

# What's Yours Then?

## Highlands & Western Isles CAMRA **Free** Newsletter



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



**All change at  
Clachnaharry Inn**

**Time to VOTE**

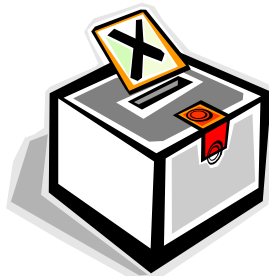
**Pubs-of-the-Year  
Beers-of-the-Year**

**All members voting for  
their Pubs of the Year  
will be entered in a  
prize draw.**

**For the Winner:**



**Food & Drink  
at your  
Favourite  
Pub-of-the-Year**



**CAMPAIGN  
FOR  
REAL ALE**

# Winter 2009

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

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

We welcome your letters, news, views and opinions. Let us know what is happening at your local, or tell us about pubs you have visited. Thanks to all who have taken trouble to send in pub and beer reports, or articles, but especially to regulars Bill, Eric, Gareth, and Steven, who keep us up-to-date with brews and what is happening in local pubs.

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

Spring edition **deadline** is 1<sup>st</sup> March, with publication in time for Easter.

If you would like to place an advert, please contact one of the branch officers (page 6). Advertising rates are as follows:

Full Page Advert.....	£58.00
Half Page Advert.....	£33.50
Quarter Page Advert.....	£18.00

There is a discount on placement of a fourth consecutive advert. Adverts are accepted on condition that inclusion does not necessarily imply an endorsement or approval of content.

We much prefer to receive artwork as a PDF or JPEG file, or Word document. We can help in preparing your advert if you wish.

**3,500+ 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.*

## ***Thank-you!***

As 2009 comes to a close we must thank our advertisers for their support. These are very challenging times for the industry and their continued support is greatly appreciated.

## **Branch Matters**

Our AGM in November was held at the Glen Mhor Hotel in Inverness, where we enjoyed a private boardroom-style facility for our meet. It is no secret that it has been another difficult year for publicans and the brewing industry, with the financial downturn and lack of help from the Government regarding tax breaks, but we were able to note that in the Highlands & Western Isles real ale outlets seem to be weathering the storm, and that our breweries have reported increased sales during 2009.

Secretary Gareth was able to report that e-mails and letters continue to arrive from all over the UK and it is rewarding to pass on info about our pubs and breweries - and to then nearly always receive positive comments back. Our small committee has again concentrated on supporting our local pubs and brewers, and we have tried to hold committee, branch and tasting meetings as far afield as is possible, and to support beer festivals and events. Our outings have been better supported than ever, and we hope to see you at one or more of the meetings or trips in our 2010 diary.

Tasting notes from our panel of trained tasters have promoted local beers, and have led to a significant number of Highlands and Islands beers winning CAMRA and SIBA awards.

CAMRA membership topped 100,000 in 2010, and the Highlands & Western Isles Branch membership is now approaching 200.

In the absence of nominations the outgoing Branch committee was returned unopposed. There are a number of vacant posts, please contact secretary Gareth Hardman for further information. Members may contact Gareth for AGM minutes and Branch Officer reports.

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

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



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



*"Some things are clear . . ."*

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

*"Sweet FA"*



## **BREWERY AND SHOP**

Opening hours:

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

Just off the A83 at the top of Loch Fyne

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

## **Skye Day Out - Barbara is Champ, but Citylink fail to deliver!**

A change of bus company this year for our annual trip to the Isle of Skye, D&E Buses being able to provide a minibus complete with wheelchair ramp. An early departure from Inverness Town House, followed by pick ups at Drumnadrochit and Balmacara meant a full busload of twenty real ale enthusiasts.

A quick - or so we thought - stop at Kyle of Lochalsh for a comfort break. Unfortunately the wheelchair ramp broke down and, despite the best efforts of driver Colin, it could not be rectified and so we were unable get our full complement back on the bus.

No local help available but as Kyle is on a busy bus route we hatched a plan to use Citylink buses. A short wait for a local Citylink bus, but it did not have facilities for wheelchair users. The local driver advised that all of the longer distance buses from Fort William or Inverness to Portree and Uig would be equipped with the necessary equipment.

A further short wait and a modern Citylink bus appeared sporting a blue wheelchair access logo on the front. The driver confirmed that the bus had a ramp, but advised (without apology) that he was not trained to use it!

A second Citylink bus arrived a little later, also sporting the blue wheelchair access logo but, incredibly, the second driver did not have the necessary training either!!

At this point our wheelchair member had had enough and called it a day and, with his wife, caught the train back to Inverness. Full marks to Scotrail who have no problem whatsoever in accommodating disabled passengers.

Less than pleased about events in Kyle, but powerless to do anything about it at that time, the remainder of our party continued over the bridge to Skye. First stop was at the Sligachan Hotel, home of the Cuillin Brewery.

Cuillin beers were on tap in the Seumas Bar: 4.1% Skye Ale (average group NBSS score 3), 4.3% Blackface (4) and 4.7% Pinnacle (2). Blackface was the favourite of most. Head brewer John Jones gave us an informative tour of their compact brewery. Cuillin beers are available in a few other outlets on Skye only. They hope to bottle again next year.

Onwards to Portree where there are now four outlets for real ale and we split into groups to check them out. The Isles Inn, owned by Punch Taverns, had a cold Blacksheep Best Bitter (2) and Deuchars IPA (2). Just past the square the Tongadale Hotel had a Cuillin Brewery blend, the 4.6% Tongadale Ale (3). The Royal Hotel had a tired Red Cuillin (2) and McNabs (2), their Isle of Skye house beer. The Bosville Hotel had a very tasty Cuillin Pinnacle (4). All bars were very quiet for a Saturday.

Back to the bus, on time for once, and off to Uig. Three of us alighted at the Uig Hotel and sampled their Isle of Skye Young Pretender (4); also on tap but not tried was Red Cuillin. Down the hill next to the Ferry Inn where we found the Champion Beer of Scotland, Orkney Raven (4). Further along to the ferry terminal where the Bakur Bar had three Isle of Skye beers on tap: Blaven (4), Cuillin Gorm (4), and Young Pretender (4). We then rejoined our party at the Isle of Skye Brewery where head brewer Pam was giving a brewery tour.

Five brews to sample: Blaven, Red Cuillin, Young Pretender, Cuillin Gorm, and a mystery brew - all in excellent condition. Cuillin Gorm is a blueberry beer launched last Christmas and now re-launched as a seasonal offering.

The mystery brew was a blend of two beers, and this year only secretary and tasting panel stalwart Gareth guessed correctly - 50% each of Red Cuillin and Cuillin Gorm.

We now enjoyed a sumptuous buffet while brewery owner Angus MacRuary introduced us to the rules for the inaugural World Cornelius Skittles Championship! Nine skittles (cornelius containers) were laid out in grid with a large water filled ball (ex-mooring buoy) dangled above. The idea was to swing the ball and knock down as many skittles as possible. After quite a bit of fun, including Del dismantling Tony and Tony dismantling the equipment, Barbara Tring won the gold medal, knocking down a total of eight giant skittles. Silver went to Steve and bronze to Paul.

Our journey back included a brief stop at the Claymore in Broadford where Red Cuillin (3) and Deuchars IPA (3) were served a little on the cool side. Our last stop was at Kintail Lodge Hotel where a Red

*(Continued on page 12)*



# Good things brewing in the Highlands



## 2009 SPECIALS

Available  
Apr/May



Available  
May



Available  
Jun/  
Jul/Aug



Available  
Sept



Available  
Sept/Oct



## PERMANENT BEERS



**Black Gold**  
Supreme  
Champion of  
the Year 2009  
as voted  
by SIBA

tel: 01479 812 222  
email: [info@cairngormbrewery.com](mailto:info@cairngormbrewery.com)  
[www.cairngormbrewery.com](http://www.cairngormbrewery.com)

Why not visit our  
shop at the brewery in  
Aviemore, now open  
(Mon-Sat), or book a  
tour (available  
Mon-Fri) and see how  
we make our beer.

10% discount when  
you bring this ad  
along to the shop.

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

Tues 15<sup>th</sup> December Annual Inverness Walkabout (7pm meet at Castle Tavern)

Tues 12<sup>th</sup> January Committee Meeting Phoenix, Inverness

Tues 26<sup>th</sup> January Tasting evening Clachnaharry Inn

### **>>> Promoting Stouts & Porters in February and March <<<**

Tues 9<sup>th</sup> February Committee Meeting Blackfriars, Inverness

Tues 23<sup>rd</sup> February Tasting & Branch Evening The Anderson, Fortrose

Tues 9<sup>th</sup> March Committee Meeting Kings Highway, Inverness

Fri 19<sup>th</sup> - Sun 21<sup>st</sup> March \* Bandstand Beer Festival Bandstand Bar, Nairn

Sat 20<sup>th</sup> March  Social/Outing/Tasting at Beer Festival at Bandstand Bar, Nairn




Meet at 15:00 at the Bandstand Bar, or at 12:00 at the Cawdor Tavern for a quick pint before walking to the Bandstand.

