

What's Yours Then?

Inverness & Highland Branch
Free Newsletter



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2004

**Orkney & Atlas
Breweries
to Join Forces**

**Blackfriars
& Old Inn
are
Pubs-of-the-Year**

Full details inside..



Campaign for Real Ale



Welcome to the Spring edition of our branch newsletter. The response to our Winter newsletter has been extremely encouraging, with pub and beer reports coming in from near and far.

In this edition -

- > Local breweries announce merger
- > Pub-of-the-Year winners
- > More pubs in the Highlands & Islands are selling real ale - see our revised list
- > Visitor's Pub Reports
- > Updated Branch Diary

Letters, views & opinions, articles, etc., are all welcome. Let us know what is happening at your local, or tell us about pubs you have visited.

The Summer Newsletter deadline will be 1st June 2004, with publication by the end of June.

If you would like to advertise in this newsletter, please contact one of the branch officers (see page 6).

If at all possible, please send your advertisement in Microsoft Publisher compatible electronic format. The need to scan in hard copy may lead to loss of quality in reproduction. We can help in preparing your advert if you wish.

Full Page Advert.....£55.00
Half Page Advert.....£32.00
Quarter Page Advert.....£17.00

800+ copies will be distributed to branch

members, to Highland & Island brewers, to Good Beer Guide listed and Real Ale pubs; plus extra copies to advertisers.



National Beer Scoring System

CAMRA have drawn up a National Beer Scoring System (NBSS) with a 6 (0-5) point scale for judging beer quality in pubs. It is an easy to use system that has been designed to assist branches in selecting pubs for the Good Beer Guide and also monitor beer quality by encouraging CAMRA members from any part of the world to report beer quality on any pub in the UK.

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.

Initially the NBSS will use credit card size forms, which can be used straight away. These will be available from HQ and www.camra.org.uk. Completed cards should be sent to HQ who will pass them on, or directly to the appropriate branch if known. In due course, an online method of entering scores will be made available to branches.



Premium Highland Ales

Available in Casks & Bottles

Stag	4.1%
Trade Winds (Now won 6 awards since launched in June 2003)	4.3 %
Nessie's Monster Mash	4.4%
Sheepshaggers Gold	4.5%
Cairngorm Gold	4.5%
Wildcat	5.1%

SEASONAL CASKS BEERS COMING UP.....



**Award-Winning
Black Gold Stout**
ABV 4.4 %
(available now -
limited stock)



Highland IPA
ABV 3.6 %
A pale ale session style
beer, available from
April



60 Shilling
ABV 3.7 %
Award-winning mild,
available in May

Unit 12, Dalfaber Ind. Estate, Aviemore, Inverness-shire, PH22 1PY
Tel: 01479 812222 Fax: 01479 811465
info@cairngormbrewery.com www.cairngormbrewery.com

Northern Pubs

A CAMRA Branch Chairman from the south-west of England regularly spends his holidays in the Highlands, sampling real ales as he goes. His report on the pubs he visited on his last trip makes interesting reading.

To spare one or two blushes, and as his reports pull no punches, I have omitted the names of the pubs he describes -

> **Inverness** - The Dark Island was in absolutely top-notch condition, spoilt only by seriously short measure and a seriously disgruntled barmaid who signed off duty just after serving us. I won't let it deter me from going back, as the grub was good and there were 4 other real ales on including the usual selection from local breweries.

> **Wick I** - Sunday lunchtime, around 12:35. Only 2 real ales 'on', Caley Deuchars IPA and the same brewery's 80/- at £1.35/pt. The Deuchars was mediocre - tasted 'tinny' and as if it hadn't been flushed out of an overnight stay in the line. No one else in when we arrived, but quite a few came in within the next few minutes. Staff friendly enough. 6 handpumps, 2 with clips turned round so we reckon they had had Badger Tanglefoot and Cairngorm Wildcat on in the recent past (or it was connected and upcoming). Quite a pleasant, airy environment in an impressive granite building. I'd go back, but the staff's knowledge of real ale seemed a bit hazy.

> **Wick II** - I like this place, but despite having 2 handpumps I have never caught it with more than one operational. This time it offered Orkney's Red McGregor,

which looked in superb condition with all the right things - but smelt phenolic and was just about to topple, I reckon. Obviously hanging around too long. I had about half my glass but couldn't take any more, and the one barmaid was being harassed by people wanting food by then, so complaining would have been time-consuming and we needed to move on. Wish I had, but I think I would have been complaining to the wrong person anyway.

