

What's *yours* then?



CAMRA Highlands & Western Isles | FREE Magazine | Winter 2015/2016



More awards for Loch Ness Brewery

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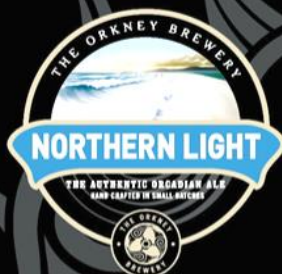
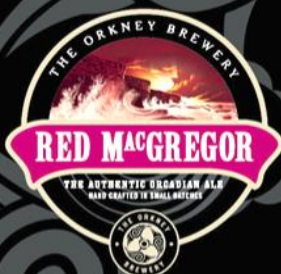
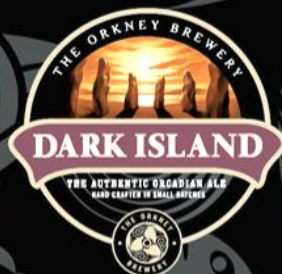
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Welcome... to the Winter issue of our branch magazine. In this edition:

not only, but also:

- > CAMRA H & I beers awards
- > Various notices to branch members
- > Brewery and pubs news
- > Badenoch beer trip report
- > Updated Real Ale pubs list
- > Focus on .. Martin Bullard
- > Scotland rail trip article from visiting CAMRA member
- > Updated branch diary (see branch website)
- > A TALE of 2 beerfests
- > Branch BOTY

If you would like to place an advert, please contact one of the branch officers (see Diary page).

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An average of 3500+ 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.

It's Winter so less visitors, this issue is 3000 copies.

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, keeping 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.

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Easter edition **deadline** might be Monday 14th March 2016 for publication in early April.

As you will have been reading previously and can read about in this edition, the branch is going through changes. The AGM in January is looking like being very vital. The branch will be changing as several committee post holders are "retiring". Indeed, the branch could close if not enough members volunteer to fill positions.

So, this could be the **last edition** of this magazine, which I know would be missed by CAMRA members here and from other branches.

If the branch continues without too big a change, the magazine will only be produced for three editions in 2016 as it is becoming more laborious to produce.

As you will see, this edition is packed as several people have taken the trouble to write articles on various beery subjects. The highlight of the branch events will be the Xmas walkabout which sees more and more branch members and visitors enjoying. See you then!
Cheers,
Ed.



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Notice to branch members:

The following was sent out to branch members with their copy of the Autumn edition. We have had little response so far and, if we do not get more volunteers, the branch may close at the AGM on January 12th in The Phoenix.

"We have appealed for help, but with so many stepping down from the committee at the next AGM (and some sooner), and with only a few volunteer rural members who distribute the newsletter (thanks guys!) we are going to have to "cut our cloth" to accommodate what we can do in the future versus what we have done in the past.

To recap, Gareth, our Secretary, and Allan the Treasurer will be standing down, as will several other committee members, Eric our Chairman for the past few years has also indicated that he may go, but the rest of the remaining committee are hoping he will reconsider (please), but if he does step down, that will reduce us to a critical level, jeopardising the continuance of the Branch!

We are distributing this as both as an (e)mail shot to the 175 (of about 250) branch members who have signed up to receiving branch emails from CAMRA, and also an enclosure with the Autumn edition of WYT? to those who have not.

So, sorry if you are getting this twice!

If you are one of the 50 who have not already "signed up" for emails with CAMRA, please do (in your CAMRA members account profile on the CAMRA website - Ed.) so that we can contact you about trips and other CAMRA items which may interest you.

Unfortunately, it has been decided that starting from the next, Winter, edition, we will no longer be mailing out copies of WYT to the membership who live within the H&WI boundary area.

Other than the batches of 10's and 20 we

send out to the real ale places in H&WI, currently we send out more than 200 individual copies to members, and in short, there is no one who is able to do that function anymore.

Stop Press! A Nethybridge branch member has volunteered to post out individual copies to branch members . Hopefully, this will work thanks to him.—Ed.

Instead, it is intended that your copy will be available at a nearby pub for you to collect.

I hope you appreciate that the decision to use this route of distribution has not been taken lightly, but with no one stepping in to help it is a case of "needs must".

Alternatively, you can always get your copy of "Wyt?" via the H&WI website here:

[http://www.hIGHLAND.camra.org.uk/viewnode.php?id=26645 "](http://www.hIGHLAND.camra.org.uk/viewnode.php?id=26645)

A special **Thank You** goes out to the branch members who helped with the new method to distribute the Autumn 2015 issue.

Notice to Advertisers:

Please be aware that after this issue, IF the branch continues after the AGM in January, the branch magazine will be reducing to 3 issues for the year rather than 4.

This is principally because with so much going on in our branch area it is becoming more labour intensive to put the magazine together. Personally, I am also generally busier and finding enough spare time to spend producing the magazine to a high standard is getting more difficult.

Advert costs will continue at the same rates although pubs who are planning beer festivals will have to be aware that it would make sense to forward plan slightly further ahead to make sure their advert includes references to beer festivals which will be seen by their principle customers. Cheers, Ed.

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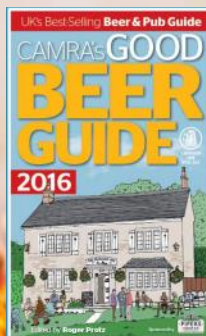


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Pubs News

As you could have read in our Autumn edition, the

Westford Inn reopened on the 9th of October—we have already received a very positive pub report from a touring CAMRA member (see email article).

We received information that the **West End Hotel** in Fort William has Cairngorm **Nessie's** on as has the **Loch Ness Lodge** which is now closed until Easter.

The **Tomich Hotel**, away up the glen past Cannich has a sign out advertising Real Ale. We have it on good authority that it is in fact keg beer.

Hootananny's, here in town, have changed one of their Real Ales from the sweet Black Isle Heather Honey ale to the more popular Black Isle Yellowhammer. The **Suie Hotel** at Kincaig is no more. It is now the Suie or Suidhe Lodge, a 6 bed, self catering lodge. The well liked, Suie Bar is separate and trading well as before but cooked food is no longer available. Non real ale, but "**Nellie Deans**" on



Young Street, beside Tesco, is closed and has a "To Let" sign on it. This modern pub has gone through a couple of identity changes in recent years but clearly has suffered from the general decline in pub going.

On Queensgate, opposite the Post Office, the small bar has been revamped, renewed and rebranded in to "**Scotch & Wry**" featuring craft beers and whisky. It looks tastefully stylish but probably won't feature Real Ale other than in bottles.

The **Tipsy Laird** in Kingussie is up for sale — this seems to be a place that is challenging to make a success.



Ben Macdhui's Inn in Aviemore has new owners and is now called **Macdhui's**.



The **Loch Ness Inn** in Lewiston has a new bar manager:- Karolina Skawinska .



The **Bandstand Beer Festival** will be going ahead in early April and looks like being even bigger. (see advert on page 5) Now that Gordon and Morag own the **Havelock**, just along the road from the **Bandstand**, there will be lots more space. The big marquee will be in the Havelock's car park leaving the beer garden at the Braeval for the barbeque, etc. Work to rejuvenate the Havelock is continuing apace with lots done but plenty still to do.

There are possibly other beer festivals taking place in branch pubs but those are the ones we know about. If owners or licensees tell us about them, we are happy to mention them — for free! The problem is that some festivals are organised in just a few weeks rather than months.

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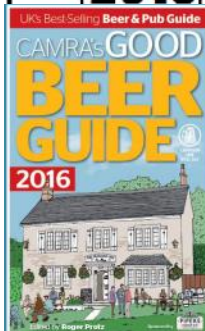
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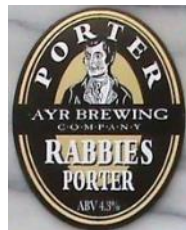
JUST A FEW OF THE MANY BREWERIES



More CAMRA awards for H&WI breweries

At the Ayrshire Real Ale Festival held in Troon Concert Hall in early October, 2 of CAMRA's Champion Beer of Scotland (CBOS) heats were held.

In the Porters category the results were:



1st Ayr **Rabbie's Porter**



2nd
Sulwath
**Black Gal-
loway**



3rd Cromarty **Ghost Town**



5th Fyne Ales **Vital Spark**

Ayr Brewing Company can now market **Rabbie's Porter** with "Champion Porter of Scotland 2015".

In the Speciality Beers category the results were:

1st Loch Ness **SaaziNESS**



2nd =
Harviestoun
**Schie-
hallion**



2nd = Kelburn **Cart
Blanche**



4th Cromarty **Red
Rocker**



6th Arran **Blonde.**



5th Cairn-
gorm
Tradewinds

Loch Ness can now market **SaaziNESS** with "Champion Speciality Beer of Scotland 2015".

At the Alloa Octoberfest in Alloa Town Hall on Saturday 31st October the final heat, for Bitters was held with the following result;

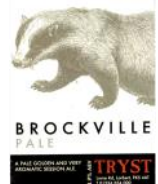
1st Loch Ness **WilderNESS**



2nd Born in
the Borders
Game Bird



3rd Orkney **Raven**



5th Tryst **Brockville Pale**



4th Loch Lo-
mond **Bonnie
'N' Bitter**

Loch Ness can now market **WilderNESS** with "Champion Bitter of Scotland 2015".

