

What's yours then?



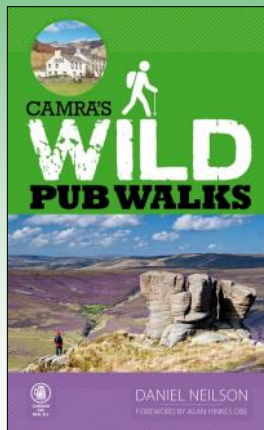
CAMRA Highlands & Western Isles | FREE Magazine | Spring 2017

Real
Ale...

...tastes
better with
friends...

...tastes
better
together.

- Going to the Pub is Good for You!
- Branch AGM Update - Good News
- Join us for a Wild Pub Walk
- Updated Real Ale Pubs List
- Pubs of the Year
- Brewery News
- Festival News
- Pub News
- Branch Diary



**CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE**

Campaigning for real
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rights since 1971



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SPECIAL ALES FOR 2016

(March to December)



e: shop@cairngormbrewery.com t: 01479 812 222
www.cairngormbrewery.com



Welcome to the Spring edition of the Highlands & Western Isles Branch of CAMRA (quarterly) Magazine.

I am very happy to be able to report that our Branch is very much alive and, to repeat the oft misquoted quip from Mark Twain, "Reports of our death are greatly exaggerated".

There was a small turnout for our AGM, the norm sadly, but all present were keen to participate in ensuring the continued existence of our Branch. Key posts have been filled and there is a significant and growing number of active local members eager to engage with publicans & brewers and contribute to the very healthy state of real ale in the Highlands & Islands.

* Please see our website for AGM minutes and reports. *

We are a small Branch, with just 245 members scattered across our 13,000 square miles, but historically we have punched above our weight and we can now optimistically look forward to celebrating our 25th anniversary at the next AGM in January next year. We very much look forward to seeing you there, but hopefully our paths will cross long before then.

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

Full Page Advert..... £95.00

Half Page ... £55.00, Quarter Page...£30.00

There is a loyalty discount on placement of your fourth consecutive advert. Adverts are accepted on condition that inclusion does not necessarily imply an endorsement or approval of content.. An average of 3500+ copies are distributed to branch members, to Highlands & Islands brewers, to Good Beer Guide listed and Real Ale pubs; plus extra copies to advertisers. This issue is **4,000 copies**. Please Note - the CAMRA logo is copyrighted and should not be used in pub adverts.



**CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE**

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 made the effort to send in pub and beer reports, or articles, keeping us up-to-date with brews and what is happening in local pubs.

Please note that the editor reserves the right to edit contributions sent for publication. All articles are copyright © Highlands & Western Isles CAMRA.

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
www.tradingstandards.gov.uk/highland

Summer edition deadline is Monday 5th June, for publication by July.

Festival News

The **Plockton Hotel** will again be hosting their very popular '**Real Ale & Gin Festival**' on 19th, 20th & 21st May 2017 – a week earlier than usual due to a big wedding in the village the following weekend!

9th Bandstand Beer & Music Festival

This annual festival, which takes place at the end of April, is the largest independent beer and music festival in Scotland. The five day



Scottish RD Sarah Bellis presents Pub-of-the-Year certificate to Bandstand landlord Gordon Holding

event will feature 100+ Scottish and English Ales. This year features numerous breweries new to the festival and the Highlands, with ales from Lincolnshire, Leicester and Northants, and from St Andrews Brewery. So, an exciting selection to choose from plus real ciders, good food and a variety of live music to suit all tastes.

FebruaryFest at the Clachaig Inn

The Clachaig Inn runs two festivals each year, with the February one usually coinciding with half-term holidays and the busy winter skiing and climbing season. As well as the usual excellent range of cask ales and good food, the month-long event also features mountain safety lectures, many live bands, quiz nights, whisky tasting events and impromptu live music sessions.

The Clachaig now has fifteen beer lines, five of which are typically dedicated to cider. On

2017
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FESTIVAL
2017
JULY
6th-8th
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Keep up to date with festival news
on our website and social media:
www.sraf.camra.org.uk
f ScottishRealAleFestival
@SRAF

weekends from April through to October all of these lines can be in use. A midweek visit in February saw seven ales and four ciders on the go. A natter with assistant manager Will highlighted that River Leven, Cairngorm, Loch Lomond, Williams Bros, Orkney, Isle of Skye and Strathaven beers all feature regularly on the list. Pints of Williams Bros 7 Giraffes and Cairngorm Trade Winds proved that the beers were on form. The cider handpumps feature the Belhaven Thistly Cross range and the drier, Vintage Cider from Cairn O'Mohr.

During last year's OctoberFest, the Clachaig brought in the concept of beer flights: three $\frac{1}{3}$ pints allowing their customers to try three different beers and still only drink a pint. This proved to be very popular and was being offered at the FebruaryFest with more to be seen during the busier summer months.

On a more topical note, all of the traditional keg lines previously supplied by a founder member of the Big 6 have been replaced by keg offerings from River Leven, Loch Lomond, Cairngorm, Williams Bros and other smaller



BANDSTAND BAR NAIRN

CAMRA Badenoch & Strathspey Pub of the Year 2016

Family-run Highland pub-hotel on the beach

9 ALE PUMPS

LOG FIRE

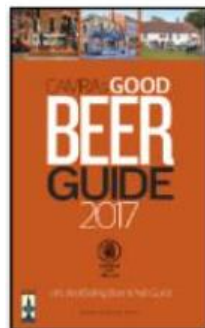
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" One of the most stunning beer gardens on the west coast"
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Branch Diary

All these events are open to CAMRA members **and** non-members, including committee meetings. * Not all events are necessarily organised by CAMRA.

This diary is as much about the local real ale scene as CAMRA Branch activities.

April/May 2017

Thursday 27th April - Monday 1st May

* Beer & Music Festival & Tasting Social (Saturday)

Bandstand Bar, Nairn

Saturday 13th May

Cairn Gorm Mountain Walk

Option 1 - from the car park

Option 2 - from the top station

Both walks led by Mountain Leaders

Full details on page 10
and on our website

Après-Walk Social in Aviemore

Please book early
to avoid disappointment
socials@highland.camra.org.uk

June 2017

13:00, Saturday 17th June

Beer Tasting Course

Cairngorm Brewery, Aviemore

17:30, Friday 30th June

Beer Tasting Social

Castle Tavern, Inverness

July 2017

Thursday 6th July - Saturday 8th July

Scottish Real Ale Festival

Corn Exchange, Edinburgh

August 2017

Tuesday 8th - Saturday 12th August

Great British Beer Festival

Olympia, London

More events will be added to our diary

Please check our website regularly for updates

It is possible that dates/times and meeting venues may change, and new events are added as soon as we hear about them, so please check our website regularly -

www.highland.camra.org.uk

Branch Contact Details

Mike Humphrey (Secretary & Branch Contact)

07340 316914 - contact@highland.camra.org.uk

(Branch Chair) - chair@highland.camra.org.uk

(Newsletter Editor) - news@highland.camra.org.uk

breweries (examples include Cairngorm Black Gold and a Pilsner lager from River Leven). Sales of these keg offerings have significantly outgrown those from the prior keg supplier. Craft beer can often be a controversial subject – does the supply of these brews strengthen the commercial aspects of local micro-breweries, does the local appeal offer more to visitors to our area than the bland nationwide alternatives, and are the drinkers of such products now just one small step from trying the Real Thing? A hot subject to discuss with friends as you sup your pint of real ale at the Clachaig's FebruaryFest, feet-tapping away to the sound of the ceilidh band in the corner of the bar! AR, Lochaber.

Carrbridge 300

Carrbridge is famous for the old Packhorse Bridge, built in 1717 and one of the most photographed, iconic landmarks in the **Cairngorms National Park**.



The community of Carrbridge has events throughout the year to commemorate the 300th anniversary of their treasured monument. Celebrations start on the weekend of the 20th May with live music and community events, including a craft fair and a mini beer festival. Check Carrbridge community social media channels or carrbridge.com for details.

Great Grampian Beer Festival

Our CAMRA neighbours over in Aberdeen are looking for a new venue for the 31st Great Grampian Beer Festival. Early festivals took place in Cowdray Hall before moving to McClymont Halls in Holburn Street.

In 2007, when redevelopment of McClymont Halls was threatened, the festival moved to Pittodrie. Formerly a November event the festival was moved to end of May/early June to avoid a clash with football fixtures.

Unfortunately holding the festival at a time of year coinciding with the peak tourist event season (beer and non-beer) made it more challenging to maintain the footfall required for economic sustainability.

