

What's Yours Then?

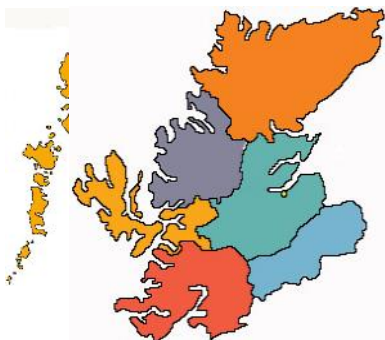
Highlands & Western Isles CAMRA
Free Newsletter



**Pubs-of-the-Year
Winners**

**New Real Ale
Venue for
Inverness**

Page 26



**CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE**

Spring 2007

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

- > Pubs-of-the-Year - **Winners**
- > Beers-of-the-Year - **Please vote**
- > Focus on - **the Badenoch Two**
- > Socials & Outings - Reports
- > Updated Branch Diary
- > Your Letters and Pub Reports
- > 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 Chairman Bill & Secretary Eric, who keep us up-to-date with brews and what is happening in local pubs. Please note that the editor reserves the right to edit contributions sent for publication. All marks and copyright are acknowledged. Summer Newsletter **deadline** is 1st June, with publication in time for the Summer visitors.

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
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Quarter Page Advert.....	£18.00

There is a discount on placement of a fourth consecutive advert. Adverts are accepted on condition that inclusion does not necessarily imply an endorsement or approval of content. We much prefer to receive artwork as a PDF or JPEG file, or Word document. We can help in preparing your advert if you wish.

3,000+ copies are distributed to Branch members, to Highlands & Islands brewers, to Good Beer Guide listed and Real Ale pubs; plus extra copies to advertisers.

What's Yours Then is a quarterly newsletter produced by the Highlands & Western Isles Branch of the Campaign for Real Ale. The views & opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the editor, CAMRA, nor its Branches.

Highlands & Western Isles

Pub-of-the-Year for 2007

Overall Winner:

We are very pleased to announce that, for the second year running, the **Clachnaharry Inn** has been selected as the overall winner and will go forward to represent the Highlands & Western Isles Branch of CAMRA in the national Pub-of-the-Year competition.

Congratulations to landlord George MacLean, and also to Veronica Findlay, the long-serving Clachnaharry Inn manageress, who has been looking after the pub since George took on the Castle Tavern (see page 26). Congratulations also to the hard-working team, not only at front of house, but those who work together behind the scenes in cellar and kitchen to make this such a popular hostelry. CAMRA Pub-of-the-Year guidelines (see website for details) were used to grade the overall winner. Marks were awarded by committee members against guideline criteria, and then totalled to find the overall Branch winner.

As ever, voting was extremely close, and the totals were carefully checked.

Congratulations to the publicans and staff at all the pubs which were voted for by local members as their Pubs-of-the-Year for 2007.

Full details of area winners on page 4.

Time now to vote for your Beers-of-the-Year, please see full details on page 12.

Trips to breweries and real ale hostelrys are open to all. Cost to members is typically £5, and £10 to non-members.

Our next outing is to the **Atlas Brewery**, with stops at real ale pubs along the way.

- > Check our diary (page 6) for details.
- > Contact Gareth to book your seat!

Congratulations to Chairman Bill who, with wife Barbara, recently celebrated forty happy years of marriage with a Caribbean cruise.

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

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Monster Mash	4.4%
Trade Winds	4.3 %
Black Gold	4.4%

Seasonal Cask Beers

Glen Ample	4.5%
Horizon	4.5%
Blessed Thistle	4.5%
Red Mountain Porter	4.5 %
Witches Cauldron	4.9%
Winter Flurry	3.8%
Highland IPA	5.0%
Mountain Dew	4.6%
Santa's	
Sledgehammer	6.3%



Black Gold
ABV 4.4 %

Award winning Scottish Stout with a rich dark colour, traditional smooth sweetness with underlying roast barley hints



Trade Winds
ABV 4.3 %

Award winning light golden beer with masses of hop, fruit and citrus flavours



Wildcat
ABV 5.1 %

Smooth deep amber coloured ale, with complex malt, fruit and hop flavours

Unit 12, Dalfaber Ind. Estate, Aviemore, Inverness-shire, PH22 1PY

Tel: 01479 812222 Fax: 01479 811465

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www.cairngormbrewery.com

Highlands & Western Isles Pubs-of-the-Year for 2007

Votes were received for a total of 35 Highlands and Islands real ale pubs, which again goes to show that there is no shortage of great real ale hostelrys in this one-time real ale desert.

Although there are once again some familiar names, only a couple of pubs won by a landslide, and some of the regular suspects only narrowly held on to their prestigious awards. For the first time we have a tied vote, with the Anderson and Benleva Hotel vying for top pub in the Inverness District. Congratulations to publicans and their teams at -

Inverness City - Clachnaharry Inn

A very friendly welcome is always guaranteed at this traditional village style coaching inn on the eastern outskirts of Inverness. Open all day, every day; food served all day, every day; and with a regularly changing selection of up to 10 real ales on tap. A new raised decking area provides stunning views over the Beaulieu Firth and Caledonian Canal.

Inverness District - *TIED Vote!!*

The Anderson, Fortrose

Located on the Black Isle, next to the red sandstone ruins of Fortrose Cathedral, this charming hostelry is well worth seeking out. In addition to real ales and ciders, there is a choice of 200+ single malt whiskies and 80+ Belgian beers. A "borderless" approach to cooking results in an ever-changing menu of Global Cuisine that lends a cosmopolitan air.

Benleva Hotel, Drumnadrochit

Home to the Loch Ness Beer Festival every September, this family-run real ale haven is not to be missed. Beers from Highlands & Islands brewery beers are regularly served, plus a real ale cider. The large sweet chestnut in front of this 400-year old former manse was a hanging tree in days more violent times. The welcome is more friendly today.

Aviemore & the Cairngorms - Glen Hotel, Newtonmore

In the heart of the BBC's 'Monarch of the Glen' country, and close to the Monalldliath and Cairngorm Mountains, this elegant Edwardian hotel has a busy local trade and is popular with outdoor enthusiasts. Mainly Scottish beers are served, often from local breweries, and the Glen-Bogle Ale is from the Isle of Skye Brewery. There is an extensive bar menu.

Skye, Lochalsh & Hebrides - Stein Inn, Watnish, Isle of Skye

A traditional family-run inn, the oldest on the Isle of Skye, located in a delightful shore-side setting on the beautiful Loch Bay. Three real ales regularly on tap in this Highland bar, an open fire in Winter, and the seafood on the menu will have been freshly landed at the nearby jetty. Shower facilities are available for seafarers who tie up in the bay.

Fort William & Lochaber - Grog & Gruel, Fort William

Lively town centre pub with an ever-changing range and high turnover of real ales, many from Highlands & Island brewers. Popular with locals, and with a busy tourist trade in summer. Owned by the same family as the Clachaig Inn in Glencoe, and beer festivals are held on a regular basis. Home-cooked food is served in the upstairs dining room.

Wester Ross - Old Inn, Gairloch

Family-run coaching inn located in a riverside setting at the foot of the beautiful Flowerdale Glen, opposite Gairloch harbour. Up to eight real ales are on tap in summer, mainly from Scottish brewers. Close to the Beinn Eighe Nature Reserve and Loch Maree. The enticing home-cooked menu features freshly caught seafood and Highland game dishes.

Caithness & Sutherland - Scourie Hotel

Popular with fishermen (25,000 acres of loch, river and hill loch fishing held for guests), bird watchers (Handa Island is nearby), and hill-walkers, this beautifully situated inn gets through up to 12 casks a week in summer, mostly from independent brewers.

>> All Selected by Highlands & Western Isles Branch of CAMRA Members <<



THE HEBRIDEAN BREWING COMPANY.

taste of the islands

clansman ale 3.9% ABV

Beer of Festival, Aberdeen, Grampian and Northern Isles Camra festival 2004

Golden Hebridean bitter, brewed with Scottish malts.

Lightly bittered, a session ale with a light golden colour.

Good all day beer, plenty of hop and malt character, with lots of malt in the finish.



islander strong premium ale 4.8% ABV

SIBA beer of Scotland, Bronze 2002, Silver 2003, Premium Ale

Brewed with special coloured Scots malt, deep ruby in colour and predominantly malty with robust hopping to match.

Complex like the Hebrides themselves.

celtic black ale 3.9% ABV

Siba Beer of Scotland, Bronze 2004, Milds Category

Runner up North Hertfordshire Camra Beer of Festival 2004

A dark porter style ale full of flavour, balancing a aromatic hop combined with a subtle bite and a pleasantly smooth caramel aftertaste.



**BERSERKER
EXPORT PALE ALE 7.5% ABV**

Brewed using traditional methods and based on 19th century recipes. Then matured over a number of weeks to develop a smooth intricate flavour.