Well done to all the breweries. The 3 winners will go forward towards the Champion Beer of Scotland and Champion Beer Of Britain competition for 2016 which will be judged and announced at GBBF next August.

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The award winning Loch Ness Brewery are hoping their new beer will be a monster hit after teaming up with the internationally acclaimed rock band Smokie. **SmokieNESS** (living next door to Nessie), is a 5% malty red brew, with honey to give a sweetness and ginger to give a slight background spicy/smoky taste. Smokie, who have had massive hits with, 'If you think you know how to love me', 'Don't play your rock 'n' roll to me' and 'Living next door to Alice', are currently on their 40th anniversary world tour. In between dates, their keyboard player, Martin Bullard, has been at the brewery; first to taste some beers to get the right flavours and then spent a day brewing the beer with the brewers and one of the owners Allan Crossland. Martin said "I feel much more connected to

SmokieNESS as a result of having taken part in the whole brewing process". Finally he was at the Benleva Hotel in Drumnadrochit to taste the outcome. Martin, who lives near the brewery said "It is delicious and every bit as tasty as I hoped. The sweetness of the honey seems to have mellowed the spiciness of the ginger to create a very smooth malty beer. Owner Steve Crossland said "We are absolutely delighted to be collaborating with Smokie who are well known in more than 25 countries. Hopefully we can extend our export market to include many of these".



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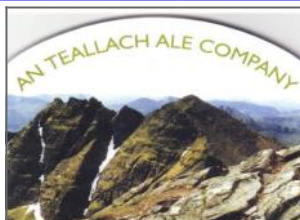
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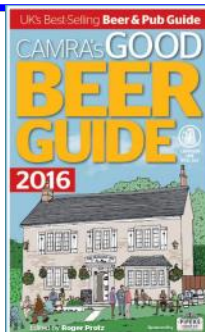
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E-mails

Good afternoon,

I recently had a holiday in Scotland and after picking up "What's Yours Then" I read you may appreciate reports from remote pubs, so here goes:

14th Oct: **Kings House**: Caingorm Trade Winds and Stag, both good (3).

Clachaig Inn: 7 ales including three red ales were on, quite a good seasonal choice I thought, Skye Red (2.5), Lochness Red (2-tired) and Williams Bros Red (2.5). Lochness Hoppyness (2.5), An Teallech Ale (2.5) and to finish off after meal Cairngorm Wildcat (3). Low scores due to temperature – too warm, maybe due to lack of turnaround – it was quiet and most people were drinking lager, including my wife, who found the beers too warm, as did the barmaid!!

15th/16th Oct: **Stein Inn**, Waternish: Harviestoun Schiehallion (3), Highlander Jack Flag (4 – crisp and lively), Caledonian Deuchars IPA (2- tired and thin, this beer does not appear to be as refreshing as it used to be)

17th Oct: **Bakur Bar**, Uig: Skye Red (3) and Gold (3.5) both good, served in jugs.

20th Oct: **Westford Inn**: Skye Blaven (4.5 – Excellent, star beer of the holiday, very fresh). Also on was Skye Red, however did not try due to the quality of the Blaven! Will reduce to one ale in winter. Great pub, was fortunate it had opened, thanks for the tip in the mag. Very friendly welcome with log burner. I left a copy of "Whats yours then?" with Colin.

21st Oct: **Lochmaddy Hotel**: Deuchars IPA (2.5 – thin and malty, I'm sure Deuchars has changed...).

24th Oct: **Lochboisdale Hotel** – No ale.

Oyster Inn, Connel: No ale (Deuchars was off).

Finished the holiday with a drought.....

Cheers,

Nathan Cross

Camra member 111069

Calderdale, West Yorks

Thanks for the info Nathan. Great to get a very positive report for the re-opened Westford Inn. And yes, Deuchars is a shadow of it's old, CBOB winning self. — Ed.

Good Morning.

I'd just like to say that I think Wyt? Is a very good read. My wife and I have visited your branch area twice in the last two weeks (see below—Ed.) and I downloaded the magazine before setting off in order that we were reasonable up to date with what is going on. Wyt? was widely available so someone is

making an effort.

I have read in a number of issues the problems that you are having recruiting active membership. I have other interests as well as beer, breweries and pubs and it is the same with most interests, for any number of reasons many people don't want to, or are unable to, contribute to the running of things.

In the CAMRA area where I live, Stockport & South Manchester, it is often difficult to get to help as jobs are snatched up as soon as they are advertised. When they required two additional people to review pubs for Regional Pub of the Year recently, I had only popped out to the local shops and in that time the positions had been advertised and snapped up! However, with a plethora of micro-breweries setting up in the railway arches close to Manchester Piccadilly station, I have now become the BLO for one of them. It's too early yet to say whether I enjoy doing this or not. If I do then maybe I'll volunteer for one of those positions in your branch area!

I have of course submitted beer scores for all the pubs that we visited and I also sent in a couple of updates.

I hope you manage to keep minibus trips and the magazine going.

Good Luck.

Regards, Dave Sheldon.

Thank you for those kind words and the offer of help Dave. And thanks for putting in scores and the updates— Ed.

The following is the abridged report from Dave Sheldon and his wife's extended tour around Scotland by train in late September / early October. He is one of the many "sub-cultures" within CAMRA - a "beer ticker" (trainspotting for beers).

"Using a combination of the Transpennine Club 55 and the Scotrail Club 50 offers, Carol and I headed north for a few days. We set off from Cheadle Hulme just after 9.30am and arrived in Inverness just after 5pm.

Phoenix Ale House, (6 ales on and a wide range of them)

Blackfriars,

Situated across the road from the Phoenix it was impossible not to see the poster advertising a Cromarty tap-takeover which had finished the previous day. Worth a look in then. (7 Cromarty ales on)

Heathmount Hotel, (2 ales on)

Corriegarth, (3 ales on)

Castle Tavern, (7 ales on)

Number 27, (the usual 3 Windswept ales on)

The Autumn edition of What's Yours Then?, the excellent CAMRA magazine for the Highlands &

(Continued on page 14)



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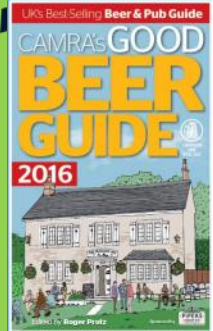
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(Continued from page 12)

Western Isles, mentions a couple of new breweries for their area.

At **John O'Groats Brewery** things appear to have been progressing slowly as their first trial brew was 15 months ago.

The second will be **Liquid Mountain Brewery** which is to be set up in Beaulay. Whilst they are going through the lengthy process of setting everything up they have recently produced a collaboration brew at **Spey Valley**.

Today's plan was to visit the **Benleiva Hotel** in Drumnadrochit for their Loch Ness Beer Festival. Not surprisingly buses are few and far between across the remote Scottish Highlands. We bought Stagecoach Zone 2 tickets for £6.10 each and caught the number 17 bus from Inverness for the 30 minute journey but decided to stay on it to the end, in Tomich, in order to enjoy the scenery. The bus set off from Inverness over 15 minutes late (*that would be Highland time then*. - Ed.) and so the driver did his best Jackie Stewart impression (or should that be Andy Stewart after a session at Hogmanay) as we sped and slewed our way along the country roads. (*I think that might be normal driving?* - Ed.) At Tomich the bus turns around and heads straight back to Inverness. Tomich is a place that you'd get off at to go hiking. We stayed aboard and, after around 90 minutes on the bus, alighted at the Drumnadrochit Post Office where we walked back to the **Loch Ness Lodge Hotel** in the hope of a Cairngorm Nessies Monster Mash. Unfortunately the opening time of the bar has changed from 11am to 5.30pm. So it was a 20 minute walk to...

Loch Ness Inn, (2 Loch Ness ales on)

And then a 15 minute walk..

Benleiva Hotel, (8 various ales on)

Marquee: (*for the beer festival, another 4 ales on*) There were only a couple of people present when we arrived with just another half a dozen arriving during the couple of hours we were there. The beer list ran to around 60 beers for this 9 day festival. They were advertising 15 on at any one time but it was only 12 during our visit. The marquee was closed off but Steve of the Loch Ness Brewery said that he would bring us any of the 4 on in there if we wanted them.

The beer list did feature quite a number of interesting beers but these were being held back for the busier weekend sessions. Half of the beers listed were from Scottish breweries but just a disappointing 5, and only 1 on the bar, were available when we visited. Disappointing.

On arrival back in Inverness we decided to make further use of our bus runabout tickets and head a couple of miles out of town. It wasn't worth the effort. **The Snowgoose** is difficult to get to, it is on the edge of an industrial estate / out of town shopping area and can only be reached from one side of

a dual-carriageway. It caters for a near-by Holiday Inn Express and people arriving by road. The pub itself is decent enough but my Bitter & Twisted was very average.

Snowgoose, (2 out of 3 golden ales on as usual)
INVERNESS

Johnny Foxes, (1 Black Isle ale on as usual)
Gellions, (1 ale on)

Gellions is not only the oldest pub in Inverness but it is hard-core nationalistic.

King's Highway, (9 ales on)

They did a huge tour of Edinburgh bars and also Glasgow bars but for our patch they returned to Fort William.....

We caught the 12.21 train from Glasgow Queen Street which arrives in Fort William at 16.11. Most of this journey is through stunning scenery, this is not a train where people spend their time staring at a laptop or on their mobiles. As the train clickety-clacks along, people stand and move from side to side to marvel at the lochs and mountains.

