Orkney IPA, which was in very good condition with a strong hoppy bite.

We then went across to Orkney, which is outside your region, and the only other bar we tried before heading south on the way back was the Anderson at Fortrose when we stayed overnight in the village. We tried two of the three beers on offer - Houston Killellan, which I thought was in good nick but my partner felt was bland - perhaps because she had the last half from the cask - it had finished by the time we might have had another. So we moved on to Rossendale Floral Dance from Lancashire, which was a pleasant English bitter at 3.5% but not one I'd rush back for. The prices were notably lower than elsewhere. They also had Fyne Ales West Highland Black IPA which at 5.3% was too strong for our taste - and I do think that someone should point out to the brewer that a black Pale Ale is a contradiction in terms. Addlestones Cloudy cider also on offer, and perhaps other ciders as well among the myriad of foreign keg and bottled beers. I hope this helps you with some of the local campaigning, in which we wish you all the

best of fortune. Best regards, Ian Simm.
(CAMRA Member since 1974!)

Reference: Cull Chuimein at the Lock Inn - This is certainly not brewed 'out the back'. A rebadged beer, possibly from Greene King. Ed.

Beer Tasting at Clachnaharry Inn

Twenty people gathered on the afternoon of 20th November, at the Clachnaharry Inn, for a beer tasting event. Ken Duncan, the head brewer from Inveralmond Brewery, gave a very informative talk about the brewery and about brewing in general. He then went around the tables to answer any questions.

The Inveralmond Brewery was opened in 1997 in an industrial area on the outskirts of Perth. They have recently moved into a brand new 30 barrel brewery, just around the corner.

Beers available were: 4.1% Ossian, a golden hoppy ale with a fruity hoppy flavour and a hint of oranges; 4.0% Thrappledouser, an amber brew with a citrus and spicy floral taste; 4.7% Lia Fail, a dark full bodied malty taste with a slight hoppy aroma; and 5% Pun-die, a golden copper brew with malts, hops and spice. Bar manager and cellarman Mark Kilby kept the Inveralmond beers flowing while Ken chatted to customers.

A most enjoyable session. EM.

More Inns & Things

> Ed, I was waiting for a bus the other night and noticed that the City Bar (Queensgate, Inverness) has had a make-over and is now called **Sammi's Bar & Restaurant**. I had a quick look through the window and spotted a fancy Deuchars handpump plus a common-or-garden hand pull without clip. Did not have time to see if either was in service. ICT.

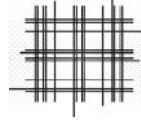
> Sadly we must report that Benleva Hotel's well loved dog, **Archie**, passed away recently. Although poorly for his last few months, he was obviously determined to wait until the first Loch Ness beers were being served. Archie was taken in from the SSPCA 11 years ago and was loved by locals and visitors.

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

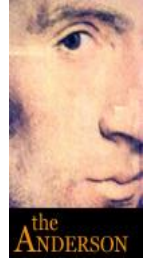




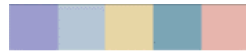
The and restaurant
GLEN Hotel



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