> **Thurso** - A fairly basic drinking den this, with lots of tipling locals, and you sit drinking while bathed in a slightly eerie orange glow from the coloured lighting globes all over the place! This is enhanced by the red lino on the floor. Not a criticism though - we'll go back, and the beer on this Sunday afternoon was Caley Deuchars IPA, Heather's seasonal Grouse Beater, and something called Big Tosser whose parent brewery I did not record (any ideas?). The Grouse Beater and IPA were in good condition, although the Grouse Beater had a peculiar taste (raspberries with a vanillas aroma) and drank 'thin'. That was the beer, though, and not the pub.

> **North** We got here at around 14:00 on a Monday, but it was closed. Nevertheless we were shown where it all happens, but they explained they had had a quiet weekend and there was no beer connected up anyway. It would have been Real Mackay.

> **North West** - The real surprise, as we were passing and spotted a blackboard by the roadside announcing the presence of real ales. Being an arch sceptic, I decided

(Continued on page 8)



Inverness & Highland Campaign for Real Ale

Saturday
3rd April 2004



Bus Trip to the Cairngorm Brewery

Leaving Inverness Town House at 09:30 am,
and returning by approximately 10:00 pm

- 10:30 Speyside Walk
- 12:30 Lunch at Heatherbrae Hotel
- 14:30 Cairngorm Brewery Visit
- 16:00 Aviemore, Kingussie and
Newtonmore Pubs visit
- 19:30 Supper at Glen Hotel
- 21:00 Return to Inverness

For further details, or to book your
seat on the coach, please contact -

Bill Tring on 01463 231448
Eric Mills on 01456 450143

e-mail: bill-tring@supanet.com or
ericdenise@millse24.freemove.co.uk



Branch Diary (Meetings start at 7.30 pm)

3rd April



Cairngorm Brewery and real ale outlets in the Aviemore area.

6th April Committee Meeting

Benleva Hotel, Drumnadrochit

13th April Branch Meeting

Glen Mhor Hotel, Inverness.

4th May Committee Meeting

Heatherbrae Hotel, Nethy Bridge.

1st June Committee Meeting

The Anderson, Fortrose

5th June Scottish Branches Meet

Benleva Hotel, Drumnadrochit

13th June
(Sunday)



An Teallach Brewery and Branch Meeting at the Old Inn, Gairloch

17th - 19th June Traditional Scottish
Beer Festival

Assembly Rooms,
George Street, Edinburgh.

6th July Committee Meeting

Glen Hotel, Newtonmore

3rd Aug Committee Meeting

Glenmorrison Arms, Invermorrison

14th Aug Real Ale Bar

Marymas Fair, Inverness

4th Sept



Isle of Skye Brewery and Branch Meeting at the Stein Inn

7th Sept Committee Meeting

Cairn Hotel, Carrbridge

17th - 25th Sept 3rd Loch Ness Beer Festival Benleva Hotel

19th Sept Beer Festival Social

Benleva Hotel, Drumnadrochit

5th Oct Committee Meeting

Cawdor Tavern, Cawdor

4th - 6th Nov Aberdeen Beer Festival

9th Nov Annual General Meeting

To Be Advised

7th Dec Committee Meeting

To Be Advised

14th Dec Annual Inverness Walkabout & Social

Contact Details



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bill-tring@supanet.com

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01463 831259
mike.whittall@talk21.com

Your business needs . . .



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Investor in People

(Continued from page 4)

to have a look and was amazed to find 2 handpumps with Taylor Landlord on the one in use, but Black Isle Yellowhammer on gravity which was in amazingly good condition. Loved it! They explained that real ale was a summer phenomenon for them, as the locals wouldn't drink it fast enough, although they get some in for Xmas. Beer from Highland breweries is favoured, including An Teallach from Dundonell. This is a real welcome watering hole on the long run down towards Gairloch and for my money could be a GBG candidate if it weren't for the winter period of abstinence on their part.

> **West Coast I** - The beers were fine, with 4 on at all times which during our stay were An Teallach Ale, Houston Texas, Skye Blaven and Skye Cuillin Beast. However, the pub itself was rather impersonal and the landlord was rarely in evidence, except when counting his money in the morning. The food was disappointing and seemed to be production line stuff. You know the sort of thing - mediocre soggy chips, greasy, overcooked factory farm eggs, and generally poor breakfasts. We had the distinct feeling that the place needs to sharpen up its act lack of competition is the problem here, I would think.

> **West Coast II** - Got distracted here by a drunken female doctor and her chum from Pitmedden, on a quick three-day west coast break. Completely batty herself, she turned out to be a psychiatric doctor dealing with care in the community patients! Great hour or so, we enjoyed it immensely, but I forgot to make notes!

The beer was reasonably good although not wonderful, that much I remember.