Upon arrival at our b&b, I enquired whether or not they thought that there would be time for us to walk to the **Ben Nevis Inn**. Fortunately another guest overheard our conversation and said that she and her husband would be driving up there in ten minutes time if we could be ready by then. Of course we could!

Ben Nevis Inn, (2 Cairngorm ales on their 3 hand-pulls)

This is a pub that could charge pretty much anything that they want for food and drink, but doesn't. It nestles in the foothills of Ben Nevis, has no nearby competition and is positioned on the path along which most hikers use when setting off for, or returning back from, BN. So full marks to them, prices are reasonable and quality is high.

With the sun disappearing behind one of the lesser hills Carol and I set off downhill for the thirty on so minute walk back to Fort William where the plan was to visit all five, maybe six, cask ale outlets.

Cobbs at Nevisport, (2 ales on their 3 handpumps)

Grog & Gruel, (5 ales on from Highland breweries)

Ben Nevis Bar, (3 ales on from their pubcompany list)

West End Hotel, (1 Cairngorm ale on)

I wasn't sure if there would be a cask ale in this large hotel at the end of town, but there was. We were told that Nessie's is their regular beer.

Great Glen, (7 ales on)

Crofters, (2 ales on)

Cheers,

Dave Sheldon.

Thanks Dave for the compliment and information—much appreciated. — Ed.

Sorry about the small font — limited space available. You can always use a magnifying glass. - Ed.

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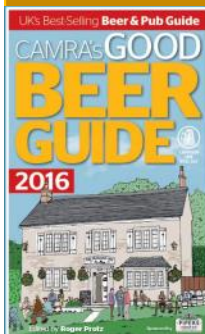
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Enduring Myths and Living With Mis-understandings

by G A Purcell—Furness Branch President

A glaring example of one of the most enduring myths that is rife amongst beer drinkers not only in the British Isles but throughout the English-speaking world, and one which even persists amongst some licensees, who you would presume, should know better, is the one about lager.

People often ask me why I spend so much time in continental Europe, and will frequently add, "Surely it's all gassy keg lager over there?"

"Yes," I tell them, "Most of the beers have been lagered, sometimes for just a few weeks, but sometimes a top-of-the-range quality brew can be allowed to stand in the lagering tanks for as many as 70 days in some cases. It is usually at that point that a very prevalent mis-understanding, the one I call the

'Lager Myth' kicks in, and I have to explain that the word 'Lager' (storage in German) refers to a process and not a style.

An alcoholic drink that is very pale in colour can often be referred to as 'Looking like a lager', and you will sometimes encounter this reaction when a beer that is not designated as 'Lager' is placed on the bar. So widespread is this assumption that I have all but given up on trying to explain, and most often I simply let the mis-understanding persist, as persist it will, whatever I or others might say. I do, however, wish that the brewing industry would at least try in some way to make the drinking public aware of just what defines a 'Lager', but they seem to be indifferent to the mis-understanding and simply ignore it.

As I understand it, more or less any colour and type of beer can be allowed to go through the lagering process, following primary fermentation, by running it off into a lagering tank, where it will undergo further fermentation as it stands in the tank at some plus two degrees Celsius for the designated lagering time. The end result

will be, by definition, a lager, irrespective of its colour or taste profile.

As for kegging, well that is standard practice in most countries around the globe, and is certainly so throughout continental Europe, where it has been in use for very many years. Believe me, they are not about to return to cask-conditioning on any meaningful scale, and in fact would consider such a move a giant step backwards.

In recent times, however, and with the upsurge of interest in the micro-breweries, there has come the welcome return of unfiltered and unpasteurised beers, and this has greatly enhanced the flavours awaiting those prepared to venture out of their comfort zone and try them. I have also noticed that carbonation levels have dropped for this type of beer, and the best of them now have just enough of it to give the beers their sought after and preferred zest. Also, their serving temperature is normally between 10 and 11c. Happily, those willing to experiment with these beers are now increasing rapidly in number, and this is particularly so with

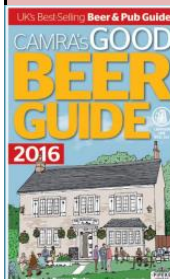


the Old Bridge Inn ~ Aviemore

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the younger end of the market the future.

Myth number two I call the **'Mild Myth'**.

This one is exemplified by the kind of reaction you get when a punter looks at a pump clip with the word 'Mild' in the description and says something like, "How can that be a 'Mild' when it's 4.4%?" or looks at a pale beer described as 'Mild' and wonders why it isn't dark in colour. The word 'Mild' refers to the hop rate, which was, and should still be relatively low. Milds of long ago, (even before my time!) could be 7% a.b.v. or even more, and ales such as 'Sarah Hughes 'Dark Ruby Mild' at 6% a.b.v. are still available to this day, and a living reminder of just what a real mild would have been like back then. Yet still the 'Mild Myth' persists. Interestingly, when the word 'Mild' is taken out of the description at the point of dispense the sales of the brew can and often do increase, especially amongst the young, for whom the term 'Mild' has a very old mannish image. Personally, I would like to see moderately hopped beers, dark or light in colour, stand or fall on their own merit at the bar counter, unencumbered by the term 'Mild'. Despite CAMRA's best efforts to promote the style over the years it still has a considerable image problem to overcome, and I for one would not be unhappy if the term were to be discontinued. This will not endear me to the stalwarts of the campaign I know, but it is a conclusion I have arrived at following many years, during which, despite regular leg ups from CAMRA, the image of the much mis-understood style still persists. This does not look so good in the light of modern day scrutiny, especially amongst those in whom we older campaigners entrust the future of traditional British cask conditioned beers.

Myth number three runs as follows:

'CAMRA was formed as a protest against keg beer'

Incorrect.

The campaign came into existence as a protest (a better word would be rebellion) against tasteless, insipid brews masquerading as beer, which were being foisted on the British beer drinker by the big brewers of the day as an alternative to the, quite frankly, often appalling, unstable and frequently poorly kept cask beers

of the time. Kegging quality beer was, and still is, a far more satisfactory way of ensuring long-term stability and shelf life. The problem was that they weren't quality products that were being offered up as an alternative to the cask beers being produced at the time. What was on offer was insipid, tasteless, over carbonated and chilled, the latter treatment being particularly unacceptable to the Mild and Bitter drinkers of the time, used to ales served at around 12-13 degrees Celsius, and stouts at up to 15 degrees.

With that wonderful 20/20 vision we call hindsight it could reasonably be argued that had they been quality beers that were being offered to us as an alternative to cask, then the stirrings of revolt that gave rise to CAMRA might never have been anything like sufficient to gain the support of the drinking public at large. Evolution, of course, doesn't work like that, and it has taken over forty years for the incredible diversity of the cask conditioned beers we enjoy today to develop.

However, the much-vilified keg beer, languishing as it has done during that time on the naughty step and generally quite deservedly so, demonised by the rising army of traditional cask ale enthusiasts, is now getting its act together and fighting back. On the world stage, the set-to-grow-rapidly era of 'Craft Beer' is and will continue to be brought to a public thirsty for innovative and challenging new brews, and almost all of it will be delivered via the medium of the keg.

CAMRA has had a vital role to play in setting the scene which we now see emerging, and still has one in the task of upholding the traditional beers that we treasure, onward into whatever the future holds. I truly hope that this will continue to be so, long after veteran campaigners like me have given over the stage to upcoming players.

The process of kegging per se did not give rise to CAMRA. The often appalling state of cask beer at the time did that, and the medium of the keg was the one that was used to deploy and perpetuate the highly unsatisfactory alternative.

(Continued on page 19)

(Continued from page 18)

That, I firmly believe, is what gave the impetus to the movement which subsequently became known as CAMRA.

Upon reading the above, I just had to include it to get it out to as wide a readership as possible. 1 reason is that it chimes so well with my beer sentiments and a second reason is that he uses Sarah Hughes Ruby Mild as an example — one of my top 3 beers!

With thanks to Dave Thompson, Editor of Furness Branch's "InnQuirer" magazine for his permission to reproduce the article from their Summer 2015 edition. — Ed.

CAMRA HIGHLANDS & WESTERN ISLES PUB OF THE YEAR TIME TO VOTE!!

Please vote for your favourite pub in each of seven areas across our Highlands & Western Isles branch. If you haven't got a favourite in all regions then just vote for the ones you have visited.

The pubs are listed in regions in the centre pages of "What's Yours Then?".

What's Yours Then can also be viewed at www.hIGHLANDCAMRA.org.uk

**REGIONS: INVERNESS;
BADENOCH & STRATHSPEY;
EASTER ROSS & LOCH NESS;
FORT WILLIAM;
WESTER ROSS & GAIRLOCH;
CAITHNESS & SUTHERLAND;
SKYE & WESTERN ISLES.**

voting is open to all Highlands & Western Isles Branch members, so please include your membership number and votes must be received by 31st January 2016.

Your votes will be used to select the regional winners.

One of the regional winners will be voted by the committee in conjunction with CAMRA member beer scores from WhatPub to become the H&WI Pub of the Year 2016

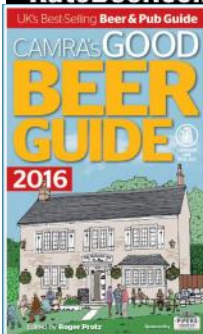
Please take the time to vote. These awards are valued by the hardworking publicans and hotel owners across our area who bring us great pints of real ale.