Mon 29<sup>th</sup> March - Mon 5<sup>th</sup> April >>> **National Cask Ale Week** <<<

Tues 30<sup>th</sup> March Tasting Evening Castle Tavern, Inverness

Tues 13<sup>th</sup> April Branch Meeting Benleva Hotel, Drumnadrochit

Sat 24<sup>th</sup> April  Social/Outing around Loch Ness - Meet at Inverness Town House for 11:00 Bus

Tues 27<sup>th</sup> April Tasting Evening Meet at Culbockie Inn, Black Isle

### **>>> May is Mild Month <<<**

Tues 11<sup>th</sup> May Committee Meeting Dalfaber Country Club, Aviemore

Tues 25<sup>th</sup> May Tasting Evening Meet Riverside Tavern, Conon Bridge

Thurs 3<sup>rd</sup> - Sat 5<sup>th</sup> June Aberdeen Beer Festival Pittodrie Stadium

Tues 8<sup>th</sup> June Branch Meeting Cawdor Tavern

Sat 19<sup>th</sup> June Marymas Fair Real Ale Bar Northern Meeting Park, Inverness

Thurs 24<sup>th</sup> - Sat 26<sup>th</sup> June Scottish Real Ale Festival Edinburgh

\* 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](http://www.highlandcamra.org.uk)

## **Contact**

Gareth Hardman (Secretary & Branch Contact) - 01463 238462

## **Details**

18, Scorguie Gardens, Inverness, IV 3 8 SS.

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



Eric Mills - Phone No. pending

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

Mike Whittall - 01463 831259

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

# BANDSTAND

## BAR & RESTAURANT, NAIRN

*CAMRA Highlands & Western Isles*



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

Dine in our popular  
**SEA VIEW**  
**RESTAURANT**  
excellent Bar Meals,  
Sea Food & Steaks



### DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

**Bandstand Beer Festival**  
**19<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup> March 2010**

40+ ales to try plus great  
entertainment  
see our website for details



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



OPEN  
ALL  
YEAR

# Benleeva Hotel

Tel:  
01456  
450080

Drumnadrochit, Loch Ness

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

**CAMRA Pub-of-the-Year Awards**

**Highland 2003 & 2005, Inverness 2006 & 2007 (tied)**

**Inverness & District North Pub-of-the-Year 2009**

**9<sup>th</sup> Loch Ness Beer Festival**

**17<sup>th</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup> September 2010**

**En-Suite Accommodation**

**Excellent Food Every Evening**

**Lunches Every Day**

## **8<sup>th</sup> Loch Ness Beer Festival**

This annual festival, held in September at the Benleeva Hotel in Drumnadrochit, is without doubt a highlight of the Scottish real ale calendar. A total of 62 different beers were featured this year, with nine beers and two ciders on tap at any time. Festival organiser Stephen Crossland has always promoted local brewers but, as demand has increased, he has showcased beers from throughout Scotland and, in recent years, he has even travelled south of the border in an effort to expand the choice for the ever-growing number of Loch Ness Festival fans.

New breweries for 2009 were Deeside, Islay, Plockton, Brewdog and Traquair from Scotland; and Bath Ales, Foxfield, Morrissey Fox and Nethergate from England. A new beer from Fyne Ales, 'Benleeva IPA' - a one off brew for the festival. Ciders not seen here before were Thistly Cross (from Belhaven Fruit Farms) and a range from Ross-on-Wye. All-in-all a great selection for both locals and visitors. Entertainment during the week included live music from four bands, a quiz (won by Fat Boy's Corner), a poker tournament (won by Crocket), and a pool tournament (won by Allan Crossland). The Guess? Beer turned out to be Atlas Nimbus, and Beer-of-the-Festival was Fyne Ales Highlander. As usual proceeds from special festival glass sales led to a good donation for the SSPCA. Dates for next year: 17<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> September.

Four of the local CAMRA committee did their annual walk to the Festival, around 12 miles this time. We bussed to the Drum car park where Benleeva landlord and part-time cabbie Stephen Crossland loaded us into his (t)rusty VW transporter and dropped us at the Corrimony turn off. We then followed the forestry trails and paths through Shewglie, Lochletter, Delshangie and Craigmonie woods to Drumnadrochit. This was a very pleasant walk with good views over Glen Urquhart valley, River Enrick and eventually views of Loch Ness. (Many thanks to Bill Tring for the detailed full-colour route maps). After our walk we were more than ready to sample the delights of the Festival and join other CAMRA members and locals in the bar! Why not join us next March when we are planning a shorter walk from the Cawdor Tavern to Nairn, for the second Nairn Beer Festival, to be held at the Bandstand Bar. *Check our diary for dates. Ed.*





# *Blackfriars Highland Pub*

## *Great Beer*



*Traditional Highland Food (New Menu)*

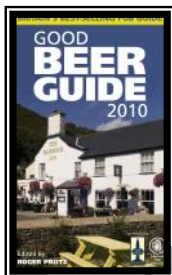
*All meals are cooked to order using  
freshly prepared local produce*

**Real Ales and Real Cider On Tap**

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

**Open all day, every day**

**Food served every day  
from 11am until 9pm**



*Regular Live Entertainment  
Featuring Local Bands*

**93-95 Academy Street  
Inverness IV1 1 LU  
Tel 01463 233881**



## **Traditional Cider Matters**

**Real Cider** and/or **Real Perry** is sold (or has recently been sold) in the following inns & hotels. (Please note that some may be seasonal outlets). Please let us know if you find additional outlets selling real cider or perry.

**The Anderson, Fortrose** - Thatchers Heritage Cider

**Eagle - Inn on the Loch, Laggan Locks** - Thatchers Original Cider

**Stronlossit Inn, Roy Bridge** - Thatchers Cheddar Valley Cider

**Strathcarron Hotel** - Thatchers Cider (rotated with cask ales)

**Glen Hotel, Newtonmore** - Westons Old Rosie or 1<sup>st</sup> Quality Cider

**Benleva Hotel, Drumnadrochit** - Westons 1<sup>st</sup> Quality Cider

**Scourie Hotel** - Two Westons Ciders on handpump

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

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

**Badachro Inn** - Westons Cider is served here

**Argyll Hotel, Ullapool** - Westons ciders from the box

**Altnacealgach Inn**, nr Ledmore Junction - Mike & Kate are giving some thought to serving a real cider. Tel: 01854 666260

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

**Blackfriars, Inverness** - Westons Old Rosie Scrumpy and 1<sup>st</sup> Quality Ciders on handpump

**Clachaig Inn, Glencoe** - Thatchers Heritage Cider was found here last August.

**Bandstand Bar, Nairn** - Westons ciders (varying selection) from the box. We understand that long term plans are to install a handpump for real cider.

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## **Real Cider Window Stickers**

CAMRA has launched a new scheme to promote pubs serving real cider. If a pub near you has at least one real cider or perry available throughout the year then please submit the pubs details to CAMRA and we'll send a free window sticker to the pub. Alternatively pubs that sell real cider can apply for accreditation.

The aim of the window sticker is to support pubs by ensuring they can showcase the availability of real cider to consumers, this will in turn raise the profile of real cider, increase real cider sales and, help support pubs in these difficult times to differentiate themselves from other drinking establishments.



## **Cider Pub-of-the-Year (CPOTY)**

Sales of real cider continue to rise, and the number of pubs serving real cider or real perry is increasing all the time. It shows that many publicans in the current climate are striving to differentiate themselves from other outlets and are making that extra effort to offer something new to the consumer. In recognition of this commitment to cider we are asking you to vote for your favourite Highlands & Western Isles cider pub. You are unlikely to find a 'cider house' on our patch, or a pub with local ciders, but please let us know who you think most deserves this award - a pub with a regularly changing cider, a pub which has showcased ciders during a festival, or a pub that just has a single high quality cider on tap every day for you to enjoy!

**Please note your favourite Cider Pub on the Pub-of-the-Year voting form (page 16), or just send us an e-mail (please see Branch Contact details on page 6).**

Real Ales  
Real Cider  
50+ Malt whiskies



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

## We don't do fast food here!



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

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

Kinlochewe Hotel,  
Kinlochewe, by Achnasheen  
Wester Ross IV22 2PA

Tel: 01445 760253  
[www.kinlochewehotel.co.uk](http://www.kinlochewehotel.co.uk)



**The Cairn Hotel**  
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**Carrbridge**  
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**PH23 3AS**

Tel: 01479 841212  
Fax: 01479 841362  
info@cairnhotel.co.uk  
www.cairnhotel.co.uk

*20p real ale discount  
for card carrying  
CAMRA members!*

Enjoy the country pub atmosphere – log fire, malt whiskies, real ales and affordable food (soup, toasties and desserts served all day) in this family-owned village centre hotel.