> **West Coast III** - Definitely a GBG candidate, this one. Depends a lot on food in summer, perhaps not surprisingly, but there were 2 handpumps, one in use dispensing good Black Cuillin, albeit slightly on the cold side. The real ale was installed earlier this year by Skye, and they intend to sell it all year round. The pub is a modernised single long, thin room with the bar biased towards one end. The obvious emphasis on food was underpinned by an extensive menu and had been awarded the 'Scottish Regional Seafood Pub of the Year' by somebody or other. They also have 7 bedrooms, which might be worth a try.

> **West Coast IV** - Under new management, and now part of pub chain. They had 2 real ales when we arrived: Red Cuillin, which was definitely in a bad way, and Black Cuillin, which was fine. The Red was taken off and changed to Big Tosser (which again I didn't record!) with much washing and flushing of lines. We were the only customers (it was about 14:30 on a Wednesday) but the barman was friendly enough. There could at any time be 'anything on' he said, but nearly always from a Scottish brewery,

> **Isle of Skye I** - 3 ales on arrival: Craigmill Stone Kettle Brewery Pheasant Plucker 80/-, Fraoch Heather, and Big Tosser. By the end of a busy Thursday evening two of these had changed to Houston Peters Well and Texas, with the Heather still on. All were in good nick, and sold in the public bar, which is in an annex to the main hotel.

OPEN
ALL
YEAR

Benleeva Hotel

Drumnadrochit, Loch Ness

Tel :
01456
450080

www.lochnesshotel.com



Highland Pub of the Year 2003

3rd Loch Ness Beer Festival

17th - 25th September 2004

En-suite Accommodation

Excellent Food

> **Isle of Skye II** - Unprepossessing pub/restaurant in a small building. Not much to write home about, but there was one handpump dispensing Skye Blaven, and very nice it was too. The food was simple and good value.

> **Isle of Skye III** - Three ales on arrival: Orkney Dark Island, Caley Deuchars, and Blaven. The Dark Island, which was in excellent, ran out and Big Tossler went on instead. I can only describe the food as 'pub grub plus', with an emphasis on local shellfish, but it was perfectly fine. The beer is almost always sourced from local breweries including one always from Skye (the landlord feels duty bound, he says), and are varied continuously. The occasional English (ale) interloper appears over the bar, but the landlord feels that the visitors prefer local (i.e. Scottish)

ales. I'll drink to that!

Well, that's it, probably too much info but I felt I owed it to you after so much delay. And I've just discovered that Big Tossler is a Houston seasonal!

Well, that is certainly telling it like it is!! Our roving reporter (name & address supplied, as they say) does not necessarily limit himself to GBG listed hosteleries, but it appears that the quality of ales he found generally met with approval. Ed.



Time Called on Historic Edinburgh Brewery

Scottish & Newcastle, Britain's biggest brewer, recently signalled the end of an era by announcing the closure of an historic Edinburgh brewery. The company said that its 148-year-old factory in Fountainbridge would close by the end of the year with the loss of 170 jobs. S&N blamed high operating costs, low capacity utilisation, and the city centre location.

Scottish & Newcastle also announced plans to buy a smaller brewery to produce beers for sale in Scotland, but said that only a handful of jobs would be created through the acquisition of the Caledonian Brewery. The purchase will at least, mean that famous ale brands such as McEwan's 70/- & 80/Tartan Special and Younger's continue to be brewed in Scotland.

The company, which is also understood to be reviewing the future of the Tyne Brewery in Newcastle, reiterated its commitment to keeping its corporate and UK head offices in Edinburgh and said it had no intention of changing its name.

In his statement, John Holland, director of CAMRA, said: "S&N have a history of broken promises and brewery closures..."

Read **Fyne Ales** interesting response to the Fountainbridge closure - page 22.

The Hebridean Brewery are to be congratulated on winning a Scotland-wide contract to supply Safeway stores. All Hebridean Brewery beers are brewed and bottled wholly in the Western Isles. Two pallets a week of **Islanders Strong Ale** and **Berserker Beers** will be delivered by local hauliers to Safeway stores.

Orkney & Atlas Breweries to Join Forces

Atlas Brewery Limited and The Orkney Brewery Limited are delighted to announce that agreement has been reached in principle to merge the two businesses. Subject to the completion of banking and legal formalities, the two businesses will be under common ownership and management before the end of April.

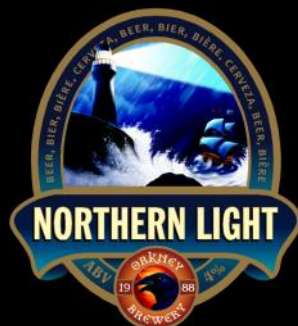
The new business, which will be called **Highlands and Islands Breweries**, is dedicated to continuing to develop two separate brands with their distinctive personalities, brewed at two very special breweries in exceptional locations.