Please e-mail your votes to:
chair@highlandcamra.org.uk

BEYOND REAL ALE

000 GUINNESS TAPS
001 BEER GEEK OWNER
004 HANDPUMPS
035 MIKKELLERS
110 BELGIANS
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H&WI Breweries News

As part of CAMRA's support for real ale and real ale breweries, volunteers from among the branch membership can be Brewery Liaison Officers. BLOs keep in contact with "their" brewery, encouraging and if appropriate, advising. BLOs are asked to make a progress report to CAMRA every 3 months, via the CAMRA website.

In Highlands & Western Isles branch, we now have 13 or 14 breweries. As you will have noticed over the past couple of editions, more new breweries are starting up in our branch area so for page space and our ability to gather news, we are having to concentrate on just our branch area.

Other CAMRA branch magazines publish news from their breweries written by the breweries themselves. This is free publicity to the very customer base that you want to appeal to.

Some of our breweries don't even have a CAMRA member on their staff but we would be happy to take any news you care to pass on to us—see the contact info on the diary page.

Cromarty Brewing Co:

After the usual, brief, Autumnal lull the pace is picking up again in preparation for the Christmas season.

Following it's success last Autumn, and customer demand, **Black Hop Down** is making a return in bottle in December. The bottling line is fully assembled and has been successfully test run with both 500ml and 330ml bottle beer runs.

More breweries are trying 330ml bottles now.

Black Isle Brewing Company:

Now using the original 5bbl plant for small batch brews such as Saisons, sours, whisky cask etc. Plans to turn an ex charity shop in Church



Street, Inverness into a craft bar (RA & keg) are being worked on including a roof top patio and B&B accommodation. Had another successful "Jocktoberfest" in September.

Loch Ness Brewery:

Their 4% lager, **SaaziNESS** has been judged

CAMRA's best Speciality Beer in Scotland, from a judging at the recent Ayr Beer Festival. Loch Ness **LochNESS**, their 4.4% 80/- style brew won the beer of the festival at Ulverston Beer and Cider Festival.

Their 3.9% bitter, **WilderNESS** has been judged CAMRA's best Bitter in Scotland from a judging at the recent Alloa Octoberfest.

They had two beers, **LightNESS** and LochNESS, on their bar at The Loch Ness Marathon in September.

Scottish Marks and Spencer's have bottles of **RedNESS** and **CaithNESS**.

Their new rocking, red ale, **SmokieNESS** (living next door to Nessie), was brewed in September with the help of Martin Bullard, Smokie's keyboard player. It is a 5% red beer with some honey and ginger added. (see article and Focus)

Another new beer is **NESSiah** which is a dry hopped IPA at 5.7% it uses New Zealand hops which give an intense, sweet fruit, hop aroma and a wonderfully balanced hop / malt taste which continues well into the aftertaste but doesn't "grab you by the throat" like some IPAs.

Their 5th birthday was in November and coincided with their re-branding and they arranged to take over a few pubs entire range of hand pumps and taps with their beers.

Cairngorm Brewery:

Took part in an initiative from Highlands and Islands Enterprise to showcase Highland brewing in London at Chelsea and Covent Garden. Head brewer, Ian McBain has left.

Further investment planned at the Winking Owl in Aviemore which is effectively their brewery tap. No progress in the complex project at Deeno's in Inverness. Listed building regulations mean they cannot even pull a nail out without consent.



The historically important murals at the top of the building require a six figure sum to restore, so there is a long way to go before we see a Cairngorm bar in Inverness.

Cuillin Brewery:

Nothing new reported this quarter.



Hebridean Brewing Company Ltd:

They have had Berserker in the Aldi Autumn beer festival, and are having some beer trialed in Wetherspoons. Work underway on a new visitor centre.



An Teallach Ale Company:

Nothing new heard from them BUT, we've heard through the grapevine that they are planning to re-brand in February.



Isle of Skye Brewing Co:

Very busy at the moment with large orders coming in to the brewery from the central belt office. The new build at the back of the brewery is a slow process.



Plockton Brewery:

Nothing new reported this quarter but Ring Tong was on in The Phoenix in November.



Old Inn Brewhouse:

No News. The 100 litre, micro brewery which is housed behind the Old Inn at Gairloch and when they have brewed some can be tried in the bar. No BLO yet—any takers?



Glenfinnan Brewery:

No News. Another of our small, remote, Highland breweries. Apart



from travelling to Glenfinnan, the most accessible place to try their ales is the Grog and Gruel. No BLO - anyone in that area?

River Leven Ales

No news to report.



Wooha Brewing Company (Nairn)

Their Porter was in ALDI's Autumn beer festival. Have released a Wheat beer as well as a Lager and an IPA which are being very well received. The Wheat Beer won the SIBA Gold award in the Specialist Bottled Beer category. The Porter has been garnering awards. Running out of space in the current brewery units. Now have 5 staff and are exporting to the USA and France.



The John O'Groats Brewery

has done some more test brews and plans to bottle. (see tour email article)



Liquid Mountain (Beaulieu)

Nothing new heard since the Autumn but they plan to set up in part of the old "House of Beaulieu" building. Spending a lot of time designing possible labels etc. Hoping to start producing in April. (see email tour article)

New!

Glen Mhor

Jon and Victoria Erasmus have now received planning permission to proceed with their plans to build a brewery and restaurant/cafe bar at their Glen Mhor Hotel on the banks of the River Ness.

A year after their plans were rejected by councillors, who were concerned about a lack of parking, access and effect on the area. The Nico's bar will be demolished and a new, glass fronted brewery, bar and restaurant will be built between the present buildings. They are planning to create 12 jobs and they hope to begin building in the autumn of 2016.



Glen hotel

www.theglenhotel.co.uk

NEWTONMORE

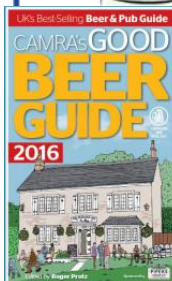
Fine Food
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Four Hand Pumps
Plus selected bottled ales

The Glen - an Oasis within the
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discount for card carrying
CAMRA members

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the Stronlossit Inn

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4 Real Ales on Tap



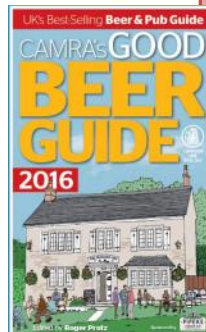
Open all day,
food & drinks
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Substantial Bar Meals Menu available all day

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Real Ale Pubs List

These Pubs, Inns and Hotels are known to sell (or to have recently sold) cask-conditioned ale.

They are listed in geographical area and area lists are in an order that would allow a continuous pub crawl if you have safe transport.

Please let us know about the quality of real ales on offer, 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 basis (S).

(TP) - ale served using top pressure so not fully real ale.

Additional note in *italics* gives discounts for card carrying CAMRA members .

Inverness

Blackfriars
Caledonian
Castle Tavern
Clachnaharry Inn
Corrigarth Hotel
Fairways Loch Ness Golf Course
Gellions
Glen Mhor Hotel (Nicos Bar)
Heathmount Hotel
Hootananny
Innes Bar
Johnny Foxes
Kings Highway *JDW 50p — which has a CAMRA info board near the main entrance*
Lauders
Mercure Hotel (Arts Bar) (TP)
Number 27
Palace Hotel
Phoenix Ale House
Room
Snowgoose
Tomlinson's Beer Shop
Waterfront

Strathspey (route from N to S) Speyside

Gun Lodge — Ardersier
Inverness Airport (D'Lish)
Golf View Hotel & Spa (TP) - Nairn
Braeval Hotel (Bandstand) - Nairn
10% off rooms
Cawdor Tavern *20%/pint*
Haugh Hotel — Cromdale
Craig Bar — Grantown on Spey
Garth Hotel and Restaurant — Grantown on Spey
Grant Arms Hotel — Grantown on Spey
Seafeld Lodge Hotel (Lodge Bar) - Grantown on Spey
Muckrach Lodge Hotel — Dulnain
Bridge

Boat Hotel — Boat of Garten
Cairn Hotel (Rowanlea Bar) - Carrbridge *20p/pint*

Aviemore

Macdhui's
Cairngorm Brewery
Cairngorm Hotel
Dalfaber Country Club
Mackenzies Highland Inn
Old Bridge Inn
Roo's Leap
Skiing Doo (Doo Below)
Winking Owl *20p/pint*
Hilton Coylumbridge Hotel (Woodshed Bar)
Pine Marten Bar — Glenmore

Badenoch

Glenmore Lodge (Lochain Bar)
Loch Inch Boathouse (Quarter Deck Bar) - Kincaig
Suie Hotel — Kincaig
Kingussie Golf Club
Topsy Laird — Kingussie ???
Scot House Hotel—Kingussie
Duke of Gordon Hotel (Ghillies Rest Bar) - Kingussie
Glen Hotel - Newtonmore *20p/pint*

Easter Ross

Black Isle

Royal Hotel — Cromarty
Cromarty Arms
Plough Inn — Rosemarkie *20p/ pint*
Anderson — Fortrose *B&B deal*
Station Hotel — Avoch
Allangrange Arms - Munloch *20p/pint*

Inverness to Dingwall

Bog Roy — Inchmore
Conon Bridge Hotel
Edderton Inn (Hotel)
Inchbae Lodge Hotel — Garve
Aultguish Inn — Garve,

Strathconon

Slaters Arms — Cannich
Struy Inn

Loch Ness (c/w from Inverness)

Dores Inn
Craigdarroch Inn - Foyers
Whitebridge Hotel
Stravaigers Lodge — Fort Augustus
Bothy Bar — Fort Augustus
Caledonian Hotel (S) - Fort Augustus
Lock Inn — Fort Augustus
Lovat Arms Hotel (TP) — Fort Augustus
Glenmorrison Arms Hotel—Invermorrison
Loch Ness Inn - Lewiston
Benleva Hotel — Drumnadrochit
Loch Ness Lodge (S) — Drum.