Festival organisers are currently scouring the

city for a suitable venue and, if the festival goes ahead, likely dates will again be towards the end of the calendar year.

Please check our website regularly for news of the Great Grampian festival when we have it, plus dates for real ale festivals organised by other neighbouring CAMRA Branches and, of course, for details of the multitude of real ale festivals organised by our local pubs.

Music Festivals

Not beer festivals but large music festivals which all feature bars selling real ales brewed in the Highlands & Western Isles:

July - HebCelt - Centres on a large marquee, capable of holding up to 5,000, in the scenic grounds of Lews Castle, Stornoway.

August - Tartan Heart - Held at Belladrum, a working family-owned estate near Beaulieu

Late September - Loopallu - On the pier in a remote village (Ullapool) on the West Coast, 60 miles from the nearest town (Inverness).



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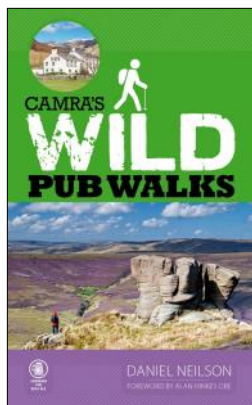
A recently refurbished, 27 room JD Wetherspoon, hotel.

2014 Good Beer Guide entrant with 10 hand pulls serving Caledonian Deuchars IPA as our house ale at £1.95 and Green King's Abbot at £2.29. We have a network of 50 brewers from across the UK, rotating quarterly plus regular beers from Strathaven, TSA, Houston, Cairngorm, An Teallach & Orkney.

Food served daily from 7am-11pm (8am Saturday & Sunday) and free wi-fi throughout the bar & hotel. Free pint of any ale with any burger, steak or hotdog every day.



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Join us for a *Wild Pub Walk*!

CAMRA's Wild Pub Walks, due out on 22nd May, presents 22 beautiful walks in remote or mountain landscapes with a great pub at the end.

The walks vary in the level of challenge, from long walks in lower-lying areas to Grade 1 scrambles, and the areas covered include the Peak and Lake Districts, and the Highlands.

The book is aimed at hill walkers who enjoy long days out followed by a great pint in a great pub. Author

Daniel Neilson is a freelance writer and editor specialising in adventure

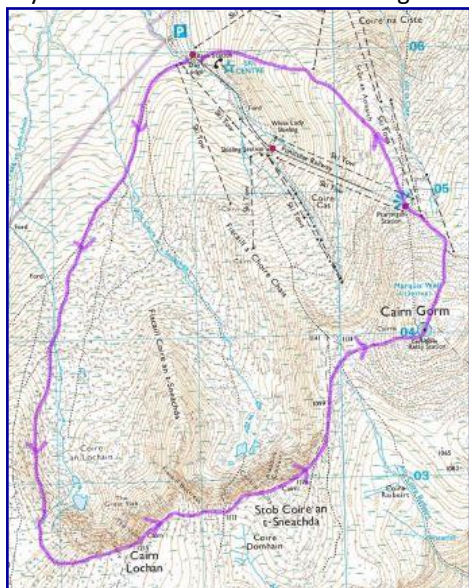
travel and beer, a former editor of Great Outdoor magazine.

Cairn Gorm and the Northern Corries is one of three walks in our CAMRA Branch area, Ben Nevis and Buachaille Etive Mòr are the other two, and to celebrate the launch of the book we are inviting you to join us on 13th May in undertaking the Cairn Gorm & Northern Corries walk. (Members and non-members are all welcome).

The walk will be led by qualified Mountain Leaders, Mike & Shirley Godfrey, from Kintail Mountain Activities. Mike & Shirley are local CAMRA members who have volunteered their services for the day. Participants will also be expected to wear suitable clothing and carry a day pack containing essentials such as waterproofs, first aid kit, food & drink, etc. For full details please follow the link from our on-line diary page at www.hIGHLAND.camra.org.uk.

Booking a place on the walk is essential, as is completion of an Activity Participation form ahead of the event. For those who prefer a less energetic way of spending a day in the mountains there is the option of taking the funicular to the Ptarmigan Restaurant, followed by a Natural Retreats mountain ranger-led walk to the summit. **Numbers are limited, and so**

please book your place. All being well the two parties will rendez-vous at the summit for the inevitable photo-call.



Daniel notes that the nearest place to get a pint is the Lochain Bar at Glenmore Lodge (*a comfortable place to sit and relax, fantastic beers*); and 'back in Aviemore there are three great pubs - the Old Bridge Inn is the first you'll get to, a lovely pub with good food, great beers and a wide selection of whiskies; the Cairngorm Hotel, and the Cairn Bar, a friendly local place with some good beers on tap; and the fantastic Winking Owl, more of an Alpine-style lodge bar than a British pub - the de facto tap room for Cairngorm Brewery, and always a wide selection of beers on handpump.'

At the end of our day on the mountain it will only remain for us to visit these hostelries, if only to confirm Daniel's sentiments! Cheers!!



CAMRA'S GOOD
BEER
GUIDE
2017



UK's Best Selling Green & Pub Guide



the Winking Owl



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

Opening Times

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

Food served all day

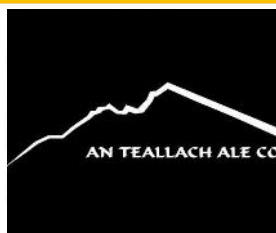
Monday to Saturday
12.00 midday until 9.30pm

Sundays
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Winking Owl is the site of the Aviemore Inn where Robbie Burns
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MONSTER RESCUE FOR ICONIC BEER BRAND

Two well-known brands in the Highlands to resurrect another well-known brand!

The Loch Ness Beer brand has been rescued by a partnership between two well established Highland businesses - Cobbs Group Loch Ness and Cairngorm Brewery. The brand which won the “Best Branding/Design” award at the UK Beer marketing awards last year is now firmly in safe hands. Loch Ness Brewing Company went into liquidation in 2016 resulting in a number of job losses in the village of Drumnadrochit, Loch Ness.

The brand had been developed over the last few years and gained a number of high profile contracts including, most recently, one with Asda. The brewery had also been in partnership with Cobbs Bakery to develop a new beer made from Cobbs scones called “Beer Today Scone Tomorrow”, which unfortunately failed to reach the shelves after the brewery was put into administration before the beer was dispatched!

The award winning Cairngorm Brewery, who previously bottled beer for Loch Ness Brewing Company, felt that the brand was too important to lose and the partnership with Loch Ness based Cobbs made complete sense. Rory Cameron, Managing Director of Cobbs Bakery, and Sam Faircliff, Managing Director of Cairngorm Brewery, decided to pool resources and rescue the brand to ensure it continued as a strong Highland craft beer brand.



Once the legals were agreed and we got the recipes, Loch Ness Beers were back on the shelves before Nessie could make her next appearance! Sam Faircliff said: “The Loch Ness brand is so well known globally that it will be a great opportunity for the export market as well as here at home”

Rory Cameron said: “We are delighted to join forces with Cairngorm Brewery and we look forward to bringing Loch Ness Brewery products to our 17 Cobbs outlets across Scotland and further afield in due course.”

Since the acquisition, both Cairngorm Brewery and Cobbs have worked with their existing contacts as well as working on renegotiating listings with the majority of wholesalers in Scotland and now some in England also. We have a 2017 Scottish Listing with ASDA from May onwards as well as being able to restock many individual outlets throughout Scotland.

At Craft Beer Rising in London last week, we made contact with a National Pub Company who had previously agreed to give a permanent UK Listing for 2017 to Loch Ness Brewing with one of the beers in cask. This was agreed just before they went into liquidation and therefore was not fulfilled but they are delighted to have made contact again and we are set for a permanent listing for 2018.

The beers went down really well in London and we made contact with other regional wholesalers in England for cask as well as being able to make contact with publicans in England who liked both Cairngorm and Loch Ness Beers. We are systematically making contact with previous Loch Ness customers that we know about, to establish which beers are of most interest before deciding on our permanent cask and kegged draught beer range.

Highlands & Western Isles Pubs-of-the-Year 2017

Every year local CAMRA Branch members are asked to vote for their favourite pubs, resulting in seven area winners across our massive geographical area. Winners for 2017:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| • Inverness | Clachnaharry Inn |
| • Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey | Glen Hotel |
| • Easter Ross & Loch Ness | Dores Inn |
| • Fort William & Lochaber | Grog & Gruel |
| • Wester Ross & Lochalsh | Kinlochewe Hotel |
| • Isle of Skye & Western Isles | Stein Inn |
| • Caithness & Sutherland | Alexander Bain & Dornoch Castle Hotel (tied) |

Congratulations to publicans and their staff at each of our area Pub-of-the-Year winners. We look forward to visiting over the next couple of months and presenting their certificates.