Highlands and Islands Breweries will, however, have a single sales, marketing and customer service team unrivalled among Scotland's small brewers. This will allow the new business to offer a wide portfolio of products, with exceptional levels of customer service, and a pipeline of new products and new ideas for the future.

Neill Cotton, founder of Atlas Brewery, will be Managing Director of the new business, with Roger White, founder of The Orkney Brewery, as Chairman.

"This deal brings together two of the most successful small breweries in Scotland, creating an exciting future for both breweries and both brands," agreed Neill Cotton and Roger White.

New commercial arrangements will be communicated in due course; in the meantime customers should continue to deal with their existing contacts at the two breweries.



**fine cask
keg and
bottled ales**



Contact - 01856 841 802 [Brewery] or 07831 213 603 [Rob Jenner, Sales Manager]

Branch Pubs-of-the-Year 2004

A record number of branch members voted for their favourite hostelrys this year. In an extremely close-run contest, **Blackfriars** and the **Old Inn** at Gairloch were voted as Inverness and Country Pubs-of-the-Year for 2004.

This is the fifth year these awards have been presented, and Blackfriars have become only the second pub to win the Inverness award, having broken the Clachnaharry Inn's four year monopoly. The Old Inn is also a first time winner, and deservedly so, following eighteen consecutive Good Beer Guide entries.

The Old Inn, Gairloch

Alastair Pearson and his wife Ute bought the Old Inn four and a half years ago and, by serving a range of well-kept real ales, they have continued along the route started by past owners. A selection of up to eight real ales from independent breweries are served, including 'Blind Piper', their 4.6% ABV house ale from the Isle of Skye Brewery. 'Blind Piper' is named after a tune written by a local composer over 300 years ago. Alastair and Ute have been upgrading the Old Inn since their arrival and the bar was completed in January. The Old Inn was awarded the *AA Pub of the Year for Scotland and Northern Ireland 2003*.

The cheerful and friendly team of staff provide a warm welcome for both the strong local base of real ale drinkers, and the regularly returning visitors. A mouth-watering menu offers home cooked game and seafood, most sourced locally, and some of the fish is landed at the harbour just across the road.

Good & Bad News for Blackfriars

Zander was delighted to be awarded the accolade of Inverness Pub-of-the-Year for 2004. The award is of course tinged by sadness for, as most of you know by now, Zander is giving up the lease on the Blackfriars. On 14th April the lease will pass to a young couple from the south of England. But, don't despair yet, the real ale quality should not be affected as the new couple has been managing a Fullers house in London.

The reason for leaving, Zander puts down to the continuing poor health of his wife Danielle on top of all the other problems associated with running a city centre pub in a climate when costs are continually rising.

We all thought that when Dougie Fraser left as manager the excellent real ale reputation he had built up at the Blackfriars would end, but Zander has taken the pub from strength to strength and it has maintained its position as one of the premier real ale pubs in the Highlands, specialising in Scottish independent brewery beers. Zander says he has enjoyed every minute and remembers few bad moments in the four years he has been in charge. He is not leaving the area and hopes to see many of his old customers on the other side of the bar. The branch thanks him for giving real ale drinkers in Inverness such a high quality venue and wishes him well in whatever venture he takes on next.

A very difficult choice for committee, but after much debate the **Old Inn** was selected to represent the branch area in the annual Scottish Pub of the Year.