Fort William

Fort William (North)

Invergarry Hotel
Great Glen Water Park — South Laggan
Eagle Barge (S) - South Laggan
Old Station Restaurant — Spean Bridge
Stronllossit Hotel — Roy Bridge
Corrour Station House Restaurant (restaurant) — Corrour Estate

Fort William (Town)

Moorings Hotel - Banavie
Ben Nevis Bar
Ben Nevis Inn — Achintee
Cobbs @ Nevisport
Crofter Bar & Restaurant
Glen Nevis Restaurant
Grog & Gruel
Great Glen *JDW 50p*
West End Hotel

Fort William (South)

Real Ale Pubs List

Four Seasons - Onich *10p/pint*
 Onich Hotel
 Loch Leven Hotel - Ballachulish
 Glencoe Inn
 Clachaig Inn - Glencoe
 Kings House Hotel - Glencoe
 Ice Factor - Kinlochleven
 MacDonald Hotel - Kinlochleven
Fort William (West)
 Glenfinnan House Hotel
 Glenuig Inn
 Glenuig Village Hall
 Loch Shiel Hotel - Acharacle
 Salen Hotel
 Ariundle Centre — Strontian
 Arisaig Hotel (Crofters Rest)
 Chlachain Inn — Mallaig
 Steam Inn — Mallaig
 West Highland Hotel (S) - Mallaig
 Old Forge — Inverie

Wester Ross Cluanie to Kyle of Lochalsh

Cluanie Inn
 Glenelg Inn
 Kintail Lodge Hotel (Kintail Bar) -
 Glenshiel Bridge
 Jac-o-bite Restaurant —
 Glenshiel
 Dornie Hotel
 Clachan Bar — Dornie

Plocton to Gairloch

Plockton Inn
 Plockton Hotel
 Strathcarron Hotel
 Lochcarron Hotel
 Applecross Inn (TP)
 Tigh an Eilean Hotel — Shildaig
 Torridon Inn (TP) — Annat
 Kinlochewe Hotel
 Ledgowan Lodge Hotel —
 Achnasheen
 Loch Maree Hotel — Talladale
 Badachro Inn (TP)

Gairloch

Old Inn
 Myrtle Bank Hotel
 Millcroft Hotel

Gairloch to Ullapool

Poolewe Hotel

Aultbae Hotel (Jam Jar Bar)
 Drumchork Hotel (S) - Aultbea
 Dundonnell Hotel (Broombeg
 Bar)

Ullapool

Arch Inn
 Argyll Hotel *20p/pint, B&B deal*
 Ceilidh Place (TP)
 Ferry Boat Inn *20p/pint, B&B deal*

Morefield Motel
 Seaforth Bar & Restaurant

Ullapool North

Summer Isles Hotel —
 Achiltibuie

Caithness and Sutherland

West Coast

Altnacealgach Inn — Ledmore
 Junction
 Inchnadamph Hotel (S) - Assynt
 Caberfeidh — Lochinver
 Kylesku Hotel (S)
 Scourie Hotel ?? (new owners)

North Coast

Sango Sands Oasis (S) - Durness
 Smoo Cave Hotel (S) - Durness
 Ben Loyal Hotel (S) - Tongue
 Tongue Hotel (S)
 Weigh Inn (Ashes Bar) - Thurso
 Commercial Hotel - Thurso
 Central Hotel (Top Joes) - Thurso
 Holburn Hotel (Bar 16) - Thurso
 Ulbster Arms Hotel (S) - Halkirk
 Northern Sands Hotel — Dunnet
 Seaview Hotel — John O'Groats

East Coast

Alexander Bain — Wick *JDW 50p*
 Mackays Hotel - Wick
 Bay Owl Restaurant — Dunbeath
 Bannockburn Inn (TP) - Helmsdale
 Belgrave Arms Hotel — Helmsdale
 Sutherland Inn — Brora
 Golspie Inn
 Trentham Hotel — Poles, nr Dornoch
 Eagle Hotel — Dornoch
 Dornoch Castle Hotel
 Dunroamin Hotel — Bonar
 Bridge
 Invershin Hotel

Achness Hotel — Rosehall (SW
 of Lairg)
 Crask Inn — N of Lairg

Skye

Sligachan Hotel (Seumas' Bar) (S)
 Old Inn — Carbost
 Taigh Ailean Hotel (Munros Bar)
 - Portnalong *20p/pint & B&B deal*
 Old School Restaurant (S) - Dunvegan
 Stein Inn — Watnish
 Edinbane Inn
 Lodge at Edinbane
 Uig Hotel
 Bakur Bar — Uig
 Ferry Inn — Uig
 Flodigarry Country House Hotel—Staffin
 Bosville Hotel - Portree
 Isles Inn — Portree
 Royal Hotel (MacNab's Inn) - Portree
 Sconser Lodge Hotel
 Broadford Hotel (Gabbro Bar)
 Dunollie Hotel - Broadford
 Clammore Restaurant — Broadford
 Hebridean Hotel - Broadford
 Saucy Marys Lodge (S) - Kyleakin
 Isle Ornsay Hotel - Sleat
 Ardvassar Hotel (Hideout Bar)

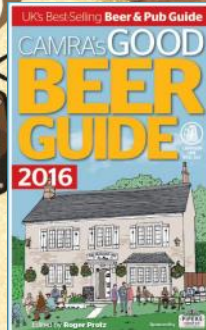
Western Isles N to S

An Lanntair Arts Centre - Stornoway, Lewis (S)
 Carlton, Stornoway, Lewis
 Crown Inn (Harbour Bar) - Stornoway
 Hotel Hebrides (Mote Bar) (S) - Tarbet, Harris
 Isle of Harris Inn (S) - Tarbet, Harris
 Hamersay House — Lochmaddy, N Uist
 Lochmaddy Hotel - N Uist
 Langass Lodge (S) - Loch Elport, N Uist
 Westford Inn, Claddach, Kirkibost, N Uist
 Borrodale Hotel (S) - Daliburgh, S Uist
 Polochar Inn — Lochboisdale, S Uist (S)



the Winking Owl

The legendary "Winky" is now managed by Cairngorm Brewery, following extensive refurbishment. A cosy, warm atmosphere, serving outstanding food and an impressive range of award winning keg & craft ales brewed right here in Aviemore.



Opening Times

Monday to Wednesday – 11.00am until 12.00 midnight
Thursday to Saturday – 11.00am until 1.00am
Sunday – 12.30pm until 12.00 midnight

Food served all day

Monday to Saturday
12.00 midday until 9.30pm

Sundays
12.30pm – 9.30pm

Grampian Road • Aviemore • PH22 1RH
T: 01479 812368 E: info@thewinkingowl.co
www.thewinkingowl.co

Winking Owl is the site of the Aviemore Inn where Robbie Burns
was served breakfast in 1787!

14th Loch Ness Beer Festival

Held at The Benleiva Hotel in Drumnadrochit during 18th to 26th September. There were 8 beers in the bar and a further 7 in the marquee and as one finished a new one came on. A large range of Loch Ness beers were available including their new 5% strength **MadNESS**, (one hop beyond), the lager **Saa-ziNESS**, halloween's **SpookyNESS** and the 10% **Prince of DarkNESS**. The rest of the beers were ones that have never featured at the pub before, including Scottish brews from **Loch Lomond**, **Kelburn**, **Wooha**, **Alechemy**, **Fallen**, **Inveralmond**, **Wharfebank** and **White Horse**. From South of the border were beers from **Black Hole**, **Blue Monkey**, **Boss Brewing**, **Brighton Bier**, **Dancing Duck**, **Dark Star**, **Elland**, **Frontier**, **Hop Back**, **Leeds** and **Oakham**.

Visiting beers that I particularly liked were Loch Lomond **Vanilla Stout** and **Take the High Road**; Fallen **Local Motive**; Boss **Bronze**; Dancing Duck **Waddle it Be**; Frontier **Goldrush**; Hop Back **Entire Stout** and Oakham **JHB**. The matured **Prince of DarkNESS** was very good.

There was a closely fought quiz on the Monday night with the top 4 teams split by 4 points. 'Nora and the young ones' were the winners; Nora was celebrating her pearl wedding anniversary.

Tuesday and Wednesday was pool competition nights.

On the rest of the days there was music from the regular, ever popular Penny Dogs; Scott McWatt who was playing at HebCelt this year; James MacKenzie; Dreaded Lurgie and ceilidh band, Tweed.

There was even a fringe event at the local village hall on the Wednesday night with two great folk singers Karen Polwart and Findlay Napier.

For those that drink cider there was a very good choice again this year. As well as bottles of **Loch Ness cider** there were boxes of **Farmer Jim**, **Barbourne** and **Abraham's** ciders available.