Close to the historic 1717 packhorse bridge over the River Dulnain, and nestling in the very heart of the Scottish Highlands, the Cairn Hotel is the perfect base for exploring the Cairngorms, the Malt Whisky Trail, Loch Ness, Strathspey and Badenoch; and including the Cairngorm and Black Isle breweries.

Walkers and cyclists are welcomed, and cyclists following Sustrans NCN Route 7, which goes past our front door, can take advantage of secure dry storage provided for bikes.

Cuillin (3) finished off our day very nicely.

Special thanks go to our driver, Colin, and to our generous hosts and hostess at Cuillin and Isle of Skye breweries. We will look forward eagerly to challenging Barbara for her title.

D&E Coaches were very good and refunded the train fare for our wheelchair user, and agreed a refund of some of our payment.

Citylink discussions continue.

### **Beer and Pubs Around Aviemore**

Eric/Bill - Ruth and I stayed at the Cairn Hotel in Carrbridge last weekend, and apart from the poor weather had an enjoyable stay.

Beers at Cairn were as follows -

Fri 23 October:

Atlas Wayfarer 3; Black Isle Red Kite 4, 4  
Cairngorm Witches Cauldron 3 (Replaced Wayfarer)

Sat 24 October:

Black Isle Red Kite 4, 4; Cairngorm Witches Cauldron 4, 4; Atlas Wayfarer  
(Replaced Red Kite late in evening)

Back in May we also visited your area during

our week on holiday in Glenlivet.

Sat 30 May - An evening in Nairn:

Braeval Hotel:

Fullers Chiswick 3; Black Cat 3, 4

Classroom Bistro - hand pump not in use

Claymore Hotel:

Trade Winds 4, 4

Havelock House - "no beer till Thursday"

I will put the scores on the NBBS site as well.

Cheers, Jon Addinall.

*Thanks Jon, glad to see you found real ale in good nick on our patch. Cheers, Ed!*

### **Inns & Things**

Welcome to Liam and Davie, local business partners who have taken over the reins at **Clachnaharry Inn**. Liam is the ex-manager from the Eden Court restaurant and Davie was a chef at Rocpool. Their aim is to complement the history and reputation of the Clachnaharry Inn by providing good traditional pub food as well as some more adventurous dishes.

The intention is for everything to be home-made using locally sourced ingredients. Liam

# The Riverside Tavern

## ***Regular Live Entertainment***

*(Please phone for Info)*

***Regular Bands include: Frayed Edges, Time Beings, The Revvz, Martin Stephenson, Andy Murray, Face The West, Sharp Exit, Scott MacDonald***

***We use fresh local produce including beef, fish, shellfish and game***



**Highlands & Islands Real Ales On Tap**

***Open 12-11pm every day Fri until 1pm - Sat until 12pm***

**Tel. 01349 866922**

***(formerly The Drouthy Duck), Conon Bridge***



# WANTED

## Newsletter

### Editor

*Applicants are likely to be real ale enthusiasts. Must have desktop publishing skills, time to spare, and be able to meet publishing deadlines.*

**REWARD**

*Please contact  
Gareth Hardman  
(see page 6)*

and Davie want the 'Clach' to be a pub where everyone is welcome, including families. They are very keen to focus on the locals both as customers and as suppliers of ingredients.

Real ale will continue to be a major factor and there are plans to link real ale and food.

They have plenty of ideas and have already started painting and cleaning. Some of the tired old chairs in the public bar have been used as firewood and some new furniture installed. A small investment in the chimney means the real fire is back as well.

*Very welcome news! We wish them well. Ed.*

#### **All Change at Corrou Station**

Corrou Halt, on the Glasgow-Fort William railway line, is the highest station in the UK, standing at 1,350 feet above sea level. It is accessible only by rail, or by walking in from Rannoch (11 miles) or Tulloch (15 miles).

In the Autumn 2008 edition of this newsletter we published two letters from readers who called in to the Station Tea Rooms for light refreshments and were astounded to find two handpumps in operation on the counter!

Trade Winds and Stag had recently been installed by Cairngorm Brewery. Beth, who ran

the establishment with her partner, explained to our correspondents that Cairngorm Brewery had set the handpumps up three weeks earlier and were keen to support her in the sale of real ale. They had also called one of their bottled beers Corrou Ale after this wonderful part of the world. Three cheers for Cairngorm Brewery!! The beers scored '5' and 'Superb'.

Beth had arranged with the brewery to drop her casks on the Spean Bridge - Newtonmore road, and then drove 16 miles along estate roads to collect them and 16 miles back.

*Dedication to Real Ale or what?*

Sadly a visit to the Corrou Station House website in November revealed that the tea room has closed, and that the restaurant would close on 22<sup>nd</sup> November. A statement from the Corrou Estate Management noted:

"The New Lease Owners will commence trading 1st February 2010".

Beth meanwhile has moved to the **Isle of Lismore Café** where, we are informed, a welcome rest and a tasty meal are on offer.

You are invited by Beth to call at the cafe for a meal, or just a coffee and a blether!

*Let us know if you find Real Ale!*

#### **Tasting Panel Update - September**

Simon Urry joined the regular team - Bill, Eric, Gareth, Allan - for a tour of his local Black Isle pubs. Cairngorm Trade Winds was on tap at the Cromarty Arms and Royal Hotel. All the usual full-on fruitiness was found in this 4.3% ABV speciality ale and, although served a little cooler than normal in the Cromarty Arms, the team thought it suited the beer's character - scoring 7's and 8's. Not quite as cool as the Royal, where all scored it 7. Trade Winds at the Plough in Rosemarkie too, but the team went for Deeside Brewery Macbeth, a beer new to all. An amber 4.1% best bitter, a little lacking in aroma, but the taste was very well balanced with hops and malt and a good bitter bite. Scores ranged between 6 and 8.

At The Anderson, our last stop, we enjoyed Stewarts Copper Cascade from Edinburgh, a well balanced sweetish malty brew, typical of a good Scottish 80/- ale. This 4.2% beer scored 8's from everybody, narrowly giving it the beer of the evening status.

# **The Old Inn**

**Gairloch, Ross-shire, IV21 2BD**

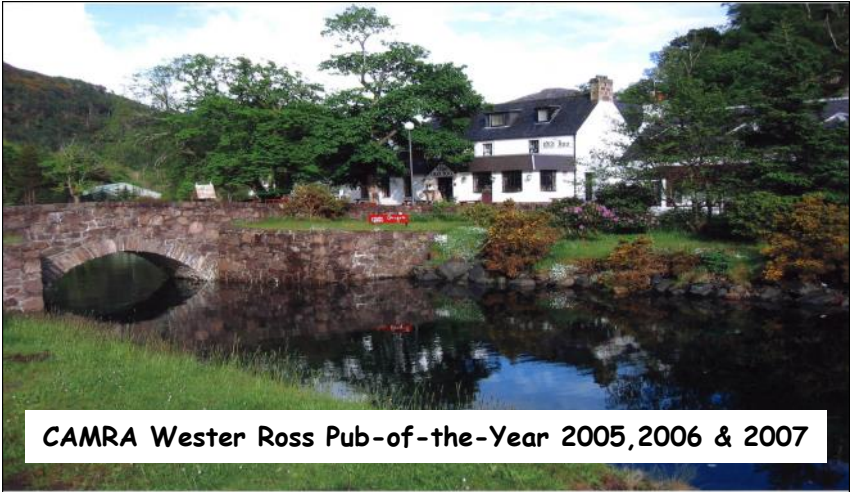
**Telephone: 01445 712006 Enquiries - *Call Free* - 0800 542 5444**

**Scottish Tourist Board 3 Star Inn**

**AA Best Seafood Pub for Scotland 2005/06**

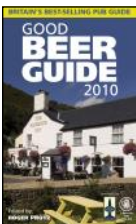
**Abbot Ale Perfect Pub for Scotland 2005/06**

**AA Pub of the Year for Scotland & Northern Ireland 2003**



**Real Ale, Real Food, Real Fires, Real Welcome  
Accommodation - All rooms en-suite - Families welcome**

Nestling at the foot of the Flowerdale Glen, with the river flowing under its charming old stone footbridge, The Old Inn is a traditional coaching inn located in a picturesque setting with spectacular views across Gairloch Harbour to Skye and the Outer Isles.