Brewed with a robust bitterness blended with a sweet smooth aftertaste and a hoppy aroma.

Champion Winter Beer of Scotland 2006

New seaforth ale 4.2% ABV

A classic blonde ale brewed with a variety of hops giving a complex fulsome bite balanced by pleasant refreshing citrus aftertaste.

Brewed and bottled entirely in the Outer Hebrides



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Stornoway, Isle of Lewis, Western Isles

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www.hebridean-brewery.co.uk



Member of the Society of Independent Brewers



Branch Diary (Meetings start at 7.30 pm)

Sat 21st April



Social/Outing to Lochaber:
Atlas Brewery & Real Ale Pubs

Tues 24th April

Tasting Panel Meet

The Phoenix, Inverness

Tues 8th May

Committee Meeting

Dornoch Castle Hotel

Sat 12th May

Annual Tasting Refresher

Benleva Hotel (Starts at 2pm)

25th May - 2nd June

* MayFest

Clachaig Inn, Glencoe

Tues 29th May

Tasting Panel Meet

Snowgoose, Inverness

Fri 1st June Voting Closes - **Your** Highlands & Western Isles Beer-of-the-Year

Tues 5th June

Branch Meeting

The Anderson, Fortrose

14th - 16th June

Scottish Beer Festival

Assembly Rooms, Edinburgh

22nd - 24th June

* TradFest

Gairloch Highland Lodge

Sat 23rd June



Social/Outing to Wester Ross:
An Teallach Brewery & Real Ale Pubs

Tues 26th June

Tasting Panel Meet

Castle Tavern Inverness

Tues 3rd July

Committee Meeting

Glen Hotel, Newtonmore

Tues 31st July

Tasting Panel Meet

Number 27, Inverness

Tues 7th August

Branch Meeting

National Hotel, Dingwall

Sat 11th August

Real Ale Bar

Marymas Fair, Inverness

Tues 28th August

Tasting Panel Meet

Hootananny, Inverness

Tues 4th Sept

Committee Meeting

Whitebridge Hotel

Sat 15th Sept



Social/Outing to Isle of Skye Brewery
(details in next edition and on website)

21st - 29th September

* 6th Loch Ness Beer Festival

28th - 30th September

* 4th Inverness Beer Festival

19th - 21st October

* 3rd Ullapool Beer Festival

* Not all events listed are necessarily organised by CAMRA.

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

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

Contact

Gareth Hardman (Branch Contact) 18, Scorguie Gardens, Inverness,

Details

IV 3 8 SS - 01463 238462 - contact@highlandcamra.org.uk

Eric Mills - 01309 675837 - secretary@highlandcamra.org.uk



Bill Tring - 01463 231448
chair@highlandcamra.org.uk

Mike Whittall - 01463 831259
news@highlandcamra.org.uk

Clachnaharry Inn *biting* You

Up to 10 Real Ales on at any one time, and with food served all day - famous for its lentil soup and stovies, this award winning pub will always make you welcome..



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& Highland
Real Ale Town
Pub of the Year
2000, 2001, 2002,
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Inverness, IV3 8RB
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FAX: 01463 226986



Tasting Panel Update

Local tasting panel members meet on the last Tuesday of most months (See page 6), sample the ales on offer, and fill in tasting cards which help beers to qualify for inclusion in national champion beer competitions.

Another very successful tasting evening took place in January, with five tasters present: Dave S, Gareth, David W, Allan and Bill. Some variations in personal taste were noted with the (Isle of Skye) Red Cuillin at the Palace Hotel - scores for the beer ranged from 4 to 8. Regular tasting meetings should help to iron out these differences. Although we were able to resolve some areas of disagreement, there is still a need for our tasters to become more consistent with their scoring - even allowing for individual tastes and preferences. The beer was of a malty character, with some fruit and caramel but with a noted astringency and a somewhat cloying aftertaste: possibly not in the best of condition on this night?

At No 27 there were not as many variations in the scoring for Caley 80/- and Deuchars IPA. Scores for the 80/- were all 7s and 8s apart

from a single 4. It was a fruitier pint than is the norm, but well balanced by its maltiness.

The Deuchars IPA was considered to be a thinnish brew, with the usual fruit and hops in abundance in the nose and taste.

All are welcome to attend our Annual Tasting Refresher course in May, but book early as places will be limited. You do not have to be an expert, and there is no obligation to fill out tasting cards. Just come along and learn a little more about the ales you enjoy drinking.

The 21st **Great Grampian Beer Festival** will be held at the McClymont Halls in Aberdeen. Dates this year are 1st/2nd/3rd November.

We include dates of all local beer festivals and real ale events in the diary page of this newsletter. For the most up-to-date list of real ale events please check our website.

Not all beer festivals are necessarily organised by CAMRA, but we are always keen to support and promote events which raise the profile of Highlands and Islands breweries.

In 2006 there was at least one local festival in nine out of twelve months. 2007 promises to be as good. Be sure you do not miss out! Ed.

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CAMRA Highland Pub of the Year 2003 & 2005

Inverness District Pub of the Year 2006 & 2007 (tied)

6th Loch Ness Beer Festival
21st - 29th September 2007

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Scottish Hotels of the Year Awards 2007

Scotland's very own, prestigious hotel awards were presented at a glittering Awards Night Party on Sunday February 25th, a sell-out event attended by Alex Salmond MP, Leader of the Scottish National Party, and Patricia Ferguson MSP, Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport, plus 500 of Scotland's top hoteliers. The event was the culmination of a process which began with 300 nominations across a spread of award categories and with over 24,000 votes cast this was the largest ever consumer poll about hotels in the UK.

Congratulations to Judith Fish and her team at the Good Beer Guide listed **Applecross Inn**, in Wester Ross, on winning the **Scottish Inn of the Year 2007** award.

Two more GBG-listed hostelries in the branch area were presented with awards:

The **Bosville Hotel** received a **Médailles d'Or for Outstanding Dinner 2007**, and **Plockton Hotel** was presented with the **Scottish Hotel Bar Food Award 2007**.

The **Glenfinnan House Hotel**, listed as a

real ale outlet, received a **Scottish Hotel Bar Food Special Commendation 2007**, and the Loch Torridon Hotel, who also serve real ale, was voted **Scottish Activities Hotel**.

Very often, it seems, that the establishments who excel in one part of their business tend to pay close attention to other areas. Good beer, good food, and good service tend to go hand in hand, and we are very fortunate in the Highlands & Islands to have so many award winning pubs and hotels to choose from.

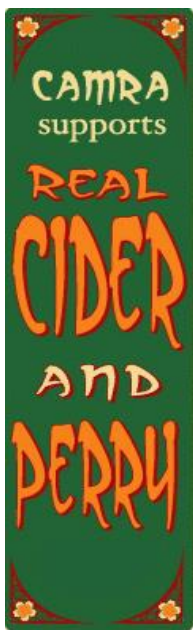


Beer, Bed and Breakfast is

a unique and comprehensive guide to more than 500 pubs throughout the UK that serve fine real ale and offer good quality bed and breakfast accommodation. All the entries include contact details, type and extent of accommodation,

list of beers served, meal types and times, and an easy-to-understand price guide. Pubs vary from tiny inns to luxury gastro-pub, rural and urban, on main roads or off the beaten track.

Buy on-line from **www.camra.org.uk/shop**



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

Blackfriars, Inverness - Del and Janette (see page 14) have told us that they plan to keep a real cider on tap.

Stronlossit Inn, Roy Bridge - Thatchers Cheddar Valley Cider

Strathcarron Hotel - Thatchers Cider (rotated with cask ales)

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

Benleva Hotel, Drumnadrochit - Westons 1st Quality Cider

Scourie Hotel - Westons 1st Quality 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

Old Bridge Inn, Aviemore, served Thatchers Heritage Cider at their March Beer festival. We understand that it was very popular.

New Bid by Aspiring Cider-Maker: As far as we are aware cider is not

currently being produced in Scotland. Dennis McGillivray of Peterhead was denied permission last December to make cider at a small orchard based on a stretch of the former Formartine and Buchan railway line near Ellon. Objections included the need to safeguard the former railway line for any future transport development. Mr McGillivray has appealed the decision with Scottish ministers and hopes to overturn the ruling by Aberdeenshire Council.

Cider Report: Called into the Kings Highway one evening in January and I was disappointed to find only one real ale (Caley 80/-) on tap. However much impressed by the wonderful pint of (Westons) Old Rosie that I had instead. GH, Inverness.

Cider Report: 12th March - I had heard that Old Rosie was on tap in Blackfriars, and so I popped in for a quick pint on my way home from work. Alas, too late, all gone. The new land-lord said it sold out in a couple of days. He said he will definitely be getting more. CVM.

The organisers of **Tradfest**, a traditional ales, food and music festival, to be held in Gairloch in June, are planning to serve a couple of real ciders. Full details on page 28.