The Overall Highlands & Western Isles Pub-of-the-Year 2017 is the Kinlochewe Hotel

The **Kinlochewe Hotel**, a very worthy winner, will now go forward to be judged against the winners in other Scottish and Northern Ireland Branches, to decide on our Regional Pub-of-the-Year. The regional winner goes forward, in turn, with the 15 other UK regional winners, to the Super-regional round - four groups of four regional winners.

The four super-regional winners form the "finalists", and the Final Round judging determines the National Pub-of-the-Year which will be announced some time in February 2018.



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The advertisement features a large, stylized map of Scotland in the background. In the foreground, there is a photograph of EPOS systems, including a desktop monitor displaying a software interface, a tablet, and a receipt printer.

Pubs Reports & News

Ullapool Pub Report

Ed, took a spin out to Ullapool for a bar lunch at end of January. A first visit to the **Seaforth** since their being taken over by Belhaven/Greene King. Three handpumps on the bar, just one (apparently) in service offering An Teallach Ale. A good start as I had feared we would only find brews from the GK stable, but sadly half a dozen pulls produced just half a pint of a very cloudy looking brew which the barman offered for free. Needless to say I declined. I did enjoy a bottle of Innis & Gunn but I'm not sure why bottled beers these days are always chilled to death.

The haddock & chips doesn't get much better, but none of the waitress service here that I remember. The single barman on duty was busy serving food and drink to tables and perhaps just as well it was a quiet winter day with just a dozen or so in the bar. That said the service was first class. A shame about the real ale. Cheers, CVM.

The **Dores Inn** was closed for refurbishment in January, but re-opened in good time for Valentine's Day celebrations.

The Dores Inn offers a complementary shuttle bus service for diners and drinkers which will pick up and drop off within a 10 mile radius. (24hrs notice required).

In January the Dores Inn, Applecross Inn, Old Forge, Clachaig Inn, and Fiddlers Bar were highlighted in the Scotsman as **Six of the best Highland Pubs**. Yes, that makes five, the sixth listed being the Drovers Inn which the last time we looked was in the Trossachs!

The Drovers is a very famous pub at the north end of Loch Lomond, popular these days with West Highland Way walkers, but a little south of our patch. Had they asked we could have suggested several alternatives, blessed as we are with plentiful fine pubs in the Highlands.

After many years, Marianne and Michelle have 'retired' and sold **Kintail Lodge Hotel**.

The Hotel is closed for refurbishment and manager Jane is looking forward to welcom-

ing guests when they re-open on 22nd March.

Flodigarry Country House Hotel, at the far north-east of the Isle of Skye is also closed for refurbishment work. Due to re-open 1st April.

Plockton Hotel Landlord Alan Pearson (right) pictured being presented with their Wester Ross & Gairloch Area Pub of the Year 2016 Certificate. The Hotel has won their 'Area Pub of the Year' every year since 2008 – a testament to the consistent quality of their beers.



The main bar has had a make-over with two new, lower, fonts replacing the previous tall ones, making communication between staff and customers - and the serving of drinks - much easier!

At the **Bandstand** the week before last I tried Spey Valley "Sunshine on Keith" - ha ha, but absolutely superb in every way. I also tried their Spey Stout, but at 5.1% abv I stuck to one glass! Whilst in Inverness at the **Castle Tavern** I tried Box Steam Brewery's Tunnel Vision at 4.2 - one I hadn't seen before. Then I thought that I'd better give the **Palace Hotel** a try but no surprises there - they were waiting for a delivery of Leann an Eilein's Skye Red - it would be interesting to find out what it tastes like!! Cheers, LB.

The award-winning **Benleva Hotel** closed its doors just before Christmas and posted a sign which said 'Closed, re-open in Jan 2017'.

In late January it was rumoured that the pub had been sold, and then that a local couple were in negotiations to buy, and then that it was only closed for refurbishment, but finally in late February we heard officially that - 'the

Benleva Hotel is having a refurbishment. Neil Morrison has taken over the running of this popular real ale pub. Neil also runs The Loch Side on Islay, MacGochans on Mull and is the Co-Director of Isle of Mull Whisky. At present the hotel is closed for extensive refurbishment. Accommodation will increase from six letting rooms to eleven. From the bar point of view not much will change as they are planning to keep a good selection of Scottish real ales and serve good quality, locally sourced food at lunchtimes and in the evenings. Allan Crossland is staying on to look after the cellar and he will also be brewing in a new Hanging Tree microbrewery based in the Bothy in the garden. They have already started to advertise for new staff. They plan to have a grand opening weekend in early April with live bands. Loch Ness Beer Festival will still be run in September, so keep an eye out for dates'.

Wow! Watch this space! The 'Bothy in the Garden', is where the Loch Ness Brewery started brewing six years ago before moving to larger premises. We wish Allan well. Ed.

What?ub Feedback

Every effort is made to keep pub descriptions in What?ub up-to-date but impossible for us to regularly visit our 400+ pubs, hotels and bars, and so we do rely upon **YOU** - licensee or drinker - to let us know if information is missing or out-of-date. All users of What?ub (members and non-members alike) can use the on-line feedback form to let us know when we need to update a pub description.

A couple of examples of recent feedback:

Pub Name: **Laroch Bar** 19-02-2017

The Laroch is most definitely open and very busy even in February. Serving excellent food but with just one real ale and a disappointing choice at Deuchars IPA.

Pub Name: **Tipsy Laird** 15-02-2017

Hi, We have taken over the tenancy at the Tipsy Laird (since Aug 2016) and wanted to update some details on your site:

We have 2 cask ales on at all times, they change each week (no longer serve Cairngorm ales), as well as a craft rotation font which varies between ales, lager, IPA's etc.



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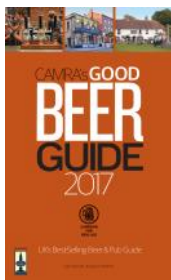
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Real Ale in the Real Highlands



Supporting Local breweries



THE TIPSY LAIRD

Situated in the village of Kingussie, just off the A9, the Topsy Laird is a friendly and popular pub with 2 Handpulls & 1 Craft Rotation tap on all year round, as well as a large selection of Malt Whiskies & Scottish Gins.

- Beer Garden
- Dog Friendly
- Contemporary Scottish Pub Food served all day
- Log Burner
- Bunkhouse with accommodation from £20 per night Bed & Breakfast

The Topsy is holding a Beer Festival on the 2nd, 3rd & 4th of June, with a range of draught & bottled ales available, as well as a BBQ, Beer Festival Themed Menu and Live Entertainment from Tweed Ceilidh Band, Ailsa Villegas & Keith Mair throughout the weekend.

Visit our website for more details!!!

The Topsy Laird
68 High Street
Kingussie PH21 1HZ
www.thetipsylaird.com
Ph: 01540 661 708



Brewery News

For every brewery in the land, CAMRA aims to appoint a volunteer whose job it is to act as the link between CAMRA and the brewery.

As part of this initiative volunteers from the local membership are encouraged to take on Brewery Liaison Officer (BLO) duties. He or she should keep in regular touch with people at the brewery so that they can learn what is happening and, of equal importance, the brewery can be kept up to date with CAMRA's views on issues that may be of concern to the brewery. One important job for the BLO is to ensure that the information published in the brewery section of each edition of the Good Beer Guide is accurate.

We currently have a number of breweries without a BLO and so if you are interested in taking on this role please contact us. Even though this is seen as a key role in support of our local breweries there is not a massive time commitment and joining the Branch committee is not necessarily a requirement.

Focus on: Strathcarron Brewery

One of our newest micros, the Strathcarron Brewery started brewing in March 2016. The brainchild of Strathcarron residents Martin Phillips and Paul Pearce, the idea originated in 2014. As Colin Parsons, long-term homebrewer, fellow member of the Big Field Blues Band and partner in the enterprise remembers it:

"It was Hogmanay, sometime after the Bells. Martin came up to me in the pub, put his hands on my shoulders and said: "We're going to open a Brewery. You'll be the brains and we'll be the brawn."

The search then started for premises.



Early ideas to knock together Martin and Paul's neighbouring shed and garage evolved into a plan to renovate the few remaining stones of walls of an old byre at Arinackaig

into a purpose-built, 2.5 Barrel microbrewery.