**Up to eight Real Ales**

**Beer Garden**

**Food served all day**

**Website: [www.theoldinn.net](http://www.theoldinn.net)**

**E-mail: [enquiries@theoldinn.net](mailto:enquiries@theoldinn.net)**



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



## **Pubs-of-the-Year (POTY)**

The roll of honour for 2009: Benleva Hotel, Drumnadrochit, Bandstand Bar, Braeval Hotel, Nairn, Glen Hotel, Newtonmore, Applecross Inn, Plockton Hotel, Stein Inn, Waternish, Isle of Skye, Grog & Gruel, Fort William, Scourie Hotel. These were your top pubs for 2009, but a lot of real ale has flowed under the bridge since you last voted for your favourite hosteleries.

Have these pubs continued to serve real ales in tip-top condition? Is the welcome and service as good as last year? Are new publicans challenging the old guard? ***Please vote now!***

***All members voting for their Pubs-of-the-Year will be entered in a prize draw.***

### **Highlands & Western Isles Branch of CAMRA 2010 Pub of the Year Voting Form**

Inverness & District (N) .....

Inverness & District (S) .....

Aviemore & Cairngorms .....

Wester Ross .....

South Skye & Lochalsh .....

North Skye & Hebrides .....

Fort William & Lochaber .....

Caithness & Sutherland .....

Your Favourite **Cider** Pub .....

Member's Name/No. .....



Closing Date - 31<sup>st</sup> January

Please check the pub lists on pages 21-24 if you are unsure in which area a pub is located. Please use the voting form and post to the Branch Contact (see page 6).

Alternatively you can either e-mail your selection to the secretary or use the on-line voting form. Further information at **[www.hIGHLANDCAMRA.org.uk](http://www.hIGHLANDCAMRA.org.uk)**

All Branch members are allowed to vote for a pub in each of the eight districts.

All votes to be returned to the secretary by the ***end of January***.

All entries must serve real ale.

All nominated pubs must be within the relevant 'District' boundaries

In the event of a tie the committee will decide the result by consensus.

The overall Highlands & Western Isles CAMRA Pub-of-the-Year - The Bandstand Bar in 2009 - which will represent the Branch in the annual Scottish Pub-of-the-Year competition, will be selected by committee (using CAMRA judging guidelines) from the eight area winners.

Please support your favourite pubs by sending in your votes. It really does not matter if you have not managed to visit some of the great real ale pubs in what is a massive geographical area. If you have just one great local, a friendly hostelry where the beer is always in the best of nick and the craic is good, then put them on the map! A chance to thank the publicans and their staff for all those enjoyable pints. *Yours could be the clinching vote! Thanks, Ed.*

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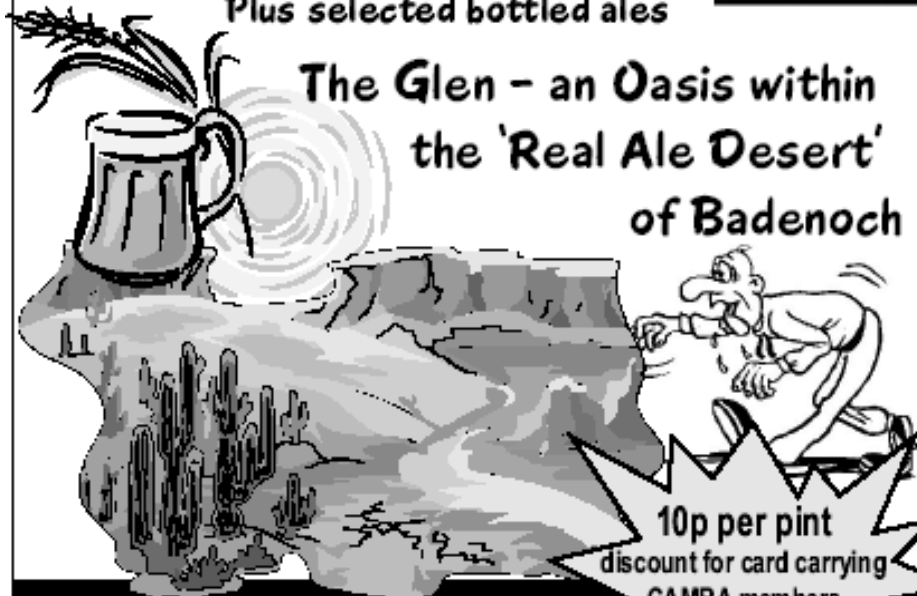
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## Focus on Allan Pearks

Allan Pearks and his wife live in Fortrose, on the Black Isle. Allan is our Social Secretary and he plans and organises our outings and socials.

Q. Where were you born?

A. Trowbridge, in Wiltshire, although I do not have any connection with the area. It was during the war and my father was stationed at RAF Melksham at the time.

Q. What is your background?

A. I am now retired, however spent all my working life in the construction industry, apart from two years in the merchant navy immediately after leaving school, as a navigating cadet. My formative years were with construction companies in Yorkshire, where I was brought up. On moving to Inverness I worked with a local contractor for a number of years until in 1982 I established my own construction business in Inverness with myself and my wife as directors. The business operated for 25 years during which time we carried out projects throughout Scotland.

Q. Why did you move up to this area?

A. I have a strong connection with the North of Scotland. My mother was from Caithness and I spent my summer holidays throughout my childhood in and around Thurso where I have a large number of relations. I was looking for career development in the mid seventies, at a time when there was a recession in the construction industry, and I was offered a senior contracts management position with a contractor in Inverness which I accepted.

Q. When and where were you introduced to real ale?

A. My first taste of real ale in a pub was in Wakefield in West Yorkshire in 1960, when I was 16 years old. I had a pint of Mild which cost one shilling. This was at a time when the only beers available in pubs were cask conditioned bitter and mild. There



were no keg beers and lagers at that time. From then until late 1976, when we moved to Inverness, my beer of choice was cask conditioned bitter. It was a shock to the system when we moved to Inverness as the only draught beers available were keg M'Ewan's Export and Tartan Special. Apart from a brief spell when Alice Ales were available, I had no alternative but to drink keg beers until the late 1980's when real ales started to become available in the Inverness area.

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

A. I appreciate all styles of real ale and I enjoy seeking out ales not tried before whenever the situation arises, which does sometimes mean they are not to my liking. However my favourites are Pale and Golden ales.

Q. What type of pubs do you like?

A. First and foremost they must have a good selection of quality ales, also they must offer good service, either no music or music of a style and volume that is acceptable to most clientele, no fruit machines and either no TV's or TV's that are discreetly located and only turned on for major sporting events. I am very much a traditionalist, and my favourite style of pubs are the Victorian city pubs in Edinburgh and English village country pubs.

Q. You spend a lot of time in Edinburgh. Where do you drink?

A. The Stockbridge Tap, which is near to where we stay, always has seven ales on tap which are constantly changing. They are sourced from all over the UK with Cairngorm Trade Winds being the only permanent ale. Other Edinburgh pubs which I enjoy visiting are the Starbank Inn, the Malt and Hops, the Cumberland Bar, the Halfway House, the Blue Blazer, Berts Bar, the Cloisters..... I could go on and on as they are too numerous to list.

Q. What are your hobbies/interests?

A. Other than CAMRA, I am a member of the Rotary Club of Inverness of which I am currently secretary. My hobbies are hill-walking - I completed all the Munros in 2000 - cycling and badminton. I also enjoy travelling and we try and fit in as many

# Clachnaharry Inn

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all day - created by an award-winning chef*



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Guide  
continually  
since 1996*

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the finest in local produce*

*Highlands & Western Isles  
Pub-of-the-Year 2006 & 2007*

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**Real Ale in the Real Highlands**



holidays as possible. Other interests are Rugby, spectating only these days, and visits to the theatre. We recently moved into a new house, which we designed and built, and a lot of my time at present and for the foreseeable future is and will be spent in creating a garden.

Q. What is your favourite part of Scotland?

A. This is a difficult question to answer, however when we go away I always enjoy the view from the A9 above Inverness, when returning from the South, looking over the Beaulieu and Moray Firths towards the Black Isle. I would have to say that the Black Isle and surrounding area is my favourite part.

### National Cask Ale Week

During Easter week 2009 over 6,000 pubs nationwide joined us to celebrate Britain's National Drink - Cask Ale. The Daily Telegraph supported the event and ran a daily free prize draw offering a year's free beer, a weekend in Paris, weekend breaks and lots more.

The week was such a success with pubs, brewers and customers alike that Cask Ale Week will be running again in 2010 between Monday 29th March and Monday 5th April.

### Tasting Panel Update - October

Regulars Bill, Eric and Gareth were joined by local member John for the October meeting in Inverness. Good to see three Highlands & Islands brews on tap at the Castle Tavern.

We started with Highland Dark Munro, a 4.0% strong mild ale with plenty of malt and roast flavours in both the aroma and the taste. Lacking hop flavours it had a good bitter bite and scored 7's and 8's.