Winter Comforts

Just for a change I thought I would send in a report on something other than real ale:

During the cold winter months there is nothing better than settling down in front of a real fire with a warming bowl of soup. After a walk on Boxing Day we went to the Old Bridge Inn at Aviemore where we sat by an open stove and enjoyed homemade mushroom soup with lots of lovely crusty bread. We also found a seat by the stove at the Anderson in Fortrose, on our way home from the Inverness Farmers Market. Soup of the day was leek & potato,

served with warm ciabatta bread, a real treat.

Clachnaharry Inn may be famous for their lentil soup, but don't stop there. Memorable offerings this Winter have included mushroom with much more than a hint of garlic, a very spicy leek and tomato, and a scotch broth that was a meal in itself. Always a warming open fire in the public bar here.

The Taybank at Dunkeld is well worth a short detour from the A9 in Perthshire. A super little bar with a large open fire. Tasty tomato soup with large chunks of different breads.

The real ale? Oh yes, very good too. ICT.



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Highlands & Western Isles **Beer-of-the-Year Award**

Your chance to vote for the best locally brewed beer you have sampled during the past twelve months



Time to reflect on the beers you have been drinking during the past year. 2007 will be the second year we have made this award. Last year you voted Cairngorm Black Gold your favourite tipple, closely followed by Isle of Skye Black Cuillin and Cairngorm Trade Winds.

During the last year our local brewers have added several new brews, and you have an even bigger range to choose from. Our real ale diary has included a record number of beer festivals throughout the Highlands, with no shortage of opportunity to sample local brews.

Real Ales from these breweries within the Highland & Western Isles CAMRA Branch boundary qualify for your vote:

- An Teallach Brewery
- Atlas Brewery
- Black Isle Brewery
- Cairngorm Brewery Company
- Cuillin Brewery
- Far North Brewery
- Glenfinnan Brewery
- Hebridean Brewing Company
- Isle of Skye Brewery

If you have joined us for an outing you will even have had an opportunity to visit most of these breweries to see where and how the beers are brewed.

So what are the criteria for deciding upon your favourite beer? How should you measure one pint against another? We will leave that up to you - a consistently good pint of beer, one you enjoy every week, or a seasonal one-off you thought to be the best beer you have sampled during the last 12 months?

A beer that has been around for many years, or a new brew?

The choice is entirely yours to decide.

Please vote for your favourite three beers: first, second & third; all scores will be totalled.

Please add any comments, NBSS scores, etc. Although not part of the voting process, all beer reports (see page 25) are helpful.

Voting closes on **1st June**, and the result will be published in the Summer edition of this newsletter. Your favourite beer will be one of at least four casks to be served at our real ale bar at the Marymas Fair in August.

We look forward to seeing you all there.



Highlands & Western Isles Branch of CAMRA **2007 Beer-of-the-Year Voting Form**

- | | |
|------------------|------------|
| 1. Brewery | Beer |
| 2. Brewery | Beer |
| 3. Brewery | Beer |

Please post your form to the Branch Contact (address on page 6). Alternatively you can either e-mail your selection to one of the Branch Officers, or use our on-line voting form. Further information at **www.hIGHLANDCAMRA.org.uk**

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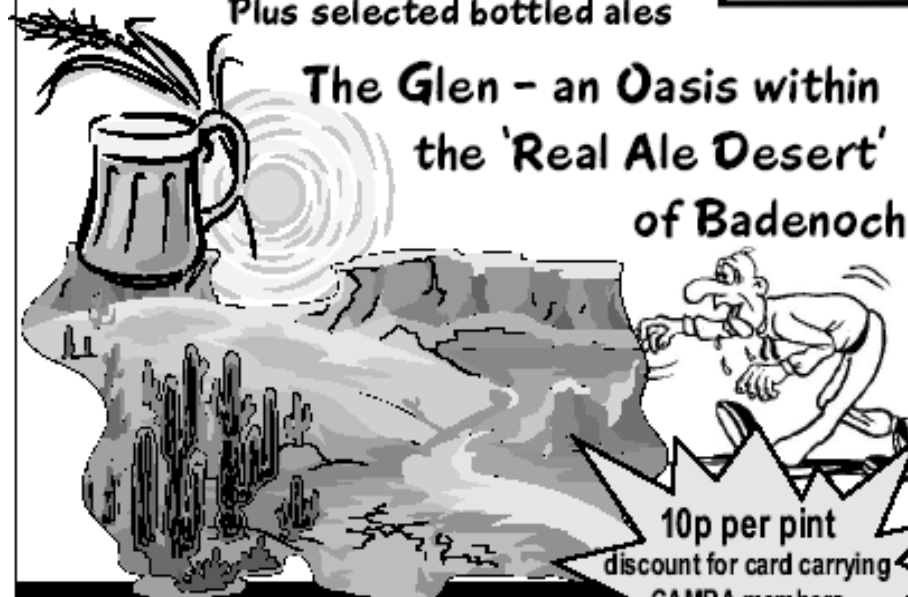
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Hello and a Warm Welcome to:

Del and Janette (pictured) took over at the **Blackfriars** at the beginning of February and plan to run this popular Inverness hostelry as a truly traditional Highland pub; Janette will run the bar, Del will prepare home-cooked Scottish fayre, using the best of local produce. Del and Janette have many years experience in the trade and aim to keep at least three real ales on tap, and to continue with real cider.



Music will feature strongly, with ceilidh, folk and country nights; and bands at weekends. Blackfriars has been in a state of limbo since Bev Alexander gave up the lease and we are sure that both locals and visitors, for whom this has been a popular meeting place over the years, will be delighted that traditional ales, food, music, and, best of all, a friendly service and warm Highland welcome will be on offer for the foreseeable future.

A new menu was being prepared as we went to press which was likely to feature Brisket Stovies with beetroot and oatcakes, Arbroath Smokie poached in milk, Stornoway Black Pudding and Cockburns Haggis, with Cloutie Dumpling (sadly not regularly available around and about) as a dessert choice.

Suzy and Nigel, in partnership with Suzy's parents, Gordon & Deborah, purchased the **Invergarry Hotel** in October. The hotel is ideally located by the junction of the A87 ('Road to the Isles') and A82, on the Great Glen Cycle Route, and close to the Great Glen Water Park. Outdoor enthusiasts will welcome the drying room. A 'Traditional Highland Bar' with regular Scottish Folk Music.

We have read (Northern Times, 27th October) that brothers **Graham and Barry Lonsdale**, from Cornwall, have bought the **Invershin Hotel** and plan to invest a six-figure sum to bring the hotel back to its former glory as one of the North's premier sporting hotels.

Best of British Beer Awards

The Daily Telegraph and Cask Marque Trust have joined forces to create the Best of British Beer Awards.

The Daily Telegraph ran a four-week campaign to encourage cask ale drinkers to vote for their favourite cask ale. During a seven-day period £1-off vouchers were available in the Daily Telegraph which could be redeemed at the participating Cask Marque polling stations.

Cask Marque award-winning outlets were able to become designated polling stations where customers could vote for their favourite beer. Customers with The Daily Telegraph vouchers were able to receive £1 off a pint of cask ale. The country was split into 10 regions and votes were to be counted by region to give regional champions. A four-page supplement will appear in the Saturday Weekend Food and Drink section of The Daily Telegraph, to cover the results of the promotion.

All regional winners will be invited to an awards luncheon to be held in London. The licensee who generated the most votes in their region will be invited to join the occasion, together with one of their customers.

There are a number of Cask Marque pubs in the Highlands, but as far as we know the GBG-listed Glen Hotel in Newtonmore was the only designated polling station in our area.

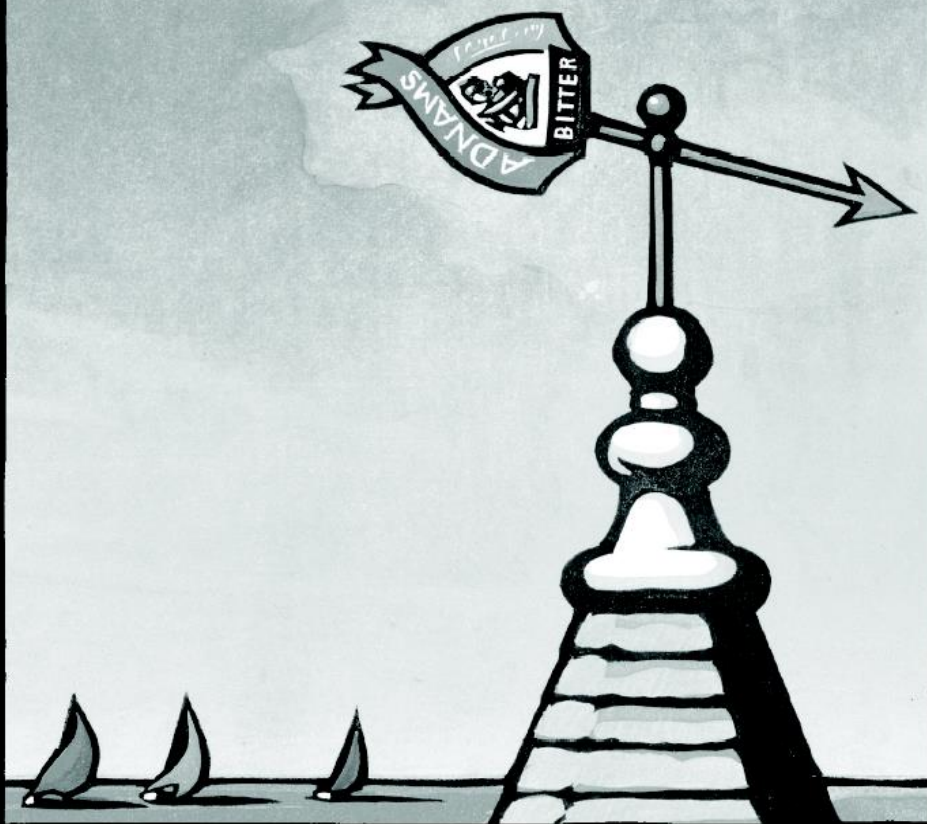
The results will obviously be eagerly awaited at the Glen, and hopefully licensee Chris Goodhill, featured in our Winter Focus, may receive an invitation to the awards luncheon.