Scott McWatt in full flow.

Hello Swannay Brewery



SWANNAY
BREWERY

As hinted in the last edition of this august magazine, Rob Hill and his son Lewis have re-branded Highland Brewery. With help

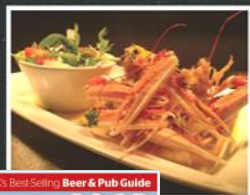
from HIE, they are embarking on a massive expansion and rebranding to sharpen focus, dispel confusion about the name and place and help drive sales nationally and internationally.

The announcement was celebrated by the brewery at Cloisters Bar in Edinburgh at the beginning of November.

This is a rather sad habit of our successfully growing local breweries — they run celebration events in chosen bars, usually in Edinburgh but sometimes also in Glasgow. Shame they don't choose the Highland capital but I guess it makes commercial sense. — Ed.

APOLOGY TIME!

*Another apology to our Exalted, Chief, Aberdeen Correspondent, Richard Jones — who was, of course, correct that **six° north** are now based further south down the A90 at Laurencekirk (their website is woefully behind the times). Ed.*



Newly
Refurbished
Bedrooms
now open

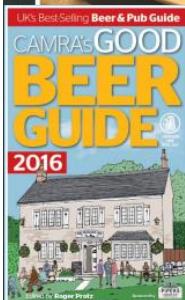
ALLANGRANGE ARMS

Serving real ales, fine wines and freshly cooked gourmet pub food

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Branch BOTY

Champion Branch Beer of the year

We would like to thank all those that went on-line and voted for their top beers brewed in Scotland. These votes have been counted up and the top beers in each category will go forward to judging at a CAMRA Beer Festival in Scotland next year. Then the winner of each category will go on to the Champion Beer of Scotland final and into Britain categories. Best of luck to them all.

Again this year we took the votes from our Branch members (*Thank You and Well Done to the ones that bothered to vote—Ed.*) for the beers brewed in our area and our Branch Beer of The Year is;



Loch Ness MildNESS

(This is the old, original Pumpclip design and the only graphic available.)



2nd Loch Ness Light- NESS (old and new pumpclip)



3rd Loch Ness Dark- NESS (old and new pumpclip)



Congratulations to the **Loch Ness Brewery.**

Other brewery beers with high scores were Cromarty **Atlantic Drift**,



Red Rocker and Ghost Town;



Cairngorm Black Gold;



Isle of Skye Cuillin Beast.



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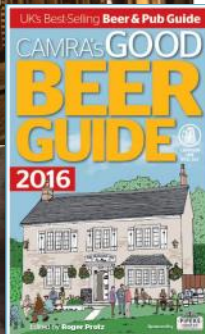
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A message from the Highlands and Western Isles Chairman to the branch

Hi everyone,

On Tuesday 12th January we have our AGM in The Phoenix in Inverness starting at 19:30. It would be great to see as many members as possible at this meeting as it will decide the future of CAMRA in our Branch area.

As you have seen in the recent Newsletters there are quite a few of the Committee retiring for one reason or another and these places need to be filled. After 15 years on the Committee and the last 10 as Chairman, I gave my notice to step down at the AGM earlier this year.

During my time as Chairman the Branch has gone from strength to strength. Taking on a fantastic base created by the previous Chairman's Bill Tring led Committee. We now have over 200 real ale serving pubs and 35 in the Good Beer Guide. The CAMRA based system WhatPub is an excellent point of pub information and has all our real ale pubs listed plus a few others. There are 13 breweries in our area, some of whom produce award winning beers - another 3 are in the pipeline. Our award winning Newsletter from the early beginnings of Editor Peter Finneran, through Mike Whittall and onto Gordon Streets has been a fantastic face of our Branch. Pub of the Year and Beer of the Year have been organised as well as many trips trying to link up with many of our members and visiting as many outlets as we can.

Our meetings have been around Inverness in the winter but have been further afield during the summer. Although most meetings have been on Tuesdays we have had some on Friday evenings and Saturday afternoons. Unfortunately, which ever day or time the meeting is on, we rarely get

many outside of the Committee turning up. We also have very few interested in voting for their Pub or Beer of the year, only around 8% to 15% of our 244 members. I am sure there are a few outlets out there that would benefit from our publicity, maybe getting into the Good Beer Guide but we get very little information on some areas. Recently we have had 4 members giving us more information in our outer reaches and also delivering our Newsletters, this has been a massive help to the Branch, if only there were more like them.

The Committee needs your help to keep the Branch continuing. What does the Committee do?

The UK is split up into regions and in Scotland there are 10 regions, ours is the largest in area. Each region has a committee which reports up the chain on what is happening in their area and back down the chain. The main tasks, not in any particular order, are to keep WhatPub up to date; put pubs into The Good Beer Guide; liaise up and down the CAMRA chain on pubs, members and breweries; hold regular meetings; encourage membership; encourage good quality real ale in pubs and keep accounts. Extra's that we have done are a Newsletter/magazine, Web Site, Socials and minibus trips. There are also other non Committee tasks like Brewery Liaison and Tasting panels.

So, if you have a few hours a month to give to The Highlands and Western Isles Branch of CAMRA please give one of the contacts a call or turn up for the AGM.

I would like to thank the many friends and supporters during my time as Chairman and the excellent job done by the Committee over the years. I wish the best of luck to the new Committee and the continued thriving real ale in our Branch.

Wishing you all a wonderful festive time.

Cheers,

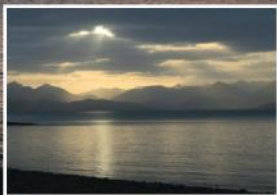
Eric Mills.

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Loch Ness Rebranding

As Loch Ness brewery is now very well established, doing very well domestically and increasing its international reach, the company took the decision to re-brand. The company is mature enough and big enough now that an outside, professional designer was contracted to come up with the new designs. You can see the new logo on the cover and in other articles in the magazine. Re-branding launch parties were held in mid November.

The **Bow Bar** in Edinburgh was well attended including a few brewers and brewsters. It was a great night and the feedback was almost universally positive.

The same weekend, a relaunch party was held at **The Benleva** (the brewery tap, of course) in Drumnadrochit. This party included a few brewers, including the couple who are starting **Liquid Mountain** brewery in Beaulieu. Pies and other artisan food was available made with Loch Ness beer as well as bottles of water from Loch Ness water company. The **State Bar** in Sauchiehall Street was the venue the following weekend.

The party went very well and continued in to the wee small hours.



T's Gossip Column

Black Isle has a new brewer who has trained in Germany. He replaces head brewer Gareth who has moved to **Eden Mill Brewery** to be closer to family that are not in the best of health.

Black Isle are about to release a gluten free beer—the name and label design is still being finalised.

Brewmiester in Keith is re-named. The brewery is now simply called "**Keith Brewery**". The names of the beers have also been changed to simple names—keep a look out for them to find out what the names are!

Spey Valley are in the planning stages of revamping and expanding.

John O' Groats Brewery are planning on bottling their beers once they are happy with getting consistently high quality in the bottled beer.

Bruce MacGregor now has the funding for his "**MacGregor's Bar**" at the end of Academy Street and work will start soon. Hopefully the venue will include some Real Ale as well as keg, etc. A "pop-up" bar was planned for a weekend in early December in the building.

(work is ongoing as I type.—Ed.)

Black Isle are ready to go ahead with work on the building they have acquired in Church Street next to the King's Highway, to turn it in to a brewery tap with accommodation, etc.

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)

Benleva Hotel, Drumnadrochit - Thatcher's Heritage Cider all year round, plus bottled ciders, including Loch Ness Cider and selection of real ciders for festivals

Scourie Hotel - Two Westons Ciders on handpump

King's Highway, Inverness - Real Cider is on draft during their 2 beer festivals each year

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

Badachro Inn - Westons Cider is served here

Argyll Hotel, Ullapool - several ciders are usually always available—more during festivals

Torridon Inn - Westons Ciders are served in the bar

Kinlochewe Hotel, at the foot of Beinn Eighe, is serving Westons Family Reserve Draft Cider

Clachaig Inn, Glencoe - Westons cider on hand pump.

Bandstand Bar, Nairn - Westons ciders on handpump plus wider selections at their festivals.

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

Blackfriars - Thistle Cross ' Jaggy Thistle— the real scrumpy cider.



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Badenoch & Strathspey Trip

Sadly only seven of us on this outing to "Cairngorm" country, however those that came had a grand day out. Our first port of call was the Cairngorm Brewery where we were met by Merlin Sandbach, the brewery's operations



manager. We were warmly welcomed with a choice of **Highland IPA** (3) and the current seasonal, **Autumn Nuts** (3). Now these scores of 3 (out of 5) on the CAMRA beer scoring system may seem low, especially at a brewery but it needs to be said that they had come straight out of the conditioning tanks, so not quite ready for their release. Nevertheless they were still both on good form. We had a quick tour of the brewery which is as busy as ever and the bottling line, which was a sound investment, is running at capacity cutting down the beer miles previously covered by moving beer by tanker for bottling as well as providing contract bottling for several other breweries. A good year for Cairngorm has seen **Black Gold** awarded the Champion Stout of Scotland in the judg-

ing at the CAMRA Paisley Beer Festival as well as **Wildcat** getting the Champion Strong Ale award in the judging at Aberdeen Beer Festival. **Trade Winds** also got Bronze in the Champion Speciality section.