We followed with An Teallach Beinn Dearg. This 3.8% copper coloured bitter had very little aroma and was quite thin in its taste and aftertaste. Not as good as it has been during the summer months, it scored disappointing 4's. Last beer at the Castle was Trade Winds and was pretty much drinking as found at last month's meeting, but with a little more bitter astringency, it scored 7's and 8's.

A few steps down the hill took us to No 27 where we tried An Teallach Suilven. A 4.3% bitter style ale it had a yeasty/sulphur aroma and only a little malt, fruit and hops in the taste. Noticeably more sweet than bitter it came across as a little cloying and it only scored an average of 3.

## **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 Good Beer Guide inclusion is merited.



We make no claims as to the quality of the beer, and you should note that some of the pubs listed may only stock real ale on a seasonal **(S)** basis:

We have taken the liberty of listing some pubs which fall within adjoining Branch Areas - Glasgow & West of Scotland (G&WS), Aberdeen & Northern Isles (A&NI) - but which are not very far from our "border" and merit a visit.

### **Inverness & District North**

Clachnaharry Inn, Inverness  
Palace Hotel, Inverness  
Old North Inn, Inchmore  
Benleva Hotel, Drumnadrochit  
Loch Ness Inn, Lewiston  
Steading Bar & Restaurant, Kilmartin (TP)  
Munlochy Hotel (TP)  
The Anderson, Fortrose  
Plough Inn, Rosemarkie  
Cromarty Arms (TP)  
Royal Hotel, Cromarty (TP)  
Culbokie Inn  
Slaters Arms, Cannich (S)  
Conon Bridge Hotel  
Riverside Tavern, Conon Bridge  
National Hotel, Dingwall  
Richmond Hotel, Strathpeffer  
Inchbae Lodge Hotel, Garve  
Aultguish Inn  
Star Inn, Tain (S)  
Castle Hotel, Portmahomack  
Edderton Inn, Edderton

TP - Served using top pressure

### **Inverness & District South**

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

# "a beer drinker's mecca"

## *Good Beer Guide 2005-2007*



real ale  
80 Belgians

real cider  
200 malts

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

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Snowgoose, Inverness  
 Tomatin Country Inn (S)  
 Dores Inn  
 Whitebridge Hotel, Loch Ness South  
 Bothy, Fort Augustus  
 Lock Inn, Fort Augustus  
 Caledonian Hotel, Fort Augustus (S)  
 Cawdor Tavern, Cawdor  
 George Inn, Ardersier  
 Bandstand Bar, Braeval Hotel, Nairn  
 Claymore Hotel, Nairn  
 Golf View Hotel, Nairn (TP)  
 Invernairne Hotel, Nairn (S)  
 Seaforth Club, Nairn (Members only) (TP)  
 Old Mill Inn, Brodie (A&NI)

### Aviemore & Cairngorms

Cairn Hotel, Carrbridge  
 Muckrach Lodge Hotel, Dulnain Bridge  
 Cairngorm Hotel, Aviemore  
 Dalfaber Country Club, Aviemore  
 Glenmore Lodge, Nr Aviemore  
 Old Bridge Inn, Aviemore  
 Winking Owl, Aviemore  
 Suie Hotel, Kincaig

Glen Hotel, Newtonmore  
 Lodge Hotel, Newtonmore  
 Kingussie Golf Club  
 Silver Fjord Hotel, Kingussie  
 Topsy Laird, Kingussie  
 Ben Mhor Hotel, Grantown-on-Spey  
 Mash Tun, Charlestown of Aberlour (A&NI)  
 Highlander Inn, Craigellachie (A&NI)  
 Croft Inn, Glenlivet (A&NI)  
 Glen Avon Hotel, Tomintoul (A&NI)

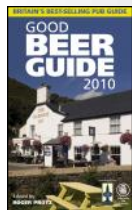
### Fort William & Lochaber

Alexandria Hotel, Fort William  
 Grog & Gruel, Fort William  
 Ben Nevis Bar, Fort William  
 Ben Nevis Hotel, Fort William  
 Ben Nevis Inn, Fort William  
 Cobbs at Nevisport, Fort William  
 West End Hotel, Fort William  
 Glen Nevis Restaurant & Bar  
 Invergarry Hotel  
 The Eagle, Laggan Locks  
*(An Inn on a boat on the water)*  
 Loch Oich Restaurant/Bar, South Laggan  
 Old Station Restaurant, Spean Bridge

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Spean Bridge Hotel (S)  
 Stronlossit Hotel, Roy Bridge  
 Corrou Halt Tea Rooms (01397 732236)  
 Tomdoun Sporting Lodge  
 Moorings Hotel, Banavie  
 Glenfinnan House Hotel  
 Glenuig Inn, Lochailort  
 Loch Shiel Hotel, Acharacle  
 Old Forge, Inverie  
 Four Seasons, Onich  
 Inn at Ardgour  
 Ice Factor, Kinlochleven  
 MacDonald Hotel, Kinlochleven  
 Mamore Lodge, Kinlochleven (S)  
 Laroch Bar, Ballachulish (G&WS)  
 Clachaig Inn, Glencoe (G&WS)  
 Kings House Hotel, Glencoe (G&WS)

### **Wester Ross**

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

### **Caithness & Sutherland**

Inchnadamph Hotel  
 The Caberfeidh, Lochinver  
 Scourie Hotel, Scourie  
 Altnacealgach Inn, nr Ledmore Junction  
 Castle Hotel, Dornoch



**Claddach Kirkibost (A865)**  
**Isle of North Uist**  
**Outer Hebrides**

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**Isle of Skye ales and beer**  
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Eagle Hotel, Dornoch  
 Dunroamin Hotel, Bonar Bridge  
 Invershin Hotel  
 Sutherland Arms Hotel, Golspie (S)  
 Sutherland Inn, Brora  
 Belgrave Hotel, Helmsdale  
 Bay Owl Restaurant, Dunbeath  
 Tongue Hotel  
 MacKay's Hotel, Wick  
 Alexander Bain, Wick (*Wetherspoons*)  
 Central Hotel, Thurso  
 Commercial Hotel, Thurso

### **South Skye & Lochalsh**

Cluanie Inn  
 Kintail Lodge Hotel  
 Jac-o-bite Restaurant, Kintail  
 Clachan Bar, Dornie  
 Dornie Hotel  
 Loch Duich Hotel, Dornie  
 Balmacara Hotel (S)  
 Plockton Hotel, Plockton  
 Plockton Inn, Plockton  
 Tingle Creek Hotel, Erbusaig  
 Kyle Hotel, Kyle of Lochalsh



Saucy Mary's Lodge, Kyleakin (S)  
 Duisdale Hotel (S)  
 Isle Ornsay Hotel  
 Ardvasar Hotel  
 Stables Restaurant, Armadale  
 Claymore, Broadford  
 Dunollie Hotel, Broadford  
 Hebridean Hotel, Broadford  
 Sconser Lodge Hotel  
 Sligachan Hotel (S)  
*Closed October - March*  
 Old Inn, Carbost  
 Taigh Ailean Hotel, Portnalong

### North Skye & Hebrides

Isle of Raasay Hotel  
 JJ's Bistro at Struan  
 Dunvegan Hotel  
 Old Schoolhouse Restaurant, Dunvegan (S)  
 Stein Inn, Waternish  
 Edinbane Hotel  
 The Lodge at Edinbane  
 Bakur Bar, Uig  
*formerly Pub at the Pier*  
 Ferry Inn, Uig

Uig Hotel, Uig  
 Flodigarry Hotel  
 Greshornish Lodge  
 Bosville Hotel, Portree  
 Isles Inn, Portree  
 Royal Hotel, Portree  
 Tongadale Hotel, Portree  
 An Lanntair, Stornoway  
 Carlton Tavern, Stornoway  
 Harris Inn, Tarbert (S)  
 Lochmaddy Hotel, North Uist  
 Tigh Dearg Hotel, Lochmaddy, North Uist  
 Langass Lodge, North Uist (S)  
 Westford Inn, North Uist  
 Dark Island Hotel, Benbecula (S)  
 Borrodale Hotel, South Uist (S)  
 Orasay Inn, South Uist (S)



A total of 34 of the pubs listed here are in the *Good Beer Guide*. We are not allowed to indicate GBG entries, you will have to buy the guide for that, but there is a chance you may find some clues elsewhere in this newsletter.

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## Highlands & Islands Brewers in 2009

**Orkney Brewery** - Brewing commenced in March 1988, at the old schoolhouse in Sandwick on Orkney Mainland.

**Isle of Skye Brewery** - Based at Uig, next to the Western ferry terminal, and has been brewing since December 1995. Ales include Red & Black Cuillin, Hebridean Gold, Long Pretender and Blaven. Seasonal, House, and speciality ales are regularly brewed.



**Isle of Mull Brewery** - Most northerly brewery in the UK, started brewing 1 December 1997. Ales include White Wife and Auld Rock.