Our website - **highlandcamra.org.uk** - was two years old in February. We try to provide useful information in support of local real ale pubs and brewers, and feedback indicates the site is well used by visitors. Let us know if you have ideas for additions, improvements, etc.

ADNAMS. BEER FROM THE COAST.

Adnams Broadside Always available at the Clachnaharry Inn



We are losing our friendly locals

(Letter to the Daily Telegraph, 27th Dec 2006)

Sir – I wonder if we shall remember 2007 as the year we lost our pubs. It used to be that when streets were redeveloped, the pub on the corner survived. A licence was a valuable asset to hang on to.

Over the past few weeks I have noticed a number of pubs, even in the West End of London, boarded up with "To Let" signs nailed to their walls. Now that most pubs are merely managed on behalf of chains, they have to earn back a large investment. Where individual landlords remain, they cannot afford the upgrading work.

Worst of all, instead of pubs being the product of landlords' intuition and regulars' loyalty, they are losing all personality, with anonymous decor, animals banned, and loud music making conversation impossible.

No wonder drinking in pubs has gone from a means of friendly social cohesion to an anti-social, mindless binge.

PO, London NW6

The letter was accompanied by a picture:

"Jack Fowler's coal-horse, Sam, was welcome at the Balloon, Bedford, in 1937" showing Sam leaning over a table in the public (presumably) bar where four men were playing dominoes!

We're not sure how many of our local pubs welcome horses in the bar, but we do know that a good number welcome dogs (check our website for details). Ed.

We are disappointed to have to report that the **Winking Owl** in Aviemore, a one-time real ale mecca, is currently boarded up. There is no shortage of real ale outlets in the Aviemore area but the demise of this once fine hostelry, known locally as the "Blinking Owl", will have saddened real ale drinkers from near and far.

The Winking Owl is currently owned by S&N Pub Enterprises who are advertising a 25 year Investment Lease on "A unique pub situated in the busy tourist town of Aviemore".

In January the Strathspey & Badenoch Herald reported that a revised application, from S&N, for planning permission to "to erect a first-floor balcony and stairwell on the building's front" had gained a frosty reception from most

members of Highland Council's Badenoch and Strathspey area planning committee who feel that the work will ruin the character of the pub built on the former site of an outbuilding of Aviemore House, which was constructed in 1765 and knocked down in 1964.

Architectural studies show that the southern wing of the Winking Owl is likely to be an original outbuilding constructed over 100 years ago to serve Aviemore House.

A decision was again deferred, but it is to be hoped that S&N and local planners can agree a way forward that does not lead to the loss of yet another licensed premises.

Smoke ban blamed for bar closure

From the Highland News -11 January, 2007

The Haugh Bar in Inverness is to close – as the city's first casualty of the smoking ban. Its owners said it had seen a drop in custom since the ban was introduced last March.

A spokesman said: "Since the introduction of the smoking ban there has been a drop in custom, as well as some complaints from neighbours regarding the noise from patrons stepping outside for a smoke."

"As the bar is in a predominantly residential area the owners and their tenants did not think it appropriate to introduce an external smoking area as this may have made the noise issue for neighbours worse."

An application is being considered by the Highland Council planning department to change the bar into three upmarket flats complete with parking.

The Haugh Bar became notorious in 1993 when landlord at the time Patrick Wight banned English people from drinking there and the pub's reputation lingered even after his departure.

Better news regarding the former Little Chef restaurant on the A9 near Tomatin, which has been closed since last January. The Inverness Courier (9th March) reported that Braemore Estates of Creiff plan to create a hotel and a food hall capable of attracting some of the best food and drink companies in the Highlands to showcase their products.

This may have been a pub before it became a Little Chef? Can anyone confirm? Ed.

The Old Inn

Gairloch, Ross-shire, IV21 2BD

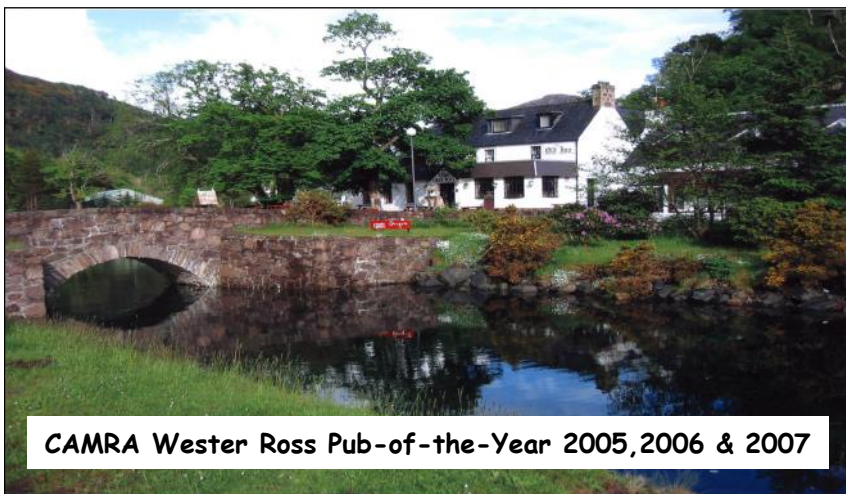
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Inverness & Highland CAMRA Country Pub-of-the-Year for 2004

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An Teallach
ABV 4.2 %

ers Pale Ale
ABV 4.2 %



Beinn Dec
ABV 3.8 %

ouse Special
ABV 4.4 %

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Tel/FAX: 01854 633 306 E-Mail: anteallachale@dundonnell.freeserve.co.uk

Focus on the Badenoch Two

Craig and Louise Whitwell are local CAMRA members who live in Kingussie, and have just had their first baby. Craig works for the NHS as a domestic supervisor and Louise is on maternity leave from the Highland Council.

Q. Where are you from?

A. We both are originally from Preston in Lancashire. We lived in Preston until 2003, when we moved to Newtonmore, and then on to Kingussie from 2004.

Q. Where did you meet?

A. We both used to live on the same street, and went out as friends a couple of times and the rest, as they say, is history!!

Q. Why and when did you first drink real ale?

A. Craig:- I was introduced to real ale in the New Britannia pub in Preston, I used to travel around the country a lot, listening to the different bands, and I found interesting

regional variations to beer styles, some hopper beers in England and the malty beers here in Scotland. Louise went to a few beer festivals in Manchester & Sheffield with me and was hooked!!!

Q. Why move to the north of Scotland?

A. We had holidayed in Kingussie, often staying at the much missed Royal Hotel in conjunction with its November beer festivals. We then decided to leave the rat race behind and settle for a quieter life in the Highlands.

Q. Have you found a difference in attitudes to real ale up here?

A. When we moved up here 3½ years ago, pubs were few and far between that were serving real ale. More pubs and hotel



bars seem to be stocking real ale now. A lot of pubs are also starting to sell real cider as well as real ale.

Q. Your favourite real ales and beer styles?

A. Louise:- I am fan of darker beers, and Cairngorm Black Gold is my favourite. I also love fruity beers, such as Hanby Cherry Bomb, mmmm (I've never seen that north of the border!!!). Craig likes a good hoppy bitter, such as Phoenix Brewery beers from Manchester, but is starting to enjoy the dark beers more. We both enjoy Belgian beers after being converted by Jim at the Anderson in Fortrose.

Q. What type of pubs do you like?

A. We both enjoy a nice quiet pint in a friendly local pub, (with a roaring real coal fire in winter and a friendly pub cat). We can't see the attraction of a crowded bar with blaring music and not being able to hear yourself think!!