The Old Inn

Gairloch, Ross-shire, IV21 2BD

Telephone: 01445 712006

Enquiries - Call Free - 0800 542 5444

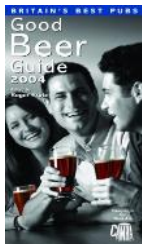
Scottish Tourist Board 3 Star Inn

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

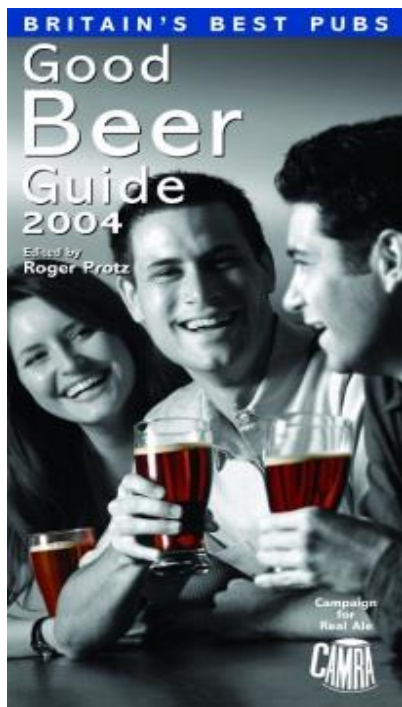
Food served all day

Website: www.theoldinn.co.uk

E-mail: nomadscot@lineone.net



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



The Good Beer Guide

The best place to find good pubs and good beer. The Good Beer Guide is more than just a pub guide. Britain's longest-running and best-selling guide contains Britain's best pubs for real ale. But for beer lovers it also gives up-to-date information on the country's beers and breweries. It is compiled by 70,000 dedicated volunteers in the Campaign for Real Ale. There are no fees for listings, and every pub is checked many times a year.

The unique **Breweries** section lists all breweries - micro, regional and national - that produce cask beer, with tasting notes compiled by CAMRA-trained tasting teams. There's also information about beers suitable for vegetarians and vegans, as well as the growing number of organic beers. The Guide lists new breweries, closed breweries, mergers and takeovers, and keeps track of the new, powerful pub groups.

Highlands & Islands Brewers in 2004

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

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

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

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 late March 2000. Ales include Blond and Dark.

Newtonmore & Kingussie Brewery - Started brewing in October 2001, using the location and plant, behind the Royal Hotel, previously used by Iris Rose.

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

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

Hebridean Brewing Company - Based in Stornoway on the Isle of Lewis. First beer was produced at end-January 2002.

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

An Teallach Brewery - A beer was brewed for this company at the Atlas Brewery from May 2002. Moved to Dundonnell during March 2003.

Not all of the breweries listed are in our branch area and Orkney and Shetland are submitted by Aberdeen, Grampian & NI Branch. The Arran Islands in the Galloway area; is covered by Glasgow West Scotland. Similarly GBG, pubs in Orkney and Shetland are submitted by Aberdeen, Grampian & NI Branch.



Good Beer Guide Listed Pubs - 2004

Inverness

Blackfriars
Clachnaharry Inn
Hootananny
Number 27
Palace Hotel
Phoenix Bar

Around Inverness

Benleva Hotel, Drumnadrochit
Invernairne Hotel, Nairn

Black Isle & Dingwall

Plough Inn, Rosemarkie

Speyside

Old Bridge Inn, Aviemore
Cairn Hotel, Carrbridge
Heatherbrae Hotel, Nethy Bridge

Isle of Skye

Sligachan Hotel
Stein Inn

Western Highlands

Old Inn, Gairloch
Plockton Hotel, Plockton
Ferry Boat Inn, Ullapool

The Road to Lochaber

Invergarry Hotel

Lochaber

Laroch Bar & Bistro, Ballachulish
Grog & Gruel, Fort William
Nevisport Bar, Fort William
Clachaig Inn, Glencoe
Invergarry Hotel, Invergarry
Tailrace Inn, Kinlochleven
Four Seasons, Onich
Nether Lochaber Hotel, Onich

Knoydart

Old Forge, Inverie

North

Central Hotel, Thurso

Orkney Islands

Bothy Bar, Kirkwall
Stromness Hotel, Stromness

Shetland Islands

Baltasound Hotel
Spiggie Hotel, Scousburgh
Inn on the Hill, Whiteness

The Royal Hotel at Kingussie was deleted in Autumn 2003 when, following a change of ownership, the hotel bars were closed for a period of time. Amendments & deletions can be found at www.camra.org on the GBG page.

Real Ale Pubs

In addition to GBG-listed pubs, it has been reported that the following Inns and Hotels are selling real ale (some in the tourist season only) -

Inverness

Glen Mhor Hotel
Heathmount Hotel
Inshes Gate - **NEW (TP)**
Kings Highway
(Weatherspoons)
Snowgoose
Waterfront

Around Inverness

Cawdor Tavern, Cawdor
Bogroy Inn, Inchmore - **NEW**
Clansman Hotel - **NEW**

Black Isle & Dingwall

National Hotel, Dingwall
Richmond Hotel, Strathpeffer
The Anderson, Fortrose
(Formerly the Royal Hotel)

Speyside

Cairngorm Hotel, Aviemore
Dalfaber Country Club, Aviemore
Winking Owl, Aviemore
Mash Tun, Charlestown of Aberlour
Highlander Inn, Craigellachie
Boat Hotel, Boat of Garten
Glen Mhor, Granton on Spey
Suie Hotel, Kincaig - **NEW (TP)**
Glen Hotel, Newtonmore
Mains Hotel, Newtonmore
Tomatin Inn, Tomatin - **NEW**
Grouse Inn, Tomintoul - **NEW**
Glen Avon Hotel, Tomintoul - **NEW**