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

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

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



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

Seasonal ales are regularly brewed.

**Hebridean Brewing Company** - Based at Stornoway in the Outer Hebrides. Brewing since January 2002. Beers include Islander Strong Ale, Berserker Export Pale Ale, and Clansman Ale (first ale ever brewed in Stornoway),

**Atlas Brewery** - Has been brewing in one of the old Aluminium Smelter buildings at Kinlochleven since February 2002.

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

**Islay Ales Co Ltd** - Established in an old Tractor Shed in Bridgend, in March 2004. Ales include Finlaggan, Black Rock, and Dun Hogs Head; plus seasonal brews.

**Cuillin Brewery** - The brewery was born on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2004, in the old public bar of the Sligachan Hotel. Skye, Eagle and Pinnacle Ales are brewed.

**Highland Brewing Company** - Located in the old Swannay cheese factory at Birsay, on Orkney Mainland. Ales include Scapa Special, Orkney Blast, Dark Munro.

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



**Sinclair Breweries Ltd** - Set up in 2006 by hotelier and restaurateur Norman Sinclair, who purchased the Orkney and Atlas Breweries. Ales regularly brewed include Three Sisters, Latitude, and Nimbus from Atlas; plus Raven Ale, Dark Island, Red MacGregor, and Skull Splitter from Orkney.



**Glenfinnan Brewery** - 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.

**Colonsay Brewery** - First brews in March 2007. IPA, 80/- and Lager (no real ales)

**Plockton Brewery** - The first brew was produced on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007. Craggs Ale and Starboard IPA may usually be found in Plockton, and at other local outlets.

**Oban Bay Brewery** - Brewing since mid 2009. 5 barrel brewery attached to Cuan Mor.

*Not all of the breweries listed are in our branch area: the Highland Brewing Co, Valhalla and Orkney are all in the Aberdeen, Grampian & Northern Isles area; the Arran Brewery falls in the Ayrshire & Galloway area; while Fyne, Islay, Mull, Colonsay & Oban Bay Breweries are covered by Glasgow & West Scotland. Similarly for Highlands & Islands pubs listed in the GBG, pubs in Orkney and Shetland are submitted by the Aberdeen, Grampian & Northern Isles Branch, and the Clachaig Inn somehow falls within Glasgow & West Scotland branch area!*

## Orkney Brewery Expansion

Work started recently on a major £1.2 million redevelopment of the Orkney Brewery in Sandwick. The first phase will see a new brewing plant installed at the Quooyloo site, almost doubling its current capacity. A visitor centre and special sampling room will also be created during a later phase of development.

Norman Sinclair, managing director of the Orkney Brewery's parent firm, Sinclair Breweries Ltd, said: "We're delighted that our vision for the Orkney Brewery is about to become a reality. It's been a great year for us, with the brewery's Raven Ale winning the Champion Beer of Scotland award in June and Red MacGregor taking second place in the same competition. Demand for the full range of Orkney Brewery beers remains very strong and the expansion will enable us to both meet that demand and explore important new markets worldwide. The project will also greatly enhance the experience of visitors to the brewery, helping strengthen Orkney's reputation as a unique and high quality holiday destination."

Members of the media were invited to a turf cutting ceremony, in September, to mark the official start of work on site. Representatives of Sinclair Breweries and Orkney based Casey Construction Ltd, who have been awarded the project contract, were in attendance.

The turf cutting was carried out by Norman's six-year-old son, Arran.

## Oban Bay Brewery

Reports are filtering through about a new brewery in Oban, housed in the Cuan Mor Restaurant & Bar. There is no information about the brewery on their website, in fact a picture shows a Colonsay Lager tap! Brewery plant is on loan from the Mull Brewery.

Early brews are Skelpt Lug (4.2% ABV) and Fair Puggled (4.5% ABV).

## Isle of Mull Brewery

Rumours of closure are unfounded, and we understand that the brewery has been temporarily shutdown for the Winter to allow new brewing plant to be installed, and will open again in time for Easter 2010.

## Rate our Beer

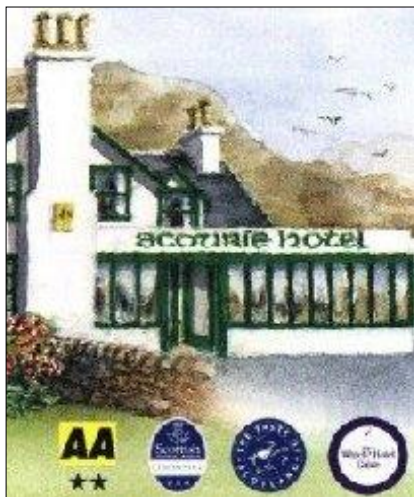
Highlands & Western Isles CAMRA would welcome your help in surveying the pubs in our massive Branch area. To help us decide which pubs in the Highlands & Western Isles are worth considering for the Good Beer Guide, we are using CAMRA's 6-point NBSS (National Beer Scoring Scheme) to record Beer Quality.

### What do the scores mean?

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

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





# Scourie Hotel

Scourie, Sutherland, IV27 4SX

Tel: 01971 502396

FAX: 01971 502423

patrick@scourie-hotel.co.uk

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## South of Drumochter

Gordon, owner of our Champion Pub - the Bandstand Bar in Nairn - organised a wee trip for some of his regulars and friends to the deepest south, for a taste of what Perthshire can offer real ale drinkers from the Highlands.

We left Nairn later than planned and picked up Branch Secretary Gareth, panicking that we had forgotten him, in Inverness. Gareth's presence gave us an air of invincibility as we planned our raid on the southerners!

We couldn't pass Aviemore without a quick visit to the Cairngorm Brewery to drop off GBGs and newsletters. Most had been ready for a pint before leaving Nairn, but we decided to hold on until Perth and then drink our way back. However Stevie and I succumbed to a bottle from Cairngorm, and problems on the A9 made us even thirstier, so we gave in and stopped in Dunkeld to seek out beer guide entries and any other real ale we could find.

The Taybank beckoned and we approached with enthusiasm. Two ales were on - at £3.45 a pint and £1.90 a ½ pint!! A can of

Irn Bru for Gordon's son Jordan - who had been commandeered to be the designated driver - was £1.45! Not the sort of prices one would expect from a bar and hotel in need of some refurbishment. We all basked in the gloriously warm Perthshire sunshine as we drank in the beer garden - all of us choosing Wayfarer from Atlas. Unfortunately this didn't live up to expectations (or the price tag), more sulphur than normal and particularly bitter, achieving a score of 2 and some 2½.

From here we walked through the beautiful small town to the bar of the Atholl Hotel which proudly showed a badge of all the ales from Inveralmond on the wall outside. We entered to see all pumps were off and the barman responding to the inevitable question with 'real what?!' We left with those familiar words 'it'll be on tomorrow', ringing in our ears.

Next to the Perth Arms, a traditional Scottish town bar with a not very traditional Scottish welcome - and no real ale to be found.

We ended up in the Royal Dunkeld Hotel.

Despite its grand title, this was a very pleasant and homely hotel bar with a real pub feel and







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three ales on tap. The first thing we all noticed was Darren the barman discarding the first ½



Our jolly bunch of Highland 'raiders' outside the Royal Dunkeld Hotel

pint to clear the pipes before serving our drinks, a sign of a man who knew what he was doing and a sight to warm the heart of all ale drinkers. Stewart Brewing Pentland IPA (3) and O'Hanlon's Firefly (started at 3, but soon

flattened and Stevie gave it a 1). However Stevie revelled in the Cairngorm Trade Winds and scored it 3, with Gareth noting it as 'very Trade Winds', meaning the elderflower was extremely prominent. Overall an excellent hostelry with a good ambience. The food looked and smelled delicious, but we decided to get back on plan and on the (back) road to Perth which took us through Bankfoot, seeking out the Bankfoot Inn. Sadly my misreading of their opening hours in the GBG meant a disappointment as it was closed until 17:00.

A mad rush now ensued to get to Perth in time for lunch at the Cherrybank Inn. Des and Stevie headed into the bar to order the food whilst Gordon and I looked at ways to overcome the fact that the pub was built into the side of a cliff and accessed by ten steep concrete steps from all directions! After a protracted discussion, where I veered from having a pint in the car park to giving myself up to Gordon's confident proclamations, I decided to take the entrance up the slightly shallower steps from the car park. This was much harder work than we thought, but we made it safely, just in time for a hot meal!

The more important points to note: three Inveralmond ales on tap - Ossian (3), Homecoming (3, some 2's) and Independence (2), and we were afforded a very warm welcome from barman Stuart who instinctively offered us all tasters. Other ales on tap included Strathaven Clydesdale IPA (3) and Houston Killelan (3). And just in case you're wondering, I made it up the steps and back to the car with a little help from my friends, aided by the additional few pints we had consumed!