Q. How do you relax, any hobbies/interests?

A. We are into music and going to gigs around the country. We are fans of Preston North End, but don't get much chance to see them up here (a 650 mile round trip for a home game is a bit too far). Since moving up here, we have become very keen on walking – There are some cracking walks and the scenery is outstanding. In the summer we love just taking ourselves off somewhere and camping (a good pub isn't usually far away though!!!). Most of our hobbies have now been put on hold, and all our time is taken up with the arrival of the wee one!!

Q. Do you see a difference in pubs in England and Scotland since the smoking ban?

A. We have been south of the border on a few occasions since the ban and always look forward to getting back to Scotland and to the smoke free bars. The smoking ban in England will be welcomed by us, some very good pubs down south are not visited by us because of the amount of smoke. We hope the success that Scotland has had with the ban will be carried over the border making pubs and bars a pleasanter place to be.

Please keep sending in the pub reports. Ed.

“a beer drinker's mecca”

Good Beer Guide 2005-2007



real ale
80 Belgians

real cider
200 malts

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2007 (tied vote)**

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Real Ale Pubs

These Inns and Hotels are known to sell (or to have recently sold) cask-conditioned ale. Please let us know about the quality of real ales on offer (see page 25), particularly if you think inclusion in the Good Beer Guide is merited. We make no claims as to the quality of the beer, and you should note that some pubs may only stock real ale on a seasonal **(S)** basis:

Inverness City

Blackfriars
Caley Inn (S)
Castle Tavern
(Formerly the Harlequin Bar & Restaurant)
Clachnaharry Inn
Nico's Bar, Glen Mhor Hotel
Heathmount Hotel
Hootananny
Johnny Foxes (TP)
Kings Highway *(Wetherspoons)*
Masonic Club
Number 27
Palace Hotel
Phoenix Bar
Snowgoose

Inverness District

Benleva Hotel, Drumnadrochit
Loch Ness Lodge, Drumnadrochit (S)
Clansman Hotel
Slaters Arms, Cannich (S)
Bothy Bar, Fort Augustus
Caledonian Hotel, Fort Augustus (S)
Lock Inn, Fort Augustus
Whitebridge Hotel, Loch Ness South
Dores Inn
Glenmoriston Arms, Invermoriston
North Kessock Hotel
Culbokie Inn
Royal Hotel, Cromarty (S)
Cromarty Arms (TP)
The Anderson, Fortrose
Plough Inn, Rosemarkie
Crofters Café Bar, Rosemarkie (TP)
Munlochy Hotel (TP)
Old North Inn, Inchmore
National Hotel, Dingwall
Richmond Hotel, Strathpeffer
Ben Wyvis Hotel, Strathpeffer
Inchbae Lodge Hotel, Garve

Castle Hotel, Portmahomack
Edderton Inn, Edderton
Star Inn, Tain
Cawdor Tavern, Cawdor
Classroom Bistro Bar, Nairn
Invernairne Hotel, Nairn (TP)(S)
Tomatin Country Inn, Tomatin (S)

(TP - Dispensed using Top Pressure)

Wester Ross

Applecross Inn
Summer Isles Hotel, Achiltibuie (S)
Am Fuaran Bar, Altandhu (S)
Ledgowan Hotel, Achnasheen
Drumchork Hotel, Aultbea (S)
Dundonnell Hotel
Kinlochewe Hotel
Loch Torridon Country House Hotel
Torridon Inn (S)
Badachro Inn
Glendale House, South Erradale (S)
Loch Inn, Gairloch
Myrtle Bank Hotel, Gairloch (S)
Steading Cafe & Restaurant, Gairloch (S)
Old Inn, Gairloch
Lochcarron Hotel, Lochcarron
Rockvilla Hotel, Lochcarron
Strathcarron Hotel
Tigh-an-Eilean Hotel, Shieldaig
Argyll Hotel, Ullapool
Caley Inn Bar, Ullapool
Ferry Boat Inn, Ullapool
Morefield Motel, Ullapool
Seaforth Bar & Restaurant, Ullapool

Fort William & Lochaber

Grog & Gruel, Fort William
Ben Nevis Hotel, Fort William
Ben Nevis Inn, Fort William
Nevisport Bar, Fort William
Invergarry Hotel
The Eagle, Laggan Locks
(An Inn on a boat on the water)
Loch Oich Restaurant/Bar, South Laggan
Old Station Restaurant, Spean Bridge
Spean Bridge Hotel (S)
Stronlossit Hotel, Roy Bridge
Tomdoun Sporting Lodge
Glenfinnan House Hotel
Steam Inn, Mallaig

Old Forge, Inverie
 Ben View Hotel, Strontian
 Strontian Inn (S)
 Four Seasons, Onich
 Corran Inn, Onich
(Formerly the Nether Lochaber Hotel)
 Inn at Ardgour
 Ice Factor, Kinlochleven
 Mamore Lodge, Kinlochleven (S)
 Tailrace Inn, Kinlochleven

* Strictly the following three pubs are in Glasgow & West of Scotland branch area, but are not very far from the "border" and are worth a visit.

Laroch Bar, Ballachulish
 Clachaig Inn, Glencoe
 Kings House Hotel, Glencoe

Aviemore & Cairngorms

Cairn Hotel, Carrbridge
 Heatherbrae Hotel, Nethy Bridge
 Boat Hotel, Boat of Garten
 Cairngorm Hotel, Aviemore
 Dalfaber Country Club, Aviemore (TP)
 Glenmore Lodge, Nr Aviemore
 Old Bridge Inn, Aviemore
 Suie Hotel, Kincaig
 Glen Hotel, Newtonmore
 Lodge Hotel, Newtonmore
 Silver Fjord Hotel, Kingussie
 Topsy Laird, Kingussie
 Ben Mhor Hotel, Grantown-on-Spey

* Strictly the following four pubs are in the Aberdeen, Grampian, & North Isles branch area, but are barely outside the Cairngorms and are worth a visit.

Mash Tun, Charlestown of Aberlour
 Highlander Inn, Craigellachie
 Croft Inn, Glenlivet
 Glen Avon Hotel, Tomintoul

Caithness & Sutherland

Scourie Hotel, Scourie
 Inchnadamph Hotel
 Burghfield House Hotel, Dornoch
 Castle Hotel, Dornoch
 Invershin Hotel
 Sutherland Arms Hotel, Golspie (S)
 Sutherland Inn, Brora
 Tongue Hotel
 Melvich Hotel
 MacKay's Hotel, Wick

A Fine Day for a Great Ale?



A Great Day for A Fyne Ale!

Alexander Bain, Wick (*Wetherspoons*)
 Central Hotel, Thurso
 Commercial Hotel, Thurso (S)

Skye, Lochalsh & Hebrides

Isle of Raasay Hotel
 King Haakon Bar, Kyleakin
 Ardsavar Hotel
 Isle Ornsay Hotel
 Broadford Hotel, Broadford
 Claymore, Broadford
 Dunollie Hotel, Broadford
 Hebridean Hotel, Broadford
 Old Inn, Carbost
 Sconser Lodge Hotel
 Sligachan Hotel (S)
 Taigh Ailean Hotel, Portnalong
 Dunvegan Hotel
 Stein Inn, Waternish
 Edinbane Hotel
 The Lodge at Edinbane
 Ferry Inn, Uig

Uig Hotel, Uig
 Pub at the Pier, Uig
 Duntulm Castle Hotel
 Greshornish Lodge
 Bosville Hotel, Portree
 Isles Inn, Portree
 Royal Hotel, Portree

Cluanie Inn
 Glenelg Inn
 Kintail Lodge Hotel
 Clachan Bar, Dornie
 Loch Duich Hotel, Dornie
 Balmacara Hotel
 Kyle Hotel, Kyle of Lochalsh
 Tingle Creek Hotel, Erbusaig
(by Kyle of Lochalsh)

Plockton Hotel, Plockton
 Plockton Inn, Plockton

Lochmaddy Hotel, North Uist (S)
 Tigh Dearg Hotel, Lochmaddy, North Uist
 Carinish Inn, North Uist (S)
 Langass Lodge, North Uist (S)
 Westford Inn, North Uist
 Dark Island Hotel, Benbecula (S)

Isle of Benbecula House Hotel (S)
 Borrodale Hotel, South Uist (S)
 Orasay Inn, South Uist (S)
 Lochboisdale Hotel, South Uist (S)
 Polachar Inn, South Uist (S)
 Shawbost Inn, Isle of Lewis
 Clachan Bar, Stornoway
 Cladh Inn, Stornoway
 Royal British Legion, Stornoway
 Whalers Rest, Stornoway
 Harris Inn, Tarbert (S)

* In total 33 of the pubs listed are in the Good Beer Guide (GBG). We cannot indicate entries, you will have to buy the guide for that, but you may find some clues elsewhere in this newsletter.

Good Beer Guide 2007

Full details on page 36

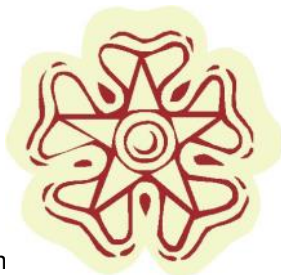
Publicans should note that if you are listed in the guide you may use this artwork in adverts and on your website.