Leaving the brewery we travelled the short distance to the Winking Owl in Aviemore. On a long lease, the "Winky" is effectively the brewery tap for Cairngorm and featured **Trade Winds** (4), **Wildcat** (4.5), **Autumn Nuts**, and **Highland IPA** alongside keg **Black Gold** and **Cairngorm Lager**. **Deuchars** and **Theakston Old Peculiar** (4) ales were also available. We enjoyed lunch here kindly provided by Maureen, the manager of the Winky. Further improvements for the pub are planned which include adding some outside decking and opening the bottom bar.

All too soon it was time to move on and after thanking Merlin and Maureen for their great hospitality, our small party split up to cover some more Aviemore pubs.

The **Cairngorm Hotel** had its usual **Stag** and **Gold** on and both were on good form. Four pumps at the **Old Bridge Inn** featuring **Deuchars** & Flying **Scotsman** from Caledonian as well as **Stag** (4) and **Trade Winds** (3.5).

A change of ownership at **Ben Macdhui's Inn** has resulted in a small name change to **Macdhui's** where there was **Trade Winds** (2) and **Wildcat** (3.5) featured. The **Trade Winds** finished after my half and I was asked if mine was ok which was a pleasant touch and bodes

(Continued on page 38)

Stein Inn

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Highland & Western Isles branch POTY 2015

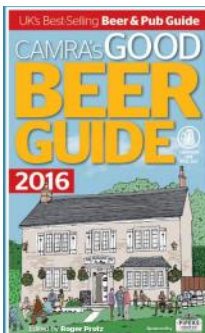
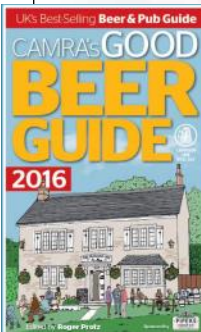
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(Continued from page 35)

well for ale sales under the new management.

Leaving Aviemore we popped into the Hilton at Coylumbridge to visit the **Woodshed**, a pleasant bar in the family friendly resort, where we found **Sheepshagger (Cairngorm Gold)** (4) and **Wildcat** (3). Further down the road and we were at the **Pine Marten Bar** which is situated next to a camp site. The cosy pine clad bar with its wood burning stove features two ever changing Cairngorm ales and today had **Trade Winds & Wildcat** (3.5).

After this it was down to Newtonmore to see Chris at the **Glen Hotel**, our very first outlet to sign up for LocAle when we introduced the scheme to the Branch some years back. Three ales on as usual featuring Cairngorm **Autumn Nuts**, Windswept **APA** (3.5) and the newish ale from Inveralmond, **Fair Maid** (4.5). A busy summer for Chris and encouraging news from him around the interest in ales as well as an increased interest in the keg products from our local breweries being enjoyed ahead of the mass produced national products.

With time pushing on it was time to make our way back to Inverness calling

into a few pubs on the way back. First stop was the **Duke of Gordon Hotel** in Kingussie where we enjoyed **Autumn Nuts** (4.5) and **Trade Winds** (3). A For Sale sign over the pub plus running behind schedule meant we skipped the Topsy Laird and sadly the Silver Fjord has closed, so we continued our way back calling into the **Suie Hotel** at Kin-craig. Another change here as it is now the Suie Lodge with the Suie Bar attached to it. What was the hotel is now a self catering lodge and the bar remains as before. The only significant change is that food is no longer available. Three ales on offer, Orkney **Corn-crake** (2) Harviestoun **Schiehallion** (3.5) and **Trade Winds** (3.5). Continuing our way home, the last stop before Inverness was the **Cairn Hotel** at Carrbridge. Always three Scottish ales here and normally local ones. This time a full house of LocAle, Cromarty Happy Chappy (3.5), **Autumn Nuts** (2) and Windswept **Aurora** (4).

We arrived back in town just about on schedule after a thoroughly enjoyable day out.

Maybe a day out in "Cairngorm" country put some folk off but as you can see we had a reasonable choice of ales across the day and another trip to reinforce that the days of a duff pint are long gone.

Our thanks to the brewery and the pubs for their hospitality as well as our driver and Fraser's Coaches of Munloch.

HBH



Duke Of Gordon Hotel

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Cairngorm National Park



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Focus on **Martin Bullard**



Martin is the keyboard player of the band Smokie, famous for such hits as 'If you think you know how to love me', 'Don't play your rock and roll to me' and 'Living next door to Alice'. The group still tours on a regular basis and recent itineraries have included Israel, Germany, Czech Republic and Russia. He also writes and composes music. He lives with his family near Loch Ness.

Q. Where are you originally from?

Cheam, Surrey.

Q. How were you introduced to real ale?

When I lived in Suffolk my local pub, The Crown in Hartest, served Greene King Ale.

Q. What are your favourite real ales/beer styles?

I like the red bitter with some sweetness and bags of flavour.

Q. What do you look for in a pub?

Cosy atmosphere.

Q. You recently brewed **SmokieNESS with The**

Loch Ness Brewery, how was the experience?

I loved it. I feel much more connected to SmokieNESS as a result of having taken part in the whole brewing process.

Q. What did you think of the finished brew?

It is delicious and every bit as tasty as I had hoped. The sweetness of the honey seems to have mellowed the spiciness of the ginger to create a very smooth, malty beer.

Q. What hobbies/interests do you have?

Walking, mountain biking and golf.

Q. What is your favourite film?

Blade Runner.

Q. What is your favourite book?

"Mutant message down under" by Marlo Morgan.

Q. What other groups/singers influenced you?

The Moody Blues and The Eagles.

Q. Why did you move to the Loch Ness area?

I always loved visiting here when I was a teenager and had the opportunity to move here when I discovered that British Airways had regular flights to Heathrow, although they don't any more.

Q. As you live next door to Nessie, did any of the group live next door to Alice?

There was an Alice who lived next door to our lead singer. She was convinced that the song was all about her and even thanked him for it.

Q. Do you look forward to any of the countries you visit for the beers. If so which countries and beers?

Actually I don't drink when I'm on tour although, if **SmokieNESS** appears backstage in Russia, I may have to alter my drinking habits.

Q. When are the group playing in Scotland?

There are no plans yet but it would be good to return to Scotland, particularly if we could play one of the festivals.

Martin, Thank you.



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A tALE of two

Beerfests

It began at a bus stop on a cool September Saturday morning in Thurso at 7.20am. Ten hours and 3 free buses later, I arrive in Berwick-on-Tweed to book into a B&B for 2 nights to check out Berwick's 8th Food & Beer Festival, though more for the beer than food. The festival is not CAMRA run, being organised by the local Slow Food Group, all by volunteers. With over 70 ales and ciders it was obvious I wasn't going to be able to sample them all so a steady stream of halves was planned for the evening session.

Entry was £4 plus an extra £1 for the programme listing drinks with prices and entertainment. An ink stamp (aka 60's disco style) on the back of my hand meant that if I didn't wash I could gain entry for free the next day! The first beer had to be the festivals' commemorative ale, **Berwick 900** (900 years since Berwick was officially documented), a 4.5% ruby beer worth a score of 3. **Pagan Queen** (4%) from Firebrick followed, again a 3. **Frelon Brun** (4.3%) from Out There Brewing Co improved the score to 3.5, being matched by Timothy Taylors **Ram Tam** (4%). Getting better, Bad Co Brewing's **Dazed & Confused** (5.5%) rated a 4. Time for a complete taste change with half of Thistly Cross **Barrel Aged cider** (7.4%) and some food. Following this I wondered if I had baffled my taste buds with the change as Wentworth **Over a Barrel** (3.8%) only rated a 1 as did Two by Twos' **Leapfrog Ale** (4.1%). Wylam Brewery restored my faith with a 4 for their **Remains in Light** (5%) but their **Bitter** (3.8%) promptly lowered the bar back to 1.5. Tempest Brewing whipped up a storm with **Elemental Dark Ale** (5.1% and a 4), being matched by 7 Brothers **Stout Porter** (5.2%)

as my final drink for the night. A slightly wobbly quarter mile took me back to the B&B.

Helping soak the alcohol up were burgers, pies and other standard pub style fare from street stalls and vans although crepes and shellfish dishes were also available.