That was it for Perth! We had planned to visit the Inveralmond Brewery, but time was against us, so we headed back up the A9 to the Moulin Inn and Brewery which was the star of the show when it came to atmosphere and ambience. A beautiful old coaching inn with four of the Moulin Ales on tap.

A sulphury, slightly fruity Braveheart and a dark, malty Ale of Atholl both scored 3. Old Remedial was rated highly by Des, scoring 3. Bar manager Jonathon enthusiastically gave us an impromptu tour of the wonderfully compact brewery. Reluctantly we left Moulin - I

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**As I write this piece I have in my cellar;  
Beartown's Bear Ass  
Brewsters Decadence  
Ringwood's Old Thumper  
Mordue's 5 Bridge Bitter  
Hook Norton's Old Hooky**

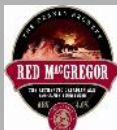
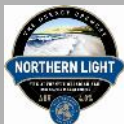
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think we will all make this a regular stop on any future journey south. But The Highlands were calling and we rushed to get a quick visit to the latest of our GBG entries – the Suie Hotel in Kincaig, where we had a very brisk visit and a malty, fruity Cairngorm Stag (3). Back through Inverness to let Gareth off while the Nairn crew headed back to the Bandstand. A predictably high quality Highland St Magnus (3 from Des), and Scapa Special (4), coupled with a delicious Steak supper with Gordon and Stevie capped off what was a really enjoyable, must do again, trip through the wonderful Scottish countryside.

During the day Des treated us to some unusual Brewdog bottled beer, ranging from the extremely hoppy to the extremely alcoholic! Thanks to Gordon for bringing it all together and a very special thanks to our driver Jordan for the very relaxed and safe journey home – despite at least two back seat drivers (well, one was in the front passenger seat!) offering what I thought was some very sensible advice on how to do it! Séamus.

### Tasting Panel Update - November

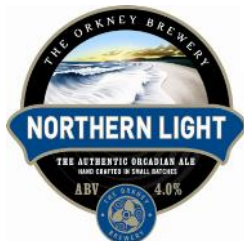
Trained tasters Bill, Allan and Séamus were joined by Braeval landlord Gordon and Nairn local Liz, who are both looking forward to participating in the next taste training session. At the Claymore Hotel Inveralmond Ossian scored 8 on all cards. A classic golden ale, it had little or no malt character but was full of fruit and hops. Plum flavours were particularly noticeable in a very drinkable pint.

At the Golf View Hotel a warm (15 deg) first pint of Trade Winds was happily changed by the barmaid. The prize-winning speciality ale scored an average of 7: the over-strong hop and elderflower character giving it a less than balanced profile. It was lacking in the nose, probably due to being at the end of the barrel. We finished at the Braeval Hotel, where we were spoilt for choice but we limited ourselves to tasting the Highland Dark Munro. This strong mild had a significant roast flavour and only a hint of hop. Fruit flavours were evident throughout and there was a nice bitter sweet finish. All tasters scored it a 7.



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## Highland & Western Isles Pub Tour - October 2009

Dear Editor,

Some feedback on the pubs we visited during our one-week family holiday based in Drumnadrochit. As we had the kids with us, it was the tattie holidays after all, by necessity most of the pub visits were in early evening primarily for meals.

Saturday 10/10/09 - Loch Ness Inn, Lewiston

Having driven over from Aberdeen in the early afternoon nobody was in the mood to get back in the car so the short walk to Lewiston to stretch the legs seemed ideal. This was our first visit since the Loch Ness Inn had changed hands and been re-named. Arriving a little too early for the start of the evening meals we partook in an excellent Trade Winds (4) whilst browsing the impressive menu. Very smartly laid out restaurant with excellent quality food. Deuchars (3) and Red Cuillin (4) accompanied the rest of the meal.

Sunday 11/10/09 - Benleiva Hotel, Drumnadrochit

After some very wet underfoot walks in Balmacaan Woods there wasn't a great desire from the girls to venture far so it was time to visit an old favourite the Benleiva Hotel. We couldn't have been much closer to our holiday accommodation. Based in the rear bar the only disappointment of this visit was that the Rabbit had run out so three of us had to opt for second choices off the menu. Still the Bitter & Twisted (4) was excellent and the house blend of Isle of Skye Archie's Ale (3) and An Teallach Beinn Derag (3) were pretty good too.

Monday 12/10/09 - Clansman Hotel

Having driven past the Clansman Hotel on many occasions it was our first time inside. It has to be said that the much-flaunted description of Loch Ness is somewhat over-rated and that was before it was lost to the evening darkness. Worse was to come when we were informed that there would be no beer until Wednesday. It's not as if the place was quiet. By the time we left there was hardly a table left.

Tuesday 13/10/09 - Blackfriars, Inverness; Phoenix, Inverness; Loch Ness Inn, Benleiva Hotel

On return from Culloden we were enticed by the potential of Blackfriars "Cask Ale Week" and with the kids seated well out of sight of the bar in what was a very quiet pub for a city centre tea time we again had to wait for evening meal service. Still a pint of Highland Light Munro (3.5) did the trick and the food was accompanied by Harviestoun's Haggis Hunter (3). It was only whilst waiting for our meal that I spotted the Phoenix across the road was also having a similar ale promotion drive. Whilst the girls were partaking of pudding I nipped across to see what they had on. The place was dead and the only beer in their line up of six of any interest to me was Cairngorm Stag (2.5). I think all your readers should be notified of the Phoenix's outrageous prices for half-pints. They charge £2-85 per pint, which is pretty good. Now even allowing for the usual rounding up that would only come to £1-45 and not the £1-60 they actually charge for a half. I managed to get rid of the kids when we got back to base camp and thought I'd try out the public bar of the Loch Ness Inn to see how it compared to the restaurant. To be honest there was very little difference in feel. The decor is the same, just no candle lit tables. Still the Trade Winds (3) was fine. Time for some vertical drinking in the Benleiva before bed. Highland Dark Munro (3), Rudgate Jorvik Blonde (3.5) and Fyne Ales Highlander (3.5) made for an excellent evening.

Wednesday 14/10/09 - Dores Inn, Dores

After a day in Fort Augustus, the obligatory boat trip and a scenic drive up the eastern side of Loch Ness we arrived in Dores well before any evening meal rush. The food was superb but I wasn't sure about the Cairngorm seasonal Autumn Nuts (2.5), maybe just not my taste but the Atlas Wayfarer (4) restored my faith. I didn't get to try the Black Sheep Bitter as my wife was so disgusted at the appalling service that after making a public complaint we left.

Inverness & District South Pub-of-the-Year 2008



# The Castle Tavern

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Thursday 15/10/09 - Castle Tavern, Inverness

After a delayed start to the day due to poor weather (only time in the week) and a delightful walk along the banks of the River Ness and some retail therapy (it's mandatory apparently?) we tried the upstairs room in the Castle Tavern. There were five beers on (including two from An Teallach, Black Sheep Bitter & Taylor's Landlord) but with Highland Scapa Special (4) on great form I didn't bother with the others. The food was good and the waitress service was excellent. And for that reason alone it got the girl's award of pub of the week.

Friday 16/10/09 - Benleiva Hotel, Drumnadrochit

We'd spent the day in Glen Affric. The weather was excellent, blue skies and warm sunshine. The autumn colours were spectacularly breathtaking. All in all one of those days that really make this time of year something special and a psychological uplift for the miserable weather that is bound to follow over the winter months (and possibly spring and summer too!). Unfortunately it was our last day of the holiday too so we stayed local and went back to the Benleiva. I guess being a Friday we should have guessed it would be busy. No room in the back bar so we ate in the public bar. Again no Rabbit on the menu. More second choices. The beers were on form with Highland Dark Munro (3), Isle of Skye Young Pretender (3) and coming on just in time for me to finish the week on a high with my beer of the week Highland Orkney IPA (4.5).

Another great week aided as always with the comprehensive list of cask ale outlets published in the branch newsletter. Looking forward to our next visit already.

Cheers, Richard.

**An Teallach Brewery** - Corrections to GBG 2010 Tasting Notes (Pages 680/681) can be found at [www.camra.org.uk](http://www.camra.org.uk) under 'Updates to the 2010 Good Beer Guide'.



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

Time again for you to vote for your Beers-of-the-Year. The nine category winners will now go forward to the 'Champion Winter Beer of Scotland' and to the 'Champion Beer of Scotland' competitions respectively; and finally the winners of these two competitions will join all the other National Regional competition winners in the 'Champion Beer of Britain' and the 'Champion Winter Beer of Britain' competitions. See page 40 for Champion Beers of 2009.

Without going into detail, please see our Winter 2007 edition for that, the new Champion Beers of Britain system - now in its third year - involves beers being chosen by a roughly 50/50 combination of Tasting Panel recommendations, and a voting system at CAMRA Branches level.