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Highlands & Islands Brewers in 2007



* **Orkney Brewery** - Brewing commenced in March 1988 at the old schoolhouse in Sandwick. Ales include Dark Island, Red MacGregor, and Skullsplitter.

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



Valhalla Brewery - The most northerly brewery in the UK started brewing on the island of Unst, in December 1997. Ales include White Wife and Auld Rock.

Black Isle Brewery - Started brewing in December 1998 in converted farm buildings. Ales include Red Kite and Yellowhammer. Organic ales are a speciality.

Far North Brewery - Melvich brewpub. Ales include Real Mackay & Fast Reactor.

Isle of Arran Brewery - Located close to Brodick Castle. Opened late March 2000. Ales include Blonde, Dark, and Sunset.

Fyne Ales Brewery - Based in Argyll, at the head of Loch Fyne, brewing started on St Andrew's Day 2001. Ales include Piper's Gold and Maverick.



Cairngorm Brewery Company - Set up in late 2001 to market the beers of the Tomintoul & Aviemore breweries, which they own. Ales include Trade Winds, Wildcat, Stag, Highland IPA, and Black Gold. Seasonal ales are regularly brewed.

Hebridean Brewing Company - Based at Stornoway in the Outer Hebrides. Began brewing in January 2002, now producing five regular and some seasonal ales. Beers include Clansman Ale (first ale ever brewed in Stornoway), Islander Strong Ale & Berserker Export Pale Ale.



* **Atlas Brewery** - Brewing in one of the old Aluminium Smelter buildings at Kinlochleven since February 2002. Ales include Latitude, Wayfarer, and Nimbus.

An Teallach Brewery - Brewing moved to the family's croft at Camusnagaul, near Dundonnell, during March 2003. Ales include An Teallach Ale, Crofter's Pale Ale, and Beinn Dearg.



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 September the 10th, 2004, in the old public bar of the Sligachan Hotel. Skye, Eagle and Pinnacle Ales are brewed.

Highland Brewing Company - Started brewing in late 2004 at Moorhouses (Lancs). Brewery is now located in the old Swannay cheese factory at Birsay, on Orkney.

Oyster Brewery - Located in Ellenabeich, on the Isle of Seil, near Oban. Set up in 2004, first brews in early 2005. Ales include Easda' Ale, Red Pearl, and Oyster Gold.

Isle of Mull Brewery - Started in 2005 with a 5 barrel plant in Tobermory. McCaig's Folly and Galleon Gold ales.

* The **Atlas** and **Orkney** Breweries were taken out of administration in June 2006 by **Sinclair Breweries Ltd**, a company formed by the hotelier & restaurateur Norman Sinclair and his wife, Christine.

Glenfinnan Brewery - The first beer, A' Chiad Fhear, was brewed in their 4-barrel plant in October 2006 - a limited edition of 1,000 bottles plus one barrel.



Not all of the breweries listed are in our branch area - many are all in the Grampian & Isles area; Brewery Ayrshire & Sea; while Islay Ales, Breweries Glasgow & similarly for Highlands & Islands pubs listed in the GBG, pubs in Orkney and Shetland are submitted by the Aberdeen, Grampian & Northern Isles Branch.



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. Alternatively you can now submit your scores online at www.beerscoring.org.uk, or our own website, or send us an e-mail. You can get NBSS cards from your local CAMRA branch or download from the members area of the national website.

CAMRA National Beer Scoring Scheme	
Surveyor	_____
Mem.No.	_____ Date of survey _____ / _____
Pub	_____
Location	_____
GBG County/Area	_____ Score 0-5 _____
Beer	_____ (optional)

Sample



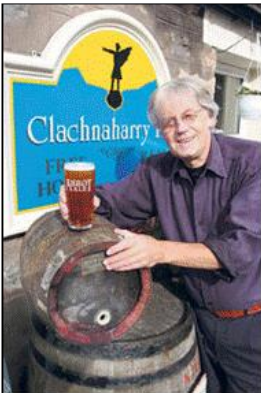
The Castle Tavern

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An article by Trevor Martin, in the Highland News on 25th January, 2007, was headed:

"Real ale 'king' buys into castle"



Trevor reported that Inverness's king of real ale was to open the door to his very own castle. Clachnaharry Inn landlord George MacLean had purchased the city's Harlequin bar and restaurant and would re-open it in February as the Castle Tavern.

Highland News he hoped his latest venture would prove a hit with the locals as well as tourists visiting the city.

George said: "As someone who has been in the licensing business for almost 40 years, and owned a few other establishments, I knew this

was too good an opportunity to miss."

George went on to explain that the site of the new pub was in a prime location at the top of Castle Street, and he hoped it would attract a lot of the tourist trade that visits the castle.

The official takeover date was 5th February, but the pub would not be open for business until 5 pm on Friday 9th February as there was some refurbishment to be carried out.

"The Harlequin name will change to the Castle Tavern and it will serve the best real ales and food that has made the Clachnaharry Inn one of the best pubs in Scotland."

George sold the Clachnaharry Inn to Dunbar-based brewers Belhaven last summer. As a condition of the sale, he took the lease of the premises and continues to run it.

The Harlequin bar and restaurant had been owned for many years by local businessman Jim Savage who bought the tumbled-down premises in 1992 and invested time and money in turning a run-down building into a successful bar and restaurant. Surprising to note that Jim Savage had been running the Harle-

quin on a part-time basis while working out in the North Sea. Changes to what he describes as his "real job" meant a decision had to be made regarding the Harlequin.

Apparently George put a good offer on the table and Mr Savage decided to sell. Having known him for many years he was confident that George would give it his full attention and hopefully take it to the next stage.

Real Ale drinkers will be pleased to note that George intends to link the two pubs for an expanded festival at the end of September.

He said: "We will be running a twin venue event between the Clachnaharry Inn and the Castle Tavern from 28th-30th September.

"There will be different real ales, ciders and stouts available coupled with street theatre artistes and live entertainment."

"Transport will be available to ferry real ale enthusiasts to and from both venues and special accommodation rates will be available with local hotels and guest houses."

Highlands & Western Isles CAMRA wish "King George" all the very best in his new Castle.

Castle Tavern - A Grand Opening

A small throng had gathered at the top of Castle Street on the late afternoon of Friday 9th February. Clearly a good number were keen to be present at the opening of a new real ale venue in Inverness.

Any who thought that George might be serving ales before the advertised opening time were to be disappointed as five o'clock approached and the doors remained securely locked.

At the nominated hour the doors were opened, and with some ceremony as a welcoming red carpet was rolled out across the beer patio!

Four beers were dispensed from handpump: Orkney Dark Island, Cairngorm Black Gold, Greene King Abbot, and Flora MacDonald Ale, a house beer from the Isle of Skye Brewery.

A very fine opening selection and the welcome extended to a large free buffet, served in the covered 50-seat beer patio and terrace which overlook the River Ness.

Walkers finishing the Great Glen Way will have only to cross the road to slake their thirst - it almost makes long distance walking sound inviting. Ideal for escaping from shops! CVM.

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Aviemore Beer Festival

Nigel Reid, at the Old Bridge Inn in Aviemore, has been promising us a beer festival for a couple of years and his early March event was well worth waiting for. A mixed group from the local CAMRA branch included our oldest member, octogenarian John Aird (pictured below), and the Badenoch Two's new arrival, son Ben. All those present enjoyed a very sociable Saturday afternoon sampling the splendid range of brews on offer.



The selection included:

Harvieston Schiehallion, Hebridean Berserker Ale, Caley 80/- & XPA, Stewart's No.3 Scotch Ale, SA Brains Reverend James, Inveralmond Trappledouser, Highland Brewing Company Orkney Best, Fyne Ales Avalanche (a new brew), plus White Lady and Trade Winds from the Cairngorm Brewery. All beers were in perfect condition, as was the Thatcher's Heritage Cider. Genial landlord Nigel (main picture), with his cheerful and friendly team ("Enjoy your beer") made every effort to make this a very good day out. Same again next year please Nigel!!



The Old Bridge Inn ~ Aviemore



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

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More Festival News

The fifth **Scottish Traditional Beer Festival** will be held at the Assembly Rooms, 54 George St, Edinburgh. Dates are Thursday 14th June until Saturday 16th June. There will be over 100 different beers, mainly from Scotland, plus Cider and Perry and some Continental bottled beers. The Champion Beer of Scotland will also be judged. Staff are always needed so look out for details in What's Brewing.

Tradfest - A Real Ale and Music Festival, in association with An Teallach Brewery, will be held at the Old Inn & Gairloch Highland Lodge on 22nd - 24th June. 20+ Real Ales will be on tap, focusing on microbreweries from across the UK, plus 2 Real Ciders. There will be music from Box O' Bananas, Southpaw, and Wingin' It, plus jam sessions.