Colin and Paul in the Brewery

Their brewing ethos is to produce traditional Scottish beers, aimed at their local pubs and shops, using water from their own spring (originating in the hills behind the Brewery),



the Old Bridge Inn ~ Aviemore

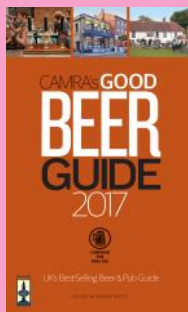
Roaring log fire, cheerful atmosphere, excellent food and fine selection of wines, cask ales and malt whiskies. The varied

menus, featuring the very best of Highland produce from river, sea and land, are carefully designed to tempt every palate.

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Tel: (01479) 811137

www.oldbridgeinn.co.uk



UK grown malt and hops, no filtration and no artificial carbonation. Good, honest, beer! Their first brew – **Red Cow** (a traditional Scottish bitter at 4.2% ABV and named after a former resident of the byre) – was met with great enthusiasm and the first ‘official’ keg at the Strathcarron Hotel sold out on its first day! This was followed by **Golden Cow**, a 3.8% ABV Golden Ale (no surprise there!), which has



The Strathcarron Herd

proved equally popular.

Both are available in draught and bottle-conditioned (RAIB - Real Ale in Bottle) form.

The third member of the herd – **Black Cow**, a 4.2% ABV Stout, is sadly only available in RAIB form at present.

To sample these beers, you will currently have to visit the area where they are brewed! You can find them on tap at the Strathcarron and Lochcarron Hotels, and the Applecross Inn, and in bottled form at the Lochcarron and Balmacara Spar shops and at Plockton Shores. With Lochcarron being on the NC500 (North Coast 500), we suspect it will not be long before the odd Red, Black or Golden Cow heads down the old drove roads and turns up further afield!!

Isle of Skye Brewery have plans this year to bottle **Young Pretender**, their Champion Bitter of Scotland 2016 winner, for the first time.



Plans also to brew more **Tarasgeir** than ever this year, for bottle only, as demand for this beer has grown year on year for the past three years, thanks to Aldi Scotland patrons amongst others, and you will find bottled beers in Asda, Sainsbury, Waitrose and JDW, as well as many independents. **Yer Ben**, the collaboration with chef Tom Kitchin is going strong and made it to the heady heights of Harrods in London for Christmas.

The casks make it to JDW, Punch, Star and many independents but the nature of the cask format means no guarantee of being available

all the time in any outlet, although on and around Skye during the summer you should have no trouble finding one or two!

Plockton Brewery – April 2017 sees the 10th Anniversary! Andy is planning a celebratory ‘Open Day’ to mark the occasion, with bottled beers and matched food. (Probably in June or July – details will be posted on our website).

The period between New Year and Easter is traditionally a quiet one for our Brewers but Andy has been using this ‘down-time’ to good effect by carrying out some R&D. Using a very neat bit of kit called ‘The Grainfather’, which brews around 23 litres at a time, Andy has been experimenting with single hop varieties and bottling them (RAIB) as part of his ‘Single Hop Series’. Citra – an American, high alpha acid hop with a strong, yet smooth floral and citrus aroma and flavour – was bubbling away on my visit. This is a relatively new hop variety which has recently caught on and become popular in American-style Pale Ales and IPA’s. Oakham Ales Citra won Gold in CAMRA’s ‘Champion Beer of Britain 2014’ Golden Ale Class and then Silver overall in the ‘Supreme Champion Beer of Britain’ so Plockton’s Citra should be well worth trying!! Amarillo and Simcoe hops have also been under test.

In November, as part of Raasay’s ‘Whisky, Fire & Song’ event, Plockton Brewery collaborated with R&B Distiller’s Raasay Brewing Company to produce a beer which was oak-aged in a Raasay ‘While We Wait’ (whisky) red wine finishing cask. Very much an experimental brew, bottles of it nevertheless ended up on sale in Edinburgh. There are plans to produce a much improved version in the near future.

Most of Plockton Brewery’s ales have been named after local landmarks (Craggs, Ciste Dubh) or have a nautical theme (Starboard, Plockton Bay, Hitched). One exception is Ring Tong, a 5.6% ABV IPA. This very hoppy beer is named after a Tea Plantation near Darjeeling run by an uncle of Andy’s wife Catherine. We are so used to acronyms these days that we quite often forget – or don’t even consider - what the letters stand for. IPA, of course, stands for India Pale Ale, a style of heavily

hopped beer that survived a long sea voyage to India in the days of the British Raj, and arrived in a far better condition than other beers of the day. Extremely apt!



The rapidly growing Nairn based **Wooha Brewery** has been celebrating their second birthday.

Demand for brews from this fledgling brewery is high and their beers are readily available in France, Denmark, Germany, Spain and, since the turn of the year, you can also find Wooha in Tennessee USA following a shipment of twenty pallets. KeyKegs are popular there due to the three week shelf life. Wooha beers sport their striking Highland Coo logo which dons a saltire kilt for the US market! The German Supermarket ALDI was their first customer and will be holding a Beer Festival sometime this year!! Watch this space.

Also, you are most welcome to meet the team at the Wooha stall at this year's Nairn Farmer's Show at the end of July.

New Kid on the Bealach

A hidden Highland hotspot to look out for in 2017. Locals and friends of Applecross, a wee West Coast village which lies over the Inner Sound from the Isle of Skye, have founded the **Applecross Brewing Company**.

We will be producing our initial range of three beers by the end of this year. A light hoppy summer beer, a ruby Scottish ale and a dark porter. Our brewer, John Johnston, has already co-ordinated brews with Drygate Brewery in Glasgow, and Bute Brew Co in Rothesay, which are going down very well at our flagship partner pub, the award-winning Applecross Inn.

We're establishing our own brewery building at Russel, on the Applecross peninsula - just waiting for planning permission!!

Meanwhile take one of the most scenic and spectacular drives in Scotland - wash down some delicious local fare with one of our brews - and tell us what you think.

Orkney Brewery's Popular Puffin Gets Bottled

The popularity of Orkney Brewery's cask Puffin Ale has prompted the firm to launch a bottled version of the 4.5 per cent brew.

Officially released this week, the new 500ml bottles of Puffin Ale are expected to fly off the shelves.

Cask Puffin, which celebrates the Orkney's most iconic seabird - known locally as a Tammie Norrie - was introduced to the market around two years ago.

"We originally thought Puffin Ale would prove most popular in both coastal and island areas, but the demand nationally has been incredible," said Norman Sinclair, managing director of Sinclair Breweries Ltd. "Ever since we launched Puffin our customers have been asking for a bottled version, so we're excited to now be bringing one to the market.

The brewery team has worked very hard to capture the distinctive flavour and character of the cask Puffin in the bottled version and they've done a fantastic job."

Mr Sinclair added: "We always appreciate feedback from our customers and love to hear what they'd like to see in terms of new products. It's that kind of enthusiasm and support which helped bring a bottled Puffin to the marketplace, so we'd like to say thanks to everyone who took the trouble to let us know how much they loved the original cask variety."

The Orkney Brewery's head brewer, Andrew Fulton, describes Puffin as a tawny ale, with an aroma of sweet, nutty malt and hints of cedar wood and dark fruits.

The 4 barrel **John O'Groats Brewery** is now just over a year in production and in that time has moved forward from a tentative launch on 2nd January last year with an inaugural brew named First Footing to supplying local out-



(Continued on page 28)



Glen hotel

www.theglenhotel.co.uk

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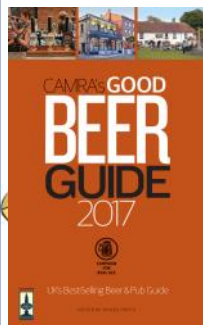
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4 Real Ales on Tap



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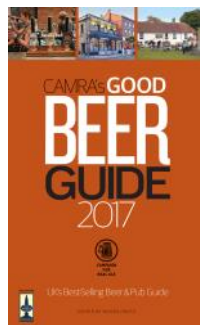
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Real Ale Pubs List

These Pubs, Inns and Hotels are known to sell (or to have recently sold) cask-conditioned ale. They are listed by geographical area and in an order that would allow a continuous pub crawl if you have safe transport. We make no claims as to the quality of the beer and you should note that some of the pubs listed may only stock real ale on a seasonal basis (S).

Please let us know about the quality of real ales on offer, particularly if you think Good Beer Guide inclusion is merited. Please e-mail us or fill in **What?ub** scores (CAMRA members).