Under the new system you may vote for any Scottish real ale, not just local brews which you have enjoyed during the past twelve months. The list of eligible beers in each category may be found on our website ([www.highlandcamra.org.uk](http://www.highlandcamra.org.uk)).

Although the new system allows you to vote for any Scottish beer, we will still be able to award our own Beer-of-the-Year to the your favourite beer locally brewed in our Branch area!

Real Ales brewed at the following Highlands & Western Isles breweries qualify for your favourite local brew:

(In alphabetical order) An Teallach, Atlas, Black Isle, Cairngorm, Cuillin, Glenfinnan, Hebridean, Isle of Skye, and Plockton.

Your locally brewed favourites last year were:

**Gold:** Cairngorm Black Gold

**Silver:** Isle of Skye Black Cuillin  
(tied vote) Cairngorm Wildcat

Please use the voting form below, or our on-line form, or just send us an e-mail! This is your chance to help put the best beers brewed in Scotland on the map!



### Highlands & Western Isles Branch of CAMRA 2010 Beer-of-the-Year Voting Form

Mild .....  
Bitter .....  
Best Bitter .....  
Strong Bitter .....  
Stout / Porter .....  
Old Ale / Strong Mild .....  
Barley Wine .....  
Golden Ale .....  
Specialty Beer .....  
Real Ale in a Bottle .....

**Your Favourite Local Ale** .....

**Member's Name/No.** .....



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### **E-Ale**

• My brother and I cycled from Lands End to John o'Groats in July this year and found real ale at the Eagle Hotel, Dornoch, and the Bay Owl (restaurant), Dunbeath.

Your web-site is very useful! David Sumblar.

• Dear Sir/Madam,

I would like to recommend the Glenuig Inn, Glenuig, Sound of Arisaig, Inverness-shire, Scotland, PH38 4NG for inclusion in the next issue of the (Good Beer) guide. I visited this Inn last Saturday and they had three ales from the Cairngorm brewery on tap and four different ales in bottles. During the summer they had four ales on. This Inn has been recently refurbished (reopened early June 2009) and really deserves to be included.

With best regards,

Rose Warwick, Member 126362.

### **Ullapool Beer Festival**

The weather forecast was for all day rain, heavy at times, throughout the Highlands - but it was a fine day, with the early haar just shifting, when we left Inverness. One pick-up

north of the bridge and then all speed to a windy Ullapool. Simon was waiting for us at the FBI (Ferry Boat Inn), making a total of ten for our walk around town.

The Punch Tavern owned FBI had Deuchars IPA and Caledonian 80/- on hand pump BUT - a problem, as very little beer was coming through! Apologies from the young barmaid as she called for help. So we walked along to the Seaforth Bar & Restaurant where two hand pumps advertised An Teallach Ale (1.5 NBSS average score). Up next to the Caley Inn that has had real ale in the past, but now only has a mark on the bar where the hand pump used to be. Not a very good start to our day!

Back down to the sea front and a walk along to the Arch Inn where we found a much better An Teallach Ale (3.5). Light drizzle was falling now as we paid a second visit to the Ferry Boat Inn where both beers were now flowing: Deuchars IPA (3) and Caledonian 80/- (2).

Up behind the FBI is the Argyll Hotel, also a Punch Tavern, but an agreement means that they can sell one local brew. An Teallach Suil-

*(Continued on page 42)*

# the loch ness inn

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



## The Loch Ness Inn is now open!

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## Champion Beers of Scotland for 2009

<u>Category</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Beer</u>	<u>Final Judging Venue</u>
Mild	Champion =2 =2	Highland Dark Munro TSA Dark Mild Arran Dark	Scottish Real Ale Festival
Bitter	Champion 2 3	Belhaven 70/- Orkney Raven Deeside Brude	Scottish Real Ale Festival
Best Bitter	Champion 2 =3 =3	Atlas Three Sisters Orkney Red MacGregor Highland Scapa Special Highland St. Magnus Ale	Paisley Beer Festival
Strong Bitter	Champion 2 3	Highland Orkney Blast Cairngorm Wild Cat Inveralmond Lia Fail	Paisley Beer Festival
Stout/ Porter	Champion 2 3	Cairngorm Black Gold Sulwath Black Galloway Black Isle Porter	Scottish Real Ale Festival
Old Ale/ Strong Mild	Champion 2 3	Fyne Highlander Stewart Edinburgh No. 3 Stewart 80/-	Alloa October Festival
Barley Wine	Champion 2 3	Black Isle Hibernator Orkney Skullsplitter Hebridean Berserker	Scottish Real Ale Festival
Golden Ale	Champion 2 =3 =3	Inveralmond Ossian Fyne Avalanche Cairngorm Sheepshaggers Gold Harviestoun Bitter & Twisted	Troon Beer Festival
Speciality	Champion 2 3	Sulwath Solway Mist Isle of Skye Hebridean Gold Cairngorm Trade Winds	Aberdeen Beer Festival
Real Ale in a Bottle	Champion 2 3	Islay Black Rock Tryst Brockville Dark Black Isle Goldeneye	Troon Beer Festival

First place beers in the Mild, Strong Bitter, Golden Ale and Speciality Beer categories, plus first and second place beers in the Bitter and Best Bitter categories go forward to the Champion Beer of Britain finals held at the Great British Beer Festival (GBBF).

First place beers in the Old Ale & Strong Mild, Stout & Porter and Barley Wine categories go forward to Champion Winter Beer of Britain (CWBOB) held at the Great British Winter Beer Festival (GBWBF). The winner of this is judged along with the other draught beer categories for Champion Beer of Britain (CBOB). Each CBOB and CWBOB category final panel will consist of the winning category beers from CAMRA regional competitions nationwide.

Real Ale in a Bottle is judged separately at the Great British Beer Festival (GBBF).



## Champion Beer of Scotland 2010

The first placed beer in each category above will go forward to the Champion Beer of Scotland Competition 2010, currently held at the Scottish Real Ale Festival in Edinburgh in June.

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ven (4) was on tap along with Shepherd Neame Spitfire (3.5). They also have a good selection of ciders, although mainly in bottles. Nigel and Franner (a singing landlady!) run the place and are always happy to see real ale drinkers. So much so that with their hospitality and the open fire we did not want to move on. Sandy had brought the bus around to ferry us up to the Morefield Motel (it's not too far and you could walk, but time was short), where the Ullapool Beer Festival, now in it's fifth year, was in full flow. We were joined by two local CAMRA members and three Blackfriars regulars who had driven up from Inverness. Tony (owner) and Neil (cellarman) were there to welcome us, with a selection of ten beers to choose from. All beers sampled were in very good condition. Our favourites on the day were Highland Scapa Special, Traquair Stuart Ale, Inverlmond Ossian, and a special from Tryst - Brewers Swansong (proceeds to Iain

Turnbull Macmillan Cancer Care). Brewdog 77, Broughton Merlin Ale, Cairngorm Autumn Nuts, Orkney Red MacGregor, Sulwath Knockendoch, and festival special 'Haggis in the Skye with Diamonds' (brewed by Isle of Skye Brewery) completed the brews on offer.



Brews from An Teallach, Cairngorm, Isle of Skye, Harviestoun, Moulin, Orkney, Atlas, and Tryst were waiting in the wings to replace those

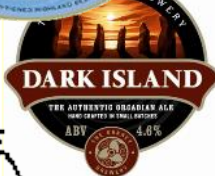
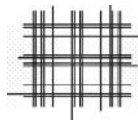
that finished. We took full advantage of their all day festival special menu as we supped our way through the beers. Six o'clock came and, unfortunately, we had to be off as this is our short trip of the year and we had to head back to Inverness in time to catch buses etc.

Make a note in your diary as the 6<sup>th</sup> Ullapool Beer Festival dates are 21<sup>st</sup> - 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2010. Many thanks to Sandy, of Fraser's Coaches, for again looking after us so well.

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

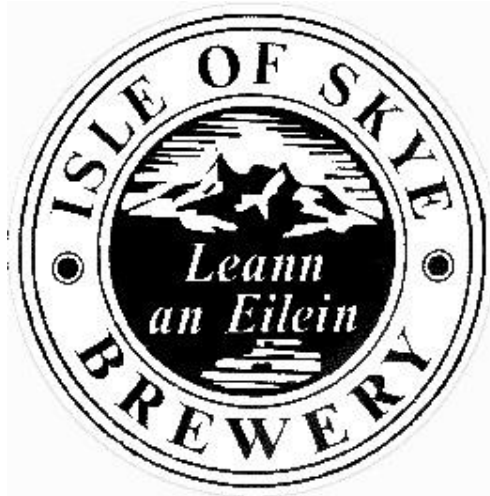






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