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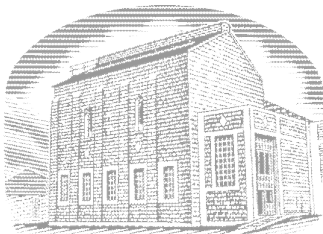
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Winter Walkabout

Our custom in recent years has been to finish the local CAMRA social calendar with a tour of Inverness city centre real ale hosteleries, and December 2006 was no exception:



Number 27 was the chosen rendez-vous and we enjoyed the Caledonian XPA (average score 3). Black Isle Red Kite ran out just as the first pint was being poured and was not replaced. A short stroll down to the river bank to Nico's Bar at the Glen Mhor Hotel, where Marstons Pedigree (3) and a sweet Belhaven St Andrews (3/4) were in very good condition. We were reminded that their regular jazz band started at nine, should we want to return.

We now headed for the town centre, along the river bank with it's festive lights. The river level was a little below the earlier very high tide, which had lapped the top of the bank.

Three Black Isle real ales were advertised at Hootananny: the Red Kite was ok (2/3), but the Goldeneye wheat beer was very good (4). Blonde was also on the board but it was from

a normal keg tap (NOT real ale), a bit of mis-advertising. Next over the road to the Kings Highway, the busiest bar of the night, where queues were forming to get served - but some people were just walking up to the bar and getting served first! This was the cheapest price of the night at £1.55 a pint, (I think I remembered getting charged £3.20! in one pub during the evening). Greene King Abbot Ale, Caledonian 80/- and Isle of Skye Red Cuillin (3) were on tap, plus Weston's Old Rosie cider. Onward to the Phoenix where everyone went for Atlas 'White Christmas'(3), (we were told it was Blizzard), also on but not tried were Caledonian 80/- and Deuchars IPA.

Across the road to an empty Blackfriars where they were having their Christmas Ales Festival. Besides Westons Traditional Scrumpy was an excellent selection to finish off our evening - Skinner's Christmas Fairy (4), Cairngorm Stag, Charles Well's Eagle IPA, Bateman's Rosey Nosey (3/4), Hyde's Yule Be Back, Kelburn Ca'Canny and Isle of Skye Leann Nollaig (3/4). Another good walk around Inverness and much enjoyed by the nine members present.



Welcome to the Corran Inn

Sitting on the shores of Loch Linnhe, beside the Corran ferry, the Corran Inn is just 10 minutes from Fort William and Ben Nevis and 10 minutes from Glencoe. With 5 comfortable rooms, a traditional bar and relaxing coal fires, the Inn provides the ideal base to explore this beautiful part of the Scottish Highlands. Whether you're walking, climbing, touring by car or just sitting with your feet up watching the world float by on the loch, The Corran Inn will give you a friendly welcome and make you feel at home.

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We believe in giving our guests what they want! So, we serve full cooked breakfasts from 7am every day. In fact, we serve good food all day, every day until 9:30 in the evening. We also stock an excellent range of real ales and have almost 50 single malt whiskies to help you relax after your meal!

For Hill walkers and climbers, if you let us know in advance, we'll serve cooked breakfasts as early as you like (We've done it at 4am for climbers heading for Tower Ridge on Ben Nevis) and will serve you an evening meal up until 11pm. We'll look after your kit as well! We have a drying and laundry room available to get your gear dry for the next day.

If you're an internet junky, we have wireless broadband available free of charge throughout the inn, including all the bedrooms, so bring your laptop!



We're open all day, every day, from 7am until late, serving breakfast, snacks, meals and coffees.

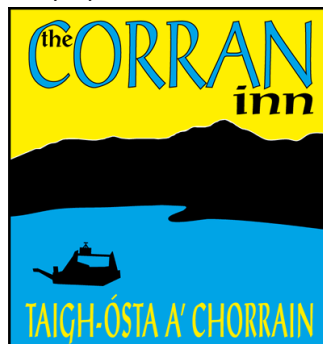
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Hebridean Brewing Company owner Andy Ribbens receives awards for his beers from local and Aberdeen CAMRA Branch Officers:

Champion Winter Beer of Scotland:

Berserker Export Pale Ale - 7.5% ABV - Award and Quaich presented by Aberdeen & Northern Isles Festival Organiser Richard Jones.



Marymas Fair Beer-of-the-Festival:

Islander Strong Premium Ale - 4.8% ABV
Award presented by Inverness & Western Isles CAMRA Chairman Bill Tring (above).

Green Jack Brewery's Ripper, an 8.5% ABV barley wine, was named as the Supreme **Champion Winter Beer of Britain 2007** by a panel of judges at CAMRA's National Winter Ales Festival in January. Silver went to Fuller's London Porter, Bronze to Orkney Skullsplitter.

SUPREME CHAMPION

Gold - Green Jack, Ripper (Lowestoft, Suffolk)
Silver - Fuller's London Porter (Chiswick, London)
Bronze - Orkney Skullsplitter (Stromness, Orkney)

CATEGORY WINNERS

Old Ales & Strong Mild Category

Gold - B&T Black Dragon Mild (Bedfordshire)
Silver - Orkney Dark Island (Orkney)
Bronze - Rudgate Ruby Mild (North Yorkshire)

Stouts & Porters

Gold - Fuller's London Porter (London)
Silver - Cairngorm Black Gold (Aviemore)
Bronze - St Peter's Old Style Porter (Suffolk)

Barley Wines

Gold - Orkney Skullsplitter (Orkney)
Silver - Green Jack Ripper (Lowestoft, Suffolk)
Bronze - Durham Benedictus (Co Durham)

Great to see more awards for local brewers. Not sure how Ripper was runner-up in the Barley Wines (behind Skullsplitter), but then took Gold overall ahead of Skullsplitter? Ed.

CAMRA and Food from Britain have brought together the winners of this year's Champion Winter Beer of Britain competition

with the finest home-grown foods for a truly sumptuous winter feast. Louise Ashworth, CAMRA Head of Marketing, said: "There are some wonderful foods from across Britain that are at their best during the colder months, and these award winning beers match them superbly. It makes perfect sense to combine beer and food to make a winter dining experience that would warm anyone's appetite."

There are some suggestions for BEER AND FOOD MATCHES – with suggested ingredient suppliers - on the main CAMRA website:

Moules Mariniere (with stout) - Mussels from Dundrum Bay Oyster Fishery, (N. Ireland).

Match with: Cairngorm Black Gold (Aviemore, Highlands). Silver medal winner in the Stouts & Porters category.

From experience we suspect that Cairngorm Black Gold would go well with a great many dishes. Hopefully to save food miles you may be able to find some local mussels to go with your local stout! Ed.

CAMRA's new UK prices survey has revealed that the average price of a pint of real ale has risen in the last year by 10p (4.61%) to £2.34. The increase is 10% above the Retail Price Index (RPI) rise of 4.2%. In Scotland the average price is £2.36, a rise of only 2.03%. Real Cider is up by 5.7% to an average £2.45.

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Inns & Things

The GBG listed **Scourie Hotel**

appeared on Scottish ITV for ten weeks during January to March, in Nick Hancock's Fishing School. The ten-part series followed six aspiring anglers who spent two intensive weeks living at the hotel and fishing together in the remote lochs and rivers of North West Sutherland. The stunning scenery of this wilderness area will have been enjoyed by anglers and non-anglers alike.

We hear that the **Westford Inn** in North Uist is having a second handpump installed.

The Sutherland Arms in Brora, will now be called the **Sutherland Inn**, in a effort to avoid confusion with the Sutherland Arms Hotel in nearby Golspie.

The **Castle Hotel** in Portmahomack is in the hands of new owners, and there will be no real ale until the tourist months of summer.

A proposed sale did not go through and so the **Boat Hotel** in Boat of Garten is still owned by the Tatchells, with a new general manager: Cath Wright. The hotel is still on the market.



The **Stronlossit Hotel** has undergone a Winter expansion, including a new cellar, kitchen and some permanent staff accommodation. This is a sure sign of the success and popularity of this fine GBG-listed pub. We wish Sandra and Maurice continuing success for the future.

The **Broadford Hotel** is having handpumps fitted in the lounge and bar, which will bring the number of real ale outlets in Skye's second largest settlement to four.

In Skye's main town, Portree, the number of handpumps in **MacNabs Bar**, at the Royal Hotel, is being increased to four. In an earlier guise, as MacNab's Inn, this was where Bonnie Prince Charlie bade farewell for the last time in 1746 to Flora MacDonald, who had famously conveyed him "Over the Sea to Skye".

Duntulm Castle Hotel, at the northern tip of Skye, is having a second handpump installed. Peter Martin has started brewing again at the **Far North Brewery**, and the **Melvich Hotel** will be open from Easter.

The Ben Damph Inn has re-opened after their winter closedown, but as the **Torridon Inn**.