The Road to Lochaber

Glenmorriston Arms (**TP**)
The Fiddlers, Drumadrochit - **NEW**
The Lock Inn, Fort Augustus - **NEW**
The Bothy, Fort Augustus - **NEW**

Lochaber

Inn at Ardgour
Ben Nevis Inn, Fort William - **NEW**



- **Independent Scottish Ales**
no cask on longer than 5 days!
- **Scotland's Largest Selection of Belgian Beer**
- **110 Single Malts**
- **Truly Multicultural Menu**
- **9 Bedrooms**

the
ANDERSON
www.theanderson.co.uk

Proprietor: Jim Anderson of Beer Philadelphia

Union Street
Fortrose, Ross-Shire
01381 620 236

Kings House Hotel, Glencoe
Stronlössit Hotel, Roy Bridge
Factor's Inn, Torlundy - **NEW**

The Road to Skye

Cluanie Inn - **NEW**
Kintail Lodge Hotel - **NEW**
Loch Duich Hotel, Dornie
Cuchulainn's, Kyle of Lochalsh

Isle of Skye

Ardvasar Hotel
Claymore, Broadford
Dunollie Hotel, Broadford
Coruisk House, Elgol
Duntulm Hotel
Dunvegan Hotel
Edinbane Hotel
Flodigarry Hotel
Isleornsay Hotel
Taigh Ailean Hotel, Portnalong
Isles Inn, Portree
Royal Hotel, Portree
Isle of Raasay Hotel
Sconser Lodge Hotel - **NEW**
Toravaig House Hotel
Ferry Inn, Uig
Pub on the Pier, Uig
Uig Hotel, Uig

Western Isles

Langass Lodge, North Uist
The Whalers Rest, Stornoway
Isle of Harris Hotel, Tarbet

Western Highlands

Applecross Inn
Altguish Inn
Drumchork Hotel, Aultbea
Badachro Inn
Inchbae Hotel, Garve
Lochcarron Hotel
Rock Villa Hotel, Lochcarron
Plockton Inn
Strathcarron Hotel
Tigh-an-Eilean Hotel, Shieldag - **NEW**
Argyll Hotel, Ullapool

North

Melvich Hotel
Scourie Inn
Mackays Hotel, Wick - **NEW**
Alexander Bain, Wick - **NEW**
(Weatherspoons)

If you visit, please let us know about the quality of real ales on tap, particularly if you think inclusion in the next edition of the Good Beer Guide is merited.

NEW - Addition since last Newsletter

TP - Dispensed using top pressure (not approved by CAMRA for GBG). *Better than no real ale at all?? Listed here for you to make up your own mind. Ed.*

Inns 'n' Things

A new entry into the Highlands real ale scene, **The Anderson**, features Scotland's largest selection of Belgian beers. The proprietor, Jim Anderson, is fresh from the United States, was publisher of Beer Philadelphia Magazine, host of Beer Philadelphia Radio and promoter of America's oldest real ale festival, Real Ale Rendezvous. They specialize in ales from independent Scottish brewers, and guarantee that no cask is ever on for longer than 5 days. The Anderson is a restaurant with rooms in Fortrose, Ross-Shire, 10 miles outside Inverness.

Western Isles E-mail: *"The branch might be interested to know that the beer in the **Whalers Rest** in Stornoway has been in excellent nick all the times I've been there lately. GBG quality imho!"*

We understand that the **Sligachan Hotel** has recently been closed for refurbishment, but will be open in time for the new season.



Join CAMRA Today - Membership Form on Page 19

A Southerner's View

Another e-mail contribution from south of the Border. This correspondent picked up a copy of our Winter newsletter on his travels and made every effort to visit as many pubs as possible listed as selling real ale - managing to visit 25 pubs in all.

Pubs were described as "Nice Pub", "OK bar", "Beautiful setting", or similar, with only one "Awful bar". The beer comments are very encouraging, with lots of "Good Quality Beer" ratings, and six noted as "Very Good Quality" or Superb".

Four pubs were closed when he visited, and four had no real ale. At only one pub did he note the ale as less than good and, when changed, the second ale was "OK".

Three regular Inverness GBG entries were missed as he had been before.

The Factor's Inn at Torlundy was rated as an "Excellent bar", and with the "Best beer I tasted in Scotland this week and would recommend for GBG".

Praise indeed.. Ed.

He finished with a short summary -

Having booked a holiday in Scotland at the GBBF 2002 we at last were able to take it in late January 2004. I know the range of beers is severely depleted in winter and some GBG pubs don't even have real ale but our time was running out and my wife wanted to see some snow. That arrived of course three or four days after we left.