(TP) - ale served using top pressure, i.e. not according to CAMRA guidelines for 'real ale'.

Additional note in *italics* gives discount per pint for card carrying CAMRA members.

Inverness

Blackfriars
Black Isle Bar
Caledonian
Castle Tavern
Clachnaharry Inn
Corriegarth Hotel
Encore Une Fois
Fairways Loch Ness Golf Course
Gellions
Glen Mhor Hotel (Nico's Bar)
Heathmount Hotel
Hootananny
Inshes Gate
Johnny Foxes
Kings Highway - *CAMRA info board near main entrance*
Kingsmills Hotel (S)
Mercure Hotel (Arts Bar) (TP)
Number 27
Palace Hotel (S)
Phoenix Ale House
Snowgoose
Tomlinson's Beer Shop
Waterfront Bar & Restaurant
Bogroy Inn - Inchmore (on A862)

Loch Ness

(clockwise)

Dores Inn
Craigdarroch Inn - Foyers
Whitebridge Hotel

Fort Augustus

Stravaigers Lodge
Bothy Bar
Caledonian Hotel (S)
Lock Inn
Lovat Arms Hotel (TP)

Glenmorriston Arms Hotel -
Invermorriston

Lewiston/Drumnadrochit

Loch Ness Inn
Benleva Hotel
Loch Ness Lodge (S)
A831 from Drumnadrochit
Slaters Arms - Cannich
Struy Inn - near Cannich

Black Isle

Allangrange Arms - Munlochry
Station Hotel - Avoch 20p
Anderson - Fortrose *B&B deal*
Plough Inn - Rosemarkie - 20p
Cromarty
Royal Hotel
Cromarty Arms
Conon Bridge Hotel

Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey

Nairn

Golf View Hotel & Spa (TP)
Braeval Hotel (Bandstand Bar)
10% off rooms
Cawdor Tavern *20% off real ale*
Gun Lodge - Ardersier
Inverness Airport

Badenoch

Kincraig

Loch Inch Boathouse
(Quarter Deck Bar)
Suie Hotel

Kingussie

Duke of Gordon Hotel
(Ghillies Rest Bar)

Kingussie Golf Club
Scot House Hotel
Silverfjord Hotel
Topsy Laird

Glen Hotel - Newtonmore - 20p

Strathspey

Haugh Hotel - Cromdale

Grantown on Spey

Ben Mhor Hotel
Craig Bar
Garth Hotel and Restaurant
Grant Arms Hotel
Seafeld Lodge Hotel
(Lodge Bar)

Muckrach Lodge - Dulnain Bridge
Boat Hotel - Boat of Garten
Cairn Hotel - Carrbridge - 20p
(Rowanlea Bar)

Aviemore

Cairngorm Hotel
Dalfaber Country Club
Glenmore Lodge (Lochain Bar)
Hilton Coylumbridge Hotel
(Woodshed Bar)
La Taverna
Macdui's
Mackenzies Highland Inn
Old Bridge Inn
Pine Marten Bar - Glenmore
Roo's Leap
Skiing Doo (Doo Below)
Winking Owl - 20p

Lochaber

Great Glen

Invergarry Hotel
South Laggan
Great Glen Water Park

Real Ale Pubs List

Eagle Barge (S)
(*An Inn on a boat on the water*)
Old Station Restaurant - Spean
Bridge

Roy Bridge

Roy Bridge Hotel
Stronlossit Hotel
Corrour Station Hse Restaurant

Fort William

Moorings Hotel - Banavie
Ben Nevis Inn - Achintee
Cobbs @ Nevisport
Ben Nevis Bar
Crofter Bar & Restaurant
Glen Nevis Restaurant (S)
Grog & Gruel
Great Glen
West End Hotel

West of Fort William

Glenfinnan House Hotel
Glenueig Inn

Glenueig Village Hall
Loch Shiel Hotel - Acharacle
Salen Hotel
Ariundle Centre - Strontian
Arisaig Hotel (Crofters Rest)

Mallaig

Chlachain Inn
Steam Inn
West Highland Hotel (S)
Old Forge - Inverie
Galmisdale Bay Café, Isle of Eigg

South of Fort William

Onich

Four Seasons 10p
Onich Hotel

Ballachulish

Laroch Bar
Loch Leven Hotel

Glencoe

Glencoe Inn (Gathering)
Clachaig Inn
Kings House Hotel

Kinlochleven

Ice Factor
MacDonald Hotel (Bothy Bar)

Isle of Skye

Sligachan Hotel (Seumas' Bar) (S)
Old Inn - Carbost
Taigh Ailean Hotel (Munros Bar) -
Portnalong 20p and B&B deal
Old School Restaurant (S) - Dun-
vegan
Stein Inn - Waternish

Edinbane

Edinbane Inn
Lodge at Edinbane

Uig

Uig Hotel
Bakur Bar
Ferry Inn

Flodigarry House Hotel

Portree

Bosville Hotel

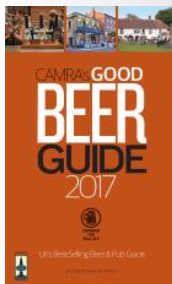
Stein Inn

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angus.teresa@steininn.co.uk



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Real Ale Pubs List

Isles Inn
Portree Hotel
Royal Hotel (MacNab's Inn)
Sconser Lodge Hotel

Broadford

Broadford Hotel (Gabbro Bar)
Dunollie Hotel
Claymore Restaurant
Hebridean Hotel
Saucy Marys Lodge (S) - Kyleakin
Isle Ornsay Hotel - Sleat
Ardvasar Hotel (Hideout Bar)

Western Isles N to S

Stornoway, Lewis

Carlton Bar (S)
Crown Inn (Harbour Bar)
Edge O' the World Ale House

Tarbat, Harris

Hotel Hebrides (Mote Bar) (S)
Isle of Harris Inn (S)

North Uist

Hamersay House - Lochmaddy
Lochmaddy Hotel
Langass Lodge (S) - Loch Elport
Westford Inn - Claddach Kirki-bost

South Uist

Borrodale Hotel (S) - Daliburgh
Polochar Inn - Lochboisdale

Lochalsh

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

Dornie

Dornie Hotel
Clachan Bar

Plockton

Plockton Inn
Plockton Hotel

Wester Ross

Strathcarron Hotel
Lochcarron Hotel

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

Gairloch

Old Inn
Myrtle Bank Hotel
Millicroft Hotel

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

Ullapool

Arch Inn
Argyll Hotel 20p and B&B deal
Ceilidh Place (TP)
Ferry Boat Inn 20p, B&B
Morefield Hotel
Seaforth Bar & Restaurant
Summer Isles Hotel -
Achiltibuie (Coigach peninsula,
25 miles from Ullapool)

Garve (A835 from Conon Br)

Inchbae Lodge Hotel
Aultguish Inn

Sutherland & Caithness

North-West Coast

Altnacealgach Inn - Ledmore
Junction
Inchnadamph Hotel (S) - Assynt
Caberfeidh - Lochinver
Kylesku Hotel (S)
Scourie Hotel

North Coast

Durness

Sango Sands Oasis (S)
Smoo Cave Hotel (S)

Tongue

Ben Loyal Hotel (S)
Tongue Hotel (S)

Thurso

Weigh Inn (Ashes Bar)
Commercial Hotel
Central Hotel (Top Joes)
Holburn Hotel (Bar 16)
Ulbster Arms Hotel (S) - Halkirk
Northern Sands Hotel - Dunnet
Seaview Hotel - John O'Groats

North-East Coast

Wick

Alexander Bain - JDW 50p
Mackays Hotel
Bay Owl Restaurant - Dunbeath

Helmsdale

Bannockburn Inn (TP)
Belgrave Arms Hotel
Sutherland Inn - Brora
Golspie Inn
Achness Hotel - Rosehall
(SW of Lairg)

Crask Inn - N of Lairg

Dornoch

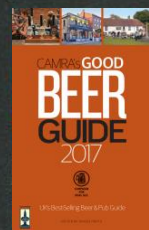
Trentham Hotel - Poles
Eagle Hotel
Dornoch Castle Hotel
Dunroamin Hotel - Bonar Bridge
Invershin Hotel
Edderton Inn (Hotel) - near Tain

A total of 35 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.