News of Brews

Plans have been lodged with Orkney Islands Council by Sinclair Breweries Ltd, owner of the Quoyloo premises in Sandwick, to expand the **Orkney Brewery** to create a visitor centre and sampling room.



"The Orkney Brewery site has an enormous potential as a tourist attraction." said Norman Sinclair, "We feel that a high-quality, purpose-built centre would greatly enhance the overall experience of people visiting the brewery. In addition to telling the story of the Orkney Brewery and explaining the brewing process through guided tours and displays, the visitor centre will stock local crafts and produce."

Sinclair Breweries Ltd bought over the award-winning Orkney Brewery in June 2006.

Ewan Grant has left Cairngorm Brewery and moved into the distilling industry with the Balmenach Distillery at Cromdale. Ewan had followed a career in brewing since leaving school in 1994; starting off at the now closed

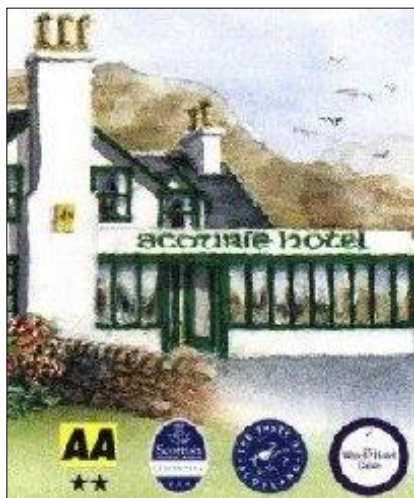
Tomintoul Brewery. His contribution has been an important factor in the development of the superb range of beers now available from the Cairngorm Brewery, and he will be missed. We wish Ewan all the very best for his future in this new challenge he has taken on.

Following the expansion and modernisation of their bottling plant, **Isle of Skye Brewery** has been able to increase output, and stocks of Oyster Stout, Blaven and Cuillin Beast are regularly available at the brewery shop.

They are also bottling MacNab's, the house beer brewed for the Royal Hotel in Portree.

Isle of Skye Brewery is also now supplying Wetherspoons direct. Their cask ales are on tap at the King's Highway in Inverness, the Muckle Cross in Elgin, the Counting House in Dundee, Archibald Simpsons in Aberdeen and the Capital Asset in Perth.

Black Isle Brewery report good sales of their bottled-conditioned Goldeneye, a straw coloured Pale Ale made with a Belgian yeast. Production is at capacity and they are looking for a new plant to give a bigger brew length.



Scourie Hotel

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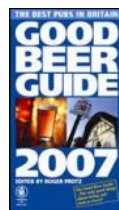
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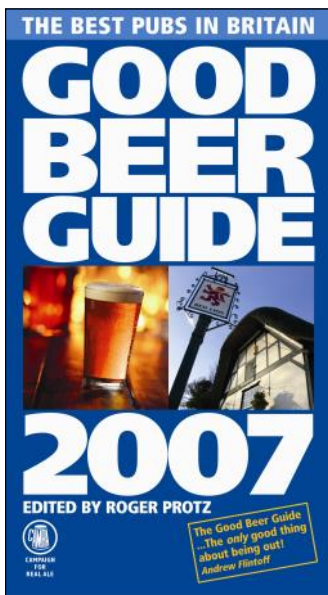
Cask Ales and Real Cider are served

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

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



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



Good Beer Guide 2007

Edited by Roger Protz, Britain's foremost beer writer and taster, and now in its 34th edition, the guide is the number one best-selling guide to pubs which sell fine quality real ale.

Year after year the *Good Beer Guide* champions fine quality real ale while providing a comprehensive guide to the nation's best pubs, from sophisticated city bars to cosy country inns, and from tiny off-beat locals to grand architectural gems.

The *Good Beer Guide* is the long-established pub guide and is beloved by beer enthusiasts. The Guide contains 4500 of the top real ale pubs in the UK, including details of which beers they serve, opening hours, addresses, information on food, amenities for families, and atmosphere.

As well as being a pub guide, the book contains details on all the country's breweries - from the largest companies to the smallest microbreweries. It also includes tasting notes for the vast majority of beers brewed in the UK.

The guide is indispensable for beer lovers and includes a selection of features on beer, brewing and pubs.

Local members can purchase the GBG 2007 from their branch committee for a bargain £10:00, which gives the branch a small profit used to support your local pubs & breweries.

Branch Matters

January and February are busy months for your local committee. Nominations for 2008 Good Beer Guide entries must be submitted to the Scottish & Northern Ireland Branches (SNIB) director by very early March, and so much time is spent in reviewing pub reports and surveys from the past 12 months in an effort to ensure only pubs who regularly serve real ale in tip-top condition are nominated.

The quality of beer on offer in the Highlands & Western Isles means that there are more than our quota of 34 pubs which merit inclusion in the guide. The committee have a duty to take care in selection of the very best real ale pubs.

The 2008 Good Beer Guide will be published in September of this year, and there is much work to be done in between all the Branch nominations being submitted and our glossy real ale guide hitting the streets. For us it is the start of a new catalogue of beer reports, and the regular surveying of real ale hosteleries throughout the Branch area. "It's a tough job, but somebody has to..."

Local Branch members have questioned the layout of the Scottish sections of the Good

Beer Guide and several are of the opinion that the pubs on Scottish Islands could be better served by having a section of their own, rather than being (often obscurely) listed within mainland districts.

We prepared a motion which was presented at a SNIB meeting in February. Although the motion was favourably received, one Scottish Branch was concerned that it might lose part of its Branch area. This despite our being at pains to point out that all Scottish Islands would remain within their current Branches for administration purposes - pubs (including GBG entries), breweries, members, etc.

Our proposal relates only to the layout in the guide, in an effort to provide information in a clearer format for readers and island visitors. The meeting voted to defer a decision, to allow time to investigate this matter further.

The first few weeks of the year have also seen the firming up of dates and venues for Branch and Committee meetings, for tasting evenings, and for socials and outings. Secretary Eric has been responsible for our Social Calendar for a number of years, but as an increasingly active

(Continued on page 38)



Blackfriars Highland Pub

Great Beer



Traditional Highland Food (New Menu)

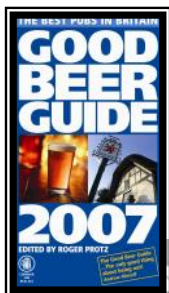
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Highlands & Western Isles Branch

CAMRA member, has been finding it difficult to commit the necessary time to this task. In addition to being Highlands & Western Isles Branch Secretary, Eric is the Brewery Liaison Officer for the Isle of Skye Brewery, and runs one of the bars at the annual Grampian Beer Festival in Aberdeen. Eric also supports other CAMRA festivals as time allows and, as a long-time CAMRA trained taster, is a regular tasting panel participant.

Allan Pearks has now taken on the role of Social Secretary, confident in the knowledge that Eric will be around to help when required.

The Anderson in Fortrose is attracting a lot of good publicity currently. Following on from a feature by Susan Nowak in the December edition of CAMRA's monthly BEER magazine, the Anderson is one of a couple of dozen pubs chosen, in the March edition of the same magazine, for an exclusive preview of the new

CAMRA **Beer, Bed and Breakfast** guide.

The Anderson was also featured in a two page spread in SLTN, the Scottish Licensed Trade Newspaper, which described how a licensed trade dream is becoming reality for American couple Jim and Anne Anderson.

In the article Jim confirms that the pub's inclusion in the Good Beer Guide has been the best source of business, along with their website.

Their Winter special offer, of two nights for the price of one for CAMRA members, has proved to be very popular.

A Press and Journal feature highlighted an unusual pudding served to guests at The Anderson's Burns Night supper - chef Anne Anderson had created a turnip-and-potato-flavoured ice-cream, to serve alongside an array of haggis, which went down a storm. When asked at the end of the evening, only one diner correctly guessed the ingredients of the neeps-and-tatties ice cream!

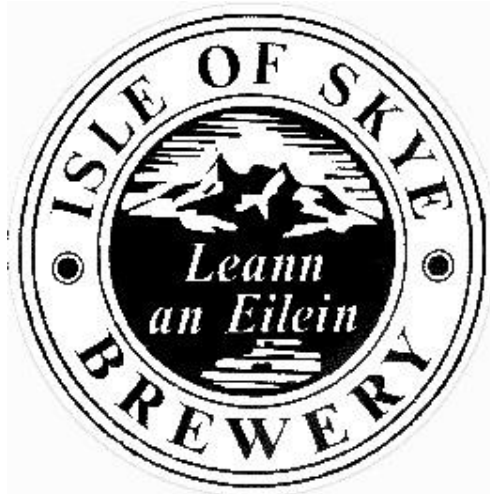
We hope you have enjoyed reading our Spring newsletter. Unless you intend to keep it for some reason, please **DO NOT** throw it away. Why not pass it on to a friend, or just leave it in a pub somewhere for others to read. Newsletters are often found many miles from source! The Summer edition will be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





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