What can I say about drinking in Scotland? I thought CAMRA in England had problems until seeing first hand the difficulties you have. I have only drunk in Scotland in the summer before, staying in

Edinburgh, Glasgow & Aberdeen. So drinking in the winter is totally different. Reduced range, closed hotels, huge distances between pubs and beer (real or 'fizz'), with prices comparable to or higher than those in Surrey where I live. Paying £2.30/£2.60 for 'fizz' beer when it is only £2.00/£2.10 down here seems preposterous. Some real ales were cheaper than 'fizz' in some bars. However I loved the scenery, the weather was kind, the pubs & hotels were clean (for the most part), and in wonderful settings (I would put the village of Plockton in my top three most beautiful places to drink in the UK and having now drunk in almost one in three pubs in the country, that is some accolade) and the Scots I met were very friendly.

And very glad we are to hear it! Ed.

So in all a great place to drink but a lot of work & dedication needed to bring real ale to more places in Scotland.

Reports such as these are very welcome, and help to keep us up-to-date on the real ale outlets in the Branch area. Ed.

May is National CAMRA Mild Month

Make a point of trying a Mild. Look out for **Cairngorm 60/-** in May.

Good News / Bad News

Chancellor Gordon Brown, in a mixed Budget for beer drinkers, has doubled the successful small breweries' relief - but added a penny to the tax on a pint. In his statement Mike Benner, CAMRA Head of Campaigns and Communications, noted, "A doubling of the threshold is very positive..."

Full story at **www.camra.org.uk**

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Send to: The Membership Secretary, CAMRA,
230 Hatfield Road, St Albans, Herts, AL1 4LW



Inverness & Highland Branch

News of Brews

Cairngorm Brewery have succumbed to popular demand and will be continuing to brew 'Trade Winds' for the foreseeable future. First brewed in June last year, Trade Winds has won several awards, including 'Punters Beer of the Festival' at the Scottish Beer Festival in Edinburgh.

The **Isle of Skye Brewery** is continuing with a large expansion programme which will see the arrival of new copper "coppers" and a complete reorganisation of the brewery. The main work will take place during two weeks in April, when the brewery will close down. The Isle of Skye Brewery was established in 1995 and the brews have become so popular that they have had to expand to keep up with the large and increasing demand. Several beers have been added to the range of bottle beers from the Isle of Skye Brewery. Watch out for the new bottled-conditioned '**Misty Isle**', in a 660ml clear glass bottle, and '**Oyster Stout**'. Cases of '**Cuillin Beast**' are now on their way to America, as well as to Denmark and Sweden.

There is a new Spring brew from **Atlas Brewery**, and you can take it home. The brewery, who have just celebrated their second birthday, have launched **Equinox**. Gold in colour, and with a hops and honey flavour, the 4.5% ABV Equinox will join the other occasional brews - Meridian, Tempest, Zephyr and Blizzard - which supplement the permanent brews in their excellent range - Latitude, Wayfarer, Three Sisters, and Nimbus.

Atlas Brewery have been working with Charles Wells Brewery and are the first in Scotland to offer the 8-pint mini-cask, which is ideal for home use.

Last Brew at Kingussie Brewery

The Iris Rose brewery started brewing in 1997 in a small microbrewery at the back of the Royal Hotel in Kingussie. Their brews had a sulphurous taste, which was unusual for the area, and included Cynack Glory and Roseburn Bitter. The brews were supplied mainly to their own three hotels, but also to various beer festivals around the country, including their own November beer festival. In 2002 the hotel and brewery were sold and the new owners changed the brewery name to Newtonmore and Kingussie Brewery (or NKB). One of the directors, along with a new brewer, changed the brews and sold their beers both to the Royal Hotel, and to the Mains Hotel in Newtonmore, plus a few other establishments. A year later the Royal Hotel was sold but the NKB kept a lease on the brewery for a further 12 months, selling the beers at the Mains. Another new brewer moved in and organised a small November beer festival in the Mains last year. The lease at the Royal Hotel ran out in March this year, so the **last brew** was made in February. The brewery equipment has been moved to the Mains Hotel at Newtonmore, just 4 miles north of the original site. If all goes well then brewing should commence again in June.

Spotted in Blackfriars and Clachnaharry Inn, a **Hoodie Crow** - we believe this to be an Isle of Skye species..