We are looking for an editor for this magazine. Please get in touch if you are interested.



chair@highland.camra.org.uk

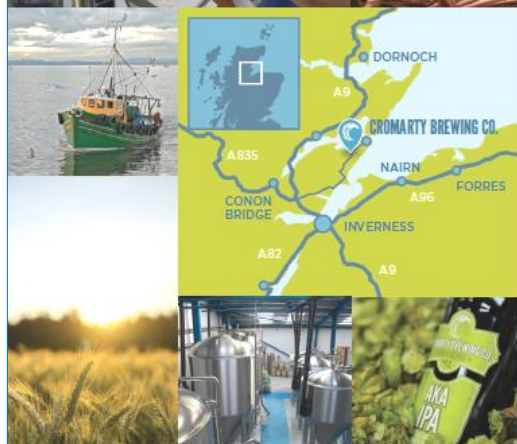


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Focus on Liz Bligh



Local CAMRA member Liz Bligh lives in Nairn but originally hails from the South East of England, a “Kentish Maid”, having been born east of the River Medway.

Q. Early memories?

A. Alcohol wasn't part of our family culture. My father used to open a huge bottle of Bulmer's Cider to enjoy with Sunday lunch. My Paternal Grandmother used to make a variety of wine from apples, elderflower and rhubarb. During the journey home back to Orpington from Christchurch, Hampshire we never knew whether the car was back-firing or whether it was the wine exploding! Grandad was a very keen gardener who used to have the excess vegetables auctioned locally. On the way home (I still run the same 80 year old car) we'd stop at a pub where he'd bring to the car Tizer & Smiths Crisps and Granny a

Mackeson Stout. She once gave me a sip and it was disgusting.

Q. What got you started?

A. I spent some time at sea with the Merchant Navy. The wines were expensive, spirits very readily available but potentially addictive. The (pretty disgusting) canned beer and lagers took a lot of resolve to get used to but were the most refreshing and least damaging, particularly in the tropics.

Q. How did your drinking tastes change?

A. During teenage years I drank Babycham, Moussec and Liebfraumilch. When I joined the Merchant Navy the passengers used to buy us Champagne. This was really, really dry and so my glass was filled with sugar lumps then topped with Champagne! As my taste became more educated the sugar lump would be drenched with Brandy then topped with Champagne!! Lovely!!

Q. Do you still drink wine?

A. I drink almost anything available! Wine is best with food.

Q. Do you enjoy beer with a meal?

A. I normally go to a Real Ale Pub to drink, not generally to eat.

Q. When did you move to Nairn?

A. Having lived all over South East England my late husband and I decided to move to Inverness to be near my Mother's family - that was over 20 years ago. I'm now very fortunate enough to live in Nairn within a very short walk to a first class pub - the Bandstand. It seemed natural to join CAMRA, socialise, swap notes and enjoy the outings which incorporate distant breweries and pubs.

Q. How long have you been a Member?

A. 20+ years (?).

Q. Why did you join?

A. I just love the idea of cottage industries, entrepreneur-ship, the different beers

have very different characters - one (or more!!) for every occasion or mood. They are health giving - drinking is sociable and relaxing.

Q. What do you gain from your CAMRA subscription each year?

A. I like to support production of genuine, high quality real ale and the companionship which goes with it.

Q. What is your favourite part of Scotland?

A. Years ago Scotland was a desert as far as Real Ale was concerned. Now the tables have turned and it is readily available, particularly in the Summer months. Perhaps I am easily pleased but my favourite pubs have to be the Clachaig, Glen Coe (amazing range of Real Ale, wood fire, good food and very comfortable accom-

modation), the pub at Torridon (great for ale, fish and scenery) and my local the Bandstand which has amazing Beer Festivals twice a year and a large range of mainly Highland real ales.

Q. The future?

A. This looks promising with the mushrooming of Micro Breweries which are making real ale increasingly available. I pray that there will be a ban on the multinationals taking over our village pubs and turning them into "drinking barns".

Small is beautiful!

I look forward to 2017 when hopefully there will be more privately owned and run Real Ale outlets.

Couldn't agree more! Ed.



(Continued from page 20)

lets and sending cask ale to beer festivals at Nairn, Aberdeen, Bradford and Nottingham.

It is currently producing two main ales - Swelkie, a 4% golden ale, and Duncansby, a 4.5% amber ale. These can regularly be found in the Seaview Hotel, John O'Groats, Mackays Hotel, Wick and the Weigh Inn, Thurso, all within CAMRA's Locale definition distance of the brewery. A 5% IPA called Hopscotch has also been brewed and is being tweaked for future brewing. Plans are being progressed for bottling later this year.

New breweries are springing up all over the place and it is almost impossible to keep up. A recent **BeerCast** article described 2016, a record year for breweries opening and breweries closing, as 'the year that the brewing industry changed forever'.

The article included figures for Breweries Opening in Scotland (by year since 2010) - 2010 - 6, 2011 - 10, 2012 - 15, 2013 - 9, 2014 - 22, 2015 - 20, 2016 - 35; making a total of **117** new breweries in seven years!! (NB - the figures include contract breweries) **21** breweries closed during the same seven

year timespan.

A glance at local planning applications reveals that more are on the way -

- Fiddlers Bar, Drumnadrochit - Change of Use of existing Café to provide Cafe-Bar with Brewery and Distillery.
- Corrary Farm, Glen Beag, Glenelg - Change of use of an existing agricultural building, currently used to store timber, to create a micro-brewery for producing local artisanal beer.

Low/No Alcohol Beers

CAMRA's Pub Campaigns Group is keen to raise the profile of good quality low and no alcohol beers so that people who are unable to drink full-strength beers, and others such as drivers, are more likely to be able to enjoy a tasty alternative. Unfortunately brewing a tasty beer below the 3.5% abv threshold is generally considered to be a challenge.

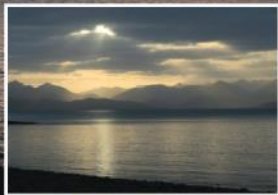
Our Branch has suggested that CAMRA give consideration to adding a new beer class/style to the Beers-of-the-Year categories and Champion Beer of Britain competitions. Such an initiative would surely encourage brewers to focus on meeting this challenge?

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E-Mail Reports

Hi team,

Just a quick note to say how pleased I am to see 'What's Yours then?' still in publication. The last time I picked up a copy it could have been the last one ever. That would have been so sad. Whilst I was up, I popped in to the Kings Highway (has it changed management recently?) where they had some good festive ales on tap. Also nipped down to the Clachnaharry Inn and had a chat with Mark. Sad to hear nobody has come forward to take the job on but I understand the building needs a lot of work doing to it.

No.27 and the Blackfriars also benefited from my custom. I read that Del is retiring – the only time I've seen him smile is when he's got his picture in the mag'. I'm sure that's not always the case!

As for my beer scores, I tried to post on-line but they failed to upload for whatever reason but, needless to say, all beers were on top

form at all of the above. Have yourselves a great Christmas and all good wishes for 2017. Kind regards, Dave Wilson, Coventry. (Coventry & Nuneaton branch)

A winter visit to Inverness to see some old pals and we couldn't have asked for better February weather. A cold frosty morning with clear blue skies, ideal for a gentle stroll, and we took a slow drive down to Dores where we enjoyed spectacular views down Loch Ness. After a couple of hours in the fresh air we were ready for a pint and headed for the inn. A good few folk out enjoying the winter sunshine but we hadn't expected to find the pub so busy on a weekday lunchtime in mid-winter! Folk are advised to book ahead apparently but happily they were able to squeeze us in and we enjoyed warming bowls of leek & potato soup. Four beers on tap - Cromarty Happy Chappy, Cairngorm Trade Winds, and two from Swannay - A9 and Scapa Special. We tried the Swannay brews



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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.

Traditional Cider Matters



Real Cider and/or Real Perry is sold (or has recently been sold) in the following inns & hotels. (Please note that some may be seasonal outlets).

Please let us know if you find additional outlets selling real cider or perry.

The Anderson, Fortrose - Thatchers Heritage Cider

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

Stronlossit Inn, Roy Bridge - Thatchers Cheddar Valley Cider

Strathcarron Hotel - Thatchers Cider (rotated with cask ales)

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

Scourie Hotel - Two Westons Ciders on handpump

King's Highway, Inverness - Real Cider s from Westons or Gwynt Y Ddraig

Alexander Bain, Wick - Westons Old Rosie & Organic

Draught Vintage Cider; Thatchers Heritage & Dry Cider

Badachro Inn - Westons Cider is served here

Torridon Inn - Westons Ciders are served in the bar

Kinlochewe Hotel - serving Westons Family Reserve Draft Cider

Argyll Hotel, Ullapool - A number of ciders are always available - more during festivals

Clachaig Inn, Glencoe - Belhaven Thistly Cross range and the drier, Vintage Cider from Cairn O'Mohr on hand pump.