The second day saw a leisurely rise with a good breakfast and a stroll around the town. The Barrack outside of which the beer festival is held is quite imposing and so was the prospect of all afternoon and evening. Not having washed my hand (honest!) I duly wandered into the marquee for a Roosters Brewing **All Star** (4.3%), a good 3.5. A Timothy Taylor **Dark Mild** (3.5%) outclassed it with a 4. Siren Breweries **Soundwave** (5.6%) upped this to a 4.5 but a let down to 2.5 in the form of Alledale's **Forge** (5.5%) followed. Bear Claw Brewery raised the bar back to 4 with its' **Wickety** (4.2%) and the 5% **Village Drunk** (not me) from VIP kept it there. Bad Co Brewing was **Comfortably Numb** (3.8%) with a 3. Time for a change and food but what a disappointment - Thistly Cross **Whisky Cask Aged cider** tasted identical to their Barrel Aged cider of last night, the bar staff weren't cider drinkers (by admission) and couldn't give me an explanation. Hanging Bat Brew Co **Suns Up** (3%) wasn't, 2, or maybe the cider had spoilt things. A **Golden Best** (3.5%) from Timothy Taylor was worse at 1.5. By now the beers were running low, only some I had already tried being left with the keg fizz brews that also formed part of the event, except for Bad Co **Bourbon Brown** (7.4%) which gave a satisfying 3.5. After leaving the festival to try the local pubs and being underwhelmed in two of them (both producing scores of 2) that, me thought, was enough although I did squeeze in a pint of Hadrian Border Brewing **Georgie Jazz** in the Pilot public House for a score of 3. In the pub were the 'Black Country Ale Tairsters' (look them up

on the internet) adding to their considerable pub crawl tally - good company. Now, although somewhat sodden with ale, I did keep (and remember) notes. Whilst there were some excellent ales some were distinctly poor, even those tasting fine were sometimes unintentionally hazy, possibly due to barrels being moved from the back to the pumps and being served very soon after. It was a hot day so possibly a factor. Pricing was a bit of a mess, some beers cost more or less than stated, I believe because the pricing system being used wasn't maintained when the beer was changed at the pump. If challenged there was a shrug of shoulders with "I can only charge what the sticker says my side of the pump". Beers were priced in the programme Band 1 (£3/£1.50 half) to Band 4 (£4.50/£2.30 half) so there was considerable variance in price at times. Tasters were allowed before purchasing. A glass cost an extra £3 and was a dead pint with half pint measure rather than oversized, the alternative being a plastic half or pint. Seating in the marquee was minimal although a few were available most of the time at the rear and many had been removed outside to be in the sunshine. Entertainment was good but loud. Whilst I generally enjoyed it this was not a CAMRA standard festival and overall could be improved with a bit of advice and care.

Here ends part one.

The second part of this tALE only involved an eight hour (3 bus) journey, with the right connections, to Troon for their 16th Annual Beer Festival. Now this was a late decision to attend as Stagecoach amended their timetables allowing me a last bus back from Inverness later than normal for October and meant lodgings could only be found in Ayr (unless I paid for a posh arm & a leg). Luckily there are regular and late bus and train connections between Ayr and Troon. This was a larger gathering of ales

and ciders (over 150) than Berwick although my last attendance in 2011 saw all run out on the last afternoon even before the Pipe Band played. Not this time. I arrived for the Thursday evening session well fortified by food beforehand, I'd remembered what was on offer in 2011 and guess what, it was still the same, limited by imagination and facilities. Broughton **Hoppopotumus** (3.8%) got me off to a good start at 3.5 before I found the themed Islands of Britain bar. There followed Okells **Manx Pale Ale** (3.6%), a 2.5, Old Laxey **Bosun Bitter** (3.8%) at a 3 with a disappointing Okells **Bitter** (4.7% at a 2) which had replaced a no show of Jaig. Lerwick **Azure** (3.4%) was a bit jaded at 2.5 but Bute **Scalspie Blonde** (3.8%) and Goddards **Wight Squirrel** (4.3%) both gave a score of 4. Isle of Skye's **Tiny Angels** (4%) was a bit of a devil at only a 2 so a dry Waulkmill **Muckle Toon Rosie cider** refreshed the palette. A barely drinkable Islay **Finlaggan** (3.7%, a 1) was removed after a few people commented about it. Yates **Golden Bitter** (4%) from the Isle of Wight gave a 2.5 but at least my last for the night produced a 3.5 in the form of Windsor & Etons **Macarana** (4%).

The next day started in the Isle of Wight with a Goddards **Ale of Wight** (3.7%), a decent 3. Firebricks **Tyne 9** (3.9%) gave a similar score whilst Great Heck's **Dave** (3.8%) raised it by another half. Loch Ness **Saazi-Ness** (4%) wasn't up to it's usual and only worth a 2.5. Phipps NBC **IPA** (4.2%) scored 3.5 before **Plan B** (3.7% gluten free) from Stringers slumped back to 2.5. It's unusual for me to dislike a beer so much I won't score it but Wells **Gun Dog** (3.8%) was such a one. I couldn't finish the half although others were enjoying it. **Lightheart** (3.3% - yes 3.3%) from Yorkshire Heart gave me heart with a 3 before Jaws **Wave** (4%) lifted me to 3.5 and Frog Islands **Natterjack**

(Continued on page 45)

Branch Diary (meetings start at 7.30 pm) (all welcome)

All these events are open to CAMRA members and non-members, including committee meetings. * Not all events are necessarily organised by CAMRA. This diary is as much about the local real ale scene as it is about CAMRA branch activities.

December 2015

Tuesday 8th
Meeting at Clachnaharry Inn

Tuesday 15th
Inverness Xmas Walkabout
meet at Innes Bar, 7 pm — finish at
Corriegarth Hotel (If you can)

January 2016

Tuesday 12th
AGM at Phoenix Ale House

If the branch still exists after the
12th, monthly committee and
members meetings should
continue.

The following is subject to change or cancellation. Check the branch website diary page.

February

Tuesday 9th
Committee Meeting at Hootananny, Church
Street

March

Tuesday 8th
Committee Meeting at Corriegarth Hotel

Friday 11th at 17.30
Tasting Social at Castle Tavern

April

Saturday 9th
Social at Bandstand Beer Festival

Tuesday 12th
Branch Members Meeting at Benleva Hotel,
Drumnadrochit

We usually have the first minibus
beer trip of the year in late
March / early April—see branch website.



The huge, Bandstand Beer Festival — Braeval
Hotel, Nairn (see advert and their website) *

Your local CAMRA branch

Protect your pleasure! Become actively involved with your local branch.

We need your help! Not a massive time commitment, just an hour or two a month 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.

Branch activities might have to be changed—Please check the branch website to confirm the dates, times and places of meetings and socials—
www.highland.camra.org.uk

Contact Details

(Secretary & Branch
Contact) - **Position Vacant!**

Eric Mills - 01456 459343
chair@highlandcamra.org.uk



Arnold Stout (social secretary)
socials@highlandcamra.org.uk

Gordon Streets (editor)
news@highlandcamra.org.uk

..... Needs YOU!

(Continued from page 43)

(4.8%) had me leaping to a 4, only to be topped by Triple FFF **Citra Sonic** (4.1%) at 4.5. Isle of Skye's **Blaven** (5%) matched it, and was my beer of the festival, before a gentle slide back to Brentwood **Marvellous Maple Mild** (3.7%) with a 3. Acorns **Yorkshire Pride** (3.7%) fell at 2 but a double finish on 3 from Ulveston **Laughing Gravy** (4%) and Five Kingdoms **Bitter X** (5.5%) ended my session - full.

It was good to see a themed bar and forms for feedback (paper or online) and suggestions for next year (I proposed an English Midlands bar theme). Entertainment was, what I heard of it, loud but good. The themed and quiet bars protected from the loudest excesses. The packed main hall proved a need for patience when trying to cross with a full or empty glass but service was very good. It was a good excursion, a

shame I couldn't stay for the Saturday and due to Stagecoach subsequently deciding to permanently curtail late winter buses I can't get there again without risking being stranded in Inverness on the way back (Blackfriars, Pheonix, Castle Tavern).

The End

All views and opinions are my own and no offence is intended. I've tried to use CAMRA's scoring system which gives a 2 as meaning average and 3 as good, so scores aren't as bad in places as some people might think - I know many think of 3 being average on a 1-5 scale (strictly a 0-5 scale but since 0 means no ale not really applicable to a beer festival!).

Keith Morrell.

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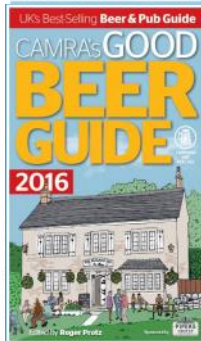
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Real Ale in the Real Highlands



ATLAS
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Supporting Local breweries

Drink in a Real Ale Pub? - Rate the Beer!

Highlands & Western Isles CAMRA needs your help in surveying the pubs in our massive Branch area. To tell us which pubs are worth considering for the Good Beer Guide, use CAMRA's 6-point NBSS (National Beer Scoring Scheme) to record Beer Quality. The info you give us helps us judge which outlets could go in to The Good Beer Guide, which outlets merit an award of area POTY and Branch POTY and which of our local beers merits the award of BOTY. It's easy! (if you are not sure about your score for a beer—half scores are fine—i.e. $1\frac{1}{2}$ for an OK beer but you wouldn't have another pint)

What do the scores mean?

0 - No cask ale available.

$1\frac{1}{2}$ - **Undrinkable.** Beer so poor you have to take it back or can't finish it.

1 - **Poor.** Beer that is between barely drinkable and 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.

Simply email us which bar, the beer(s) and your scores plus any real ale and real cider news to our Branch Contacts (see Diary page).

CAMRA members can use the website: **whatpub.com**

Log in to it using your normal CAMRA login details, search for the pub and then click on "Submit Beer Scores" - fill in the boxes on the form, scrolling down and then click "Submit Beer Score". You can do this for any pub in the country. If you have been on a CAMRA beer tasting course and are then registered as an accredited beer taster, you will be offered to fill in a CAMRA tasting card online too. Thanks!

What's yours then? is a newsletter magazine 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.



*We hope you have enjoyed reading our Winter magazine. Unless you intend to keep it, 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? Our magazines are often found many miles from source! The next, Easter, edition might be out mid April 2016.*

Thanks to our advertisers for making publication of this magazine possible and our wonderfully helpful local breweries and branch members that help distribute it.



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SPECIAL ALES FOR 2015

(March to December)



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