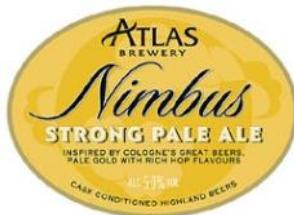
ATLAS BREWERY



Latitude Cask Pilsner
(3.6% abv)



Three Sisters Scottish Ale
(4.2% abv)

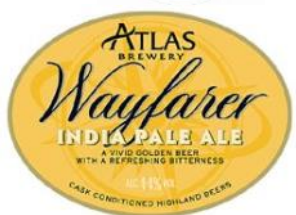


Nimbus Strong Pale Ale
(5.0% abv)



Seasonal Range:

Spring - Equinox Pale Gold Ale 4.5% abv
Summer - Wayfarer India Pale Ale 4.4% abv
Autumn - Tempest Wheat Beer 4.9% abv
Winter - Blizzard Winter Beer 4.7% abv



Wayfarer India Pale Ale
(4.4% abv)



Tempest Wheat Beer
(4.9% abv)



Blizzard Winter Beer
(4.7%abv)



Atlas Brewery Limited
Kinlochleven, Scotland
telephone: 01855 831111
email: info@atlasbrewery.com
www.atlasbrewery.com



Festival Favourites

The Champion Winter Beer of Britain 2004 Winners were recently announced at the National Winter Ales Festival held in Burton on Trent -

Old Freddy Walker from Moor Beer Company, Bridgwater, Somerset was named as the Supreme Champion.

Old Freddy Walker is a 7.3% ABV Barley Wine and described in the 2004 edition of the Good Beer Guide as a 'Rich, dark, strong ale with a fruity complex taste, leaving a fruitcake finish'.

Festival Mild from Gales took Silver, with Bronze going to Shepherd Neame's **Original Porter**.

Aberdeen Beer Festival Roundup

Aberdeen now holds the biggest and best beer festival in Scotland. At the 2003 event, sponsored by the Isle of Skye Brewery, Seventy four different beers from all over the UK were brought together for all to sample. 139 firkins (around 70 pints in each) were delivered, and only 80 pints were left at the end, making this a record number of beers sold. 2,744 people attended over the three days, yet another record, up by 250 on last year. As reported in Our Winter Newsletter, the Punters Choice for Beer of the Festival was Isle of Skye Cuillin Beast, for the second year running. Second and third were also Highland beers, Cairngorm Black Gold, and Atlas Three Sisters, proving that some great beers are brewed in the Highlands. The festival has been running for 17 years. The workforce are all volunteers, giving from as little as a couple hours to a full

week, and the only payment is a few beers. If you want to help out and have some fun then look in What's Brewing for details later in the year.

The Anderson in Fortrose will be holding a tutored **Belgian Beer tasting** on Saturday 24 April at 3:30 pm. Hosting the tasting will be Belgian beer expert, Jim Anderson, who was instrumental in making Philadelphia the largest market for Belgian beer outside of Belgium. He will be drawing from The Anderson's extensive selection of Belgian ales for the afternoon. Price is £15 (£12 for CAMRA members) and includes beer, Belgian finger food and a 10% discount voucher on dinner that evening at The Anderson. Bookings may be made at 01381 620 236 or info@theanderson.co.uk.

FYNE ALES SET TO TAKE GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY?

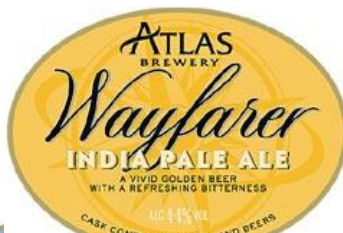
The Directors of Fyne Ales announce today that they are seriously considering a move to the Fountainbridge Brewery soon to be vacated by Scottish & Newcastle. Speaking from the brewery at the head of Loch Fyne, Tuggy Delap, a director, said:

'We will of course have to think long and hard about whether we should leave the locality which has given us such a wonderful start. Kenny MacKay, our brewer, is certain that the quality of the water is better in Argyll. However these opportunities only come once in a lifetime and, knowing how good the beers from Fyne Ales are, we feel that we would have real room for expansion if we grabbed the chance to acquire the Fountainbridge premises.'

Jonny Delap, chairman of Fyne Ales, said it was indeed a dream come true and he intended to stay asleep for as long as possible

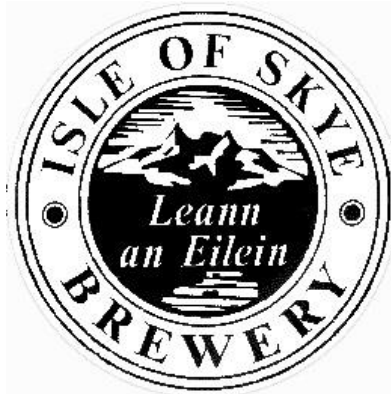
WHAT DO YOU DO IF YOU CAN'T AFFORD IT? **"Sweet FA"**





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