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

Grog & Gruel, Fort William - Thatchers Heritage cask cider.



and very good they were too. All in all a very pleasant little excursion and for once the shopping on the way back didn't seem as much of a chore as usual! Cheers, AC (Lancs).

New Stornoway Bar

We picked up from a report in the Press & Journal at the end of February that Hebridean Brewing Co. owner/brewer Andy Ribbens was due to open a new bar/shop in Stornoway.

Selling cask and craft ales brewed on the premises the venture, named the **Edge O' the World Brewery**, has been developed in a converted warehouse and office block. The bar, which is being aimed at a "mixed and diverse demographic of customers", will serve the brewery's five ales as well as guest

beers, perry and cider, but no spirits. The bar has a children's license, and also plans to introduce food service, but no late license and plans to close at 11pm every night.

As far as we can tell from the P&J article the Hebridean Brewing Co. has been relaunched as a new company, with different backers and Mr Ribbens as the sole proprietor, licensee and head brewer. We wish Andy well.

As chance would have it we received a report a couple of days later from a local member:

Andy Ribbens opened his bar this evening - quite a cosy place. He's got five beers on - all his own - three on hand pump and two "carbonated" (his expression) and bottles. Also two or three ciders on hand pump. No

spirits but serving wine, soft drinks (free for designated drivers), tea and coffee.

He's introduced a "Friends of Hebridean Brewing Club" for £24 per year or £2 per month which entitles members to "up to" 30% off his beers or 20% off other products. Currently his prices are low, starting from £3.25 a pint (£2.50 for members) going up to £3.90 for Berserker (7.5% abv).

I had a pint of Moo Coo, a dark mild, which was less than impressive but couldn't try anything else as I had the car. Had a sip of my mate's Islander which was OK but you can't really tell from a sip - he enjoyed it though and a young guy that I know was drinking the Berserker which he was impressed with (he's well aware of the consequences of over indulging in that tipple!!). I'll keep you informed of the quality as I get the chance to work my way along the pumps!!

The **Carlton** has stopped serving real ale for winter and the **Crown** has been alternating between Deuchars and Greene King IPAs.

Annual Christmas Walkabout

Every year real ale fans from near and far congregate for a stroll around Inverness town centre pubs. We tend to rendez-vous at one end of town - the Phoenix Ale House last December - before meandering around the town in small groups, and then meet up again at the other end of town to compare notes.

Some may not venture far, but one member at least made every effort to visit as many pubs as possible on our list -

Hi, I was in early to do most of my Walkabout as my last bus home was 20:15. Then I was able to meet in the Phoenix and go across to Blackfriars with the group. These are my findings from the places I visited:

Waterfront - One handpump no real ale.

Thistle Inn - 4 handpumps, no real ale and charity collection boxes around the pumps.

Encore Une Fois - 2 handpumps, one serving a very good Happy Chappy (NBSS Score 4). Pint £3.55, half £1.80. They now host the

Ness River Rhythm Kings on Tuesdays.

Palace Hotel - One handpump, no real ale. Upturned paper cup on handpump.

Glen Mhor Hotel (Nicky Tam's Bar) - 2 handpumps, one serving Greene King Fireside (3). Pint around £4.75, half £2.50.

Castle Tavern - 6 handpumps, all in use. Isle of Skye Skye Red (2), Strathaven Ebony Stout (4), Hardy & Hansons Rocking Rudolf (3). Also on tap - Orkney Dark Island, Wychwood Bad Humber, Otter Bitter. Pint £3.60, half £1.90.

Heathmount Hotel - 2 handpumps, both in use. Cairngorm Stag (3), Inveralmond Ossian. Served in a Brewdog glass. £3.60/£1.85.

Corriegarth Hotel - 4 handpumps, three in use. Cairngorm Tradewinds (4.5), Caledonian Flying Scotsman, Bombardier Burning Gold. Pint £3.80? half £1.80.

Black Isle Bar - 3 casks on tap. Yellowhammer pint £3.50, half £1.80; Red Kite pint £4, half £2; Goldeneye (4.5) pint £5.20, half £2.60.

Phoenix - I had Orkney Red MacGregor (3).

Blackfriars - I had Swannay Running Beer (4). Cheers, EM.

A very comprehensive report. Thanks, Ed.

Breaking News.. *As we went to press we heard the **Castle Tavern** had changed hands.*

The **Crask Inn** in Lairg will become the first in Scotland to be used for religious services after it was gifted to a local church.

According to BBC News reports Michael and Kai Geldard had planned to sell the inn, but have instead handed it over to their local Scottish Episcopal Church where they are members of the congregation. The inn is to continue to be run as a pub, and as a B&B, but will also be used for religious services.

Conversion of a pub into a place of worship is not unprecedented within our Branch area and in our Spring 2009 edition we reported the sale of the Carinish Inn on North Uist to the Free Church. In the case of the Carinish Inn however use of the building as a pub did certainly not continue!

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CAMRA Pub of the Year 2016

Co-operative pub takes CAMRA Pub of the Year crown

A small village pub which was saved from closure by the local community has won CAMRA's National Pub of the Year award.

When the **George & Dragon** pub in Hudswell closed in 2008 it left the small North Yorkshire village with no other facilities for its residents apart from a village hall. Within two years, the community banded together to form the Hudswell Community Pub Ltd group and bought back the pub, re-opening in June 2010 after extensive renovations.



The community was determined that the George & Dragon would offer far more than a traditional pub. As well as acting as a meeting place and venue, it is also home to the village library, a local shop staffed by volunteers, community allotments and free internet access for its patrons.

Judges were particularly impressed with the pub's warm and welcoming atmosphere and strong community ethos. The homely multi-roomed country inn has a large beer terrace offering fantastic panoramic views over the Swale Valley just a few miles from the market town of Richmond. In addition, the current landlord has shown a great passion for quality beer, greatly extending the range of real ales and cider available.

Going to the pub is officially good for you, according to Oxford University researchers - New research, which shows that moderate alcohol consumption with friends at a local pub may be linked to improved wellbeing,

has been published in the journal *Adaptive Human Behaviour and Physiology*.

The researchers believe that having a local pub is linked with improved wellbeing due to social engagement. Professor Robin Dunbar, from Oxford's experimental psychology department, said: *"This study showed that frequenting a local pub can directly affect people's social network size and how engaged they are with their local community, which in turn can affect how satisfied they feel in life. Our social networks provide us with the single most important buffer against mental and physical illness.*

While pubs traditionally have a role as a place for community socialising, alcohol's role appears to be in triggering the endorphin system, which promotes social bonding. Like other complex bonding systems such as dancing, singing and storytelling, it has often been adopted by large social communities as a ritual associated with bonding."

He and colleagues found people with a local pub they visit regularly tended to feel more socially engaged and contented, and trusted other members of their community more.

CAMRA's national chairman, Colin Valentine, said: *"Personal wellbeing and happiness have a massive impact not only on individual lives, but on communities as whole. It will be of no surprise to CAMRA members that pubs play such a pivotal role in a person's wellbeing but it is fantastic news to hear that this wisdom has now been confirmed by research.*

Pubs play a unique role in offering a social environment to enjoy a drink with friends in a responsible, supervised community setting. For this reason, we all need to do what we can to ensure that everyone has a 'local' near to where they live or work – the first step to which is strengthening planning protection for pubs to stem the 21 pubs closing across this country each week."

The full paper, 'Functional benefits of (modest) alcohol consumption', can be read in the journal *Adaptive Human Behaviour and Physiology*:<http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s40750-016-0058-4>

All the more reason to congratulate the good folk of Hudswell for saving their pub. Ed.

Good Pub Guide Awards

Every year the Good Pub Guide editors select pubs from across the country for a number of National Awards.

Whisky Pub of the Year 2017

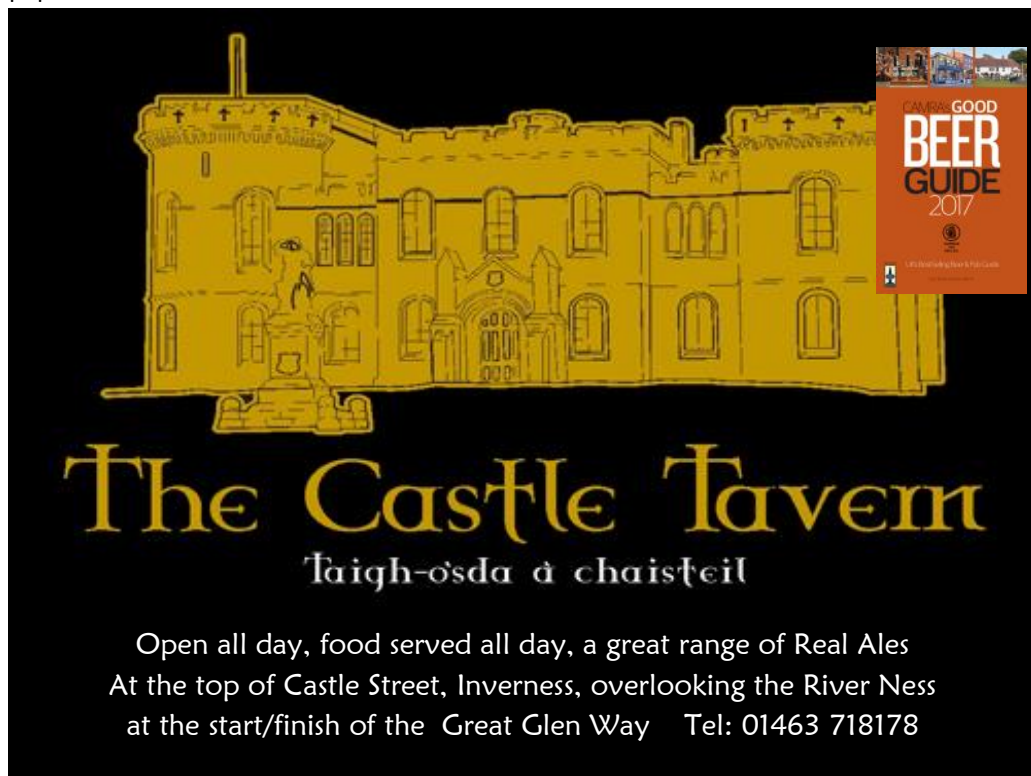


With a choice of over 400 malt whiskies, the **Sligachan Hotel** on the Isle of Skye, a past winner of this award, is their Whisky Pub of the Year 2017. The oft photographed whisky gantry is a sight to behold! The hotel is also a brewpub, home to the Cuillin Brewery, and is popular with climbers and walkers.

Landlady of the Year 2017



Congratulations to **Judith Fish** at the remote Applecross Inn who is their Landlady of the Year for 2017. In January Judith celebrated 28 years at the inn, during which time she has won numerous awards, including Scottish Thistle Awards Friendliest Pub/Bar in 2015/2016 - and Number 75 in the Sunday Times Top 100 UK restaurants 2015.



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Beer Tasting Panels

Our former Branch Chair Eric Mills has been appointed CAMRA Tasting Panel Coordinator for Scotland and Northern Ireland.



There are four panels in Scotland - Northern Scotland which Eric chairs, Fife & Tayside, South East & Central Scotland, and Western Scotland; with the possibility of one being formed in Northern Ireland this year.

Eric is hosting an official CAMRA Tasting Course in Aviemore, on Saturday 17th June, at the Cairngorm Brewery and thanks are due to Sam Faircliff and Merlin Sandbach at the brewery for their help in arranging the event.

The course, which is restricted to CAMRA members, will last approximately two hours and will go through all the aspects of tasting real ale. There are limited numbers and so please let Eric know if you are interested.

ericmills65@yahoo.co.uk

Any CAMRA member having undertaken a tasting course is eligible to join a CAMRA Tasting Panel. Taste-trained members taste real ales and record their characteristics on tasting cards. The data is used for tasting notes for GBG and other publications; and for nominations for the Champion Beer of Britain and Champion Winter Beer of Britain awards.

Everyone's palate is different and a Panel needs a range of participants. Key flavours are salt, sweet, bitter and sour. Training helps identify flavours and aromas present in beer. Please don't think your palate may not be good enough, very few people have no sense of taste! With practice your palate will become more sophisticated and you'll be

able to pick out more flavours and identify them. It's fun and who doesn't like drinking beer! So get involved.

Eric is also hosting a number of beer tasting socials, based around Inverness and open to all, which are just very informal get-togethers to talk about beers and fill in some tasting cards. Please see our on-line diary for details.

Champion Winter Beer of Britain 2017

A brewery owned by a Californian has scooped CAMRA's prestigious Champion Winter Beer of Britain award on the opening day of the National Winter Ales Festival, which took place in Norwich this year.



Following over a year of local tasting panels and regional heats leading up to the finals, **Old Freddy Walker** (7.5 per cent ABV) from Bristol-based **Moor Beer Company** impressed judges with its incredible balance of flavours.

Nick Boley, CAMRA's National Director responsible for the competition, noted: "The judges were particularly impressed with the fantastic balance in this brew. It was a strong ale, with a rich flavour perfectly balanced between chocolate, honey, dark roasts and a hint of liquorice. It is a beer to sip and enjoy, particularly as a dessert."

Moor Beer Company's Justin Hawke moved to the UK and bought a brewery after falling in love with beer while on military service in Germany. He said: "We are absolutely thrilled to win the Champion Winter Beer of Britain award for the second time."

The annual Champion Winter Beer of Britain competition provides an opportunity to showcase the best traditional winter brews in the country, and beers are judged in four categories - Barley Wine & Strong Old Ales, Old Ales & Strong Milds, Porters, and Stouts.

Sulwath Brewers (Dumfries & Galloway) Black Galloway and Dark Arts (Huddersfield) Magic Rock took overall Silver and Bronze awards.

Please check our website 'News' for Gold, Silver and Bronze winners in each category.

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

The National Beer Scoring System (NBSS) is a 0-5 point scale for judging beer quality in pubs. It is an easy to use system that has been designed to assist CAMRA 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. If you are a CAMRA member we want you to tell us about the quality of beer in the pubs you visit. If you are not a CAMRA member, why not join? As an incentive, when you score a beer you get entered into a prize draw to win free CAMRA books!

What do the scores mean?

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

You can score your beer online at home or, if you have a smart phone, in the pub!

To submit your scores just visit <http://whatpub.com>.

Log into the site using your CAMRA membership number and password, search for the pub and then click on "Submit Beer Scores" - fill in the boxes on the form, scrolling down and then click "Submit Beer Score". You can do this for any pub in the country. If you have been on a CAMRA beer tasting course and are a registered CAMRA beer taster, you can fill in a tasting card online too.



The advertisement is a horizontal banner. On the left, a man with a beard is holding two beer mugs up to his eyes, using them as binoculars. The beer in the mugs is dark with a thick, white head of foam. In the center, the text reads: 'CAMRA CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE' with a logo, followed by 'WHAT?PUB' in large, bold, blue letters, then 'Thousands of pubs at your fingertips!' in smaller text, and 'whatpub.com' in a large, bold, blue font. Below that, it says 'Featuring over 35,000 real ale pubs'. On the right, a hand is holding a smartphone that displays the WhatPub website. To the right of the phone, on a red background, is the text: 'Over 96% of Britain's real ale pubs featured', 'WHAT?PUB', 'Information updated thousands of times by volunteers', 'WHAT?PUB', 'by CAMRA', 'produce the best beer guide'.

If you have a little more time to spare, why not send us a pub report? We regularly organise trips to the outer reaches of our massive Branch area - bigger than Belgium - but we rely upon reports from locals and visitors to keep us up-to-date with what is happening on the ever-changing real ale scene.

We would be very pleased to hear from you, particularly if you are on holiday in the Highlands and Western Isles. Please let us know about the pubs you visit, the ales and ciders you drink, and what you think of them.

Simply email any pub, brewery, real ale or real cider news to our Branch Contacts (see Diary page). Thanks, Ed.

Pubs-of-the-Year 2016 Awards

Later than the Branch would have hoped, but the new committee has finally got around to presenting awards to 2016 winners.

Full details on our website.



Andy Rogers presents Clachaig Inn Barman Will (left) with their award

The **Clachaig** is a famous 16th century inn at the bottom of the Pass of Glencoe on the old single track road. Located at the foot of the Aonach Eagach ridge, the inn is a popular haunt for walkers and climbers. February and October festivals have been held for twenty years and feature '*good beer, hearty food, great craic*' as well as live music and more.

The **Phoenix Ale House**, with its classic Scottish island bar style, is one of three pubs in our branch area which are listed on CAMRA's Inventory of Historic Pub Interiors.

The Phoenix is classified as being a pub with a regionally important historic interior.

The Union Tavern in Fortrose and Criterion Bar in Stornoway are the other two.

The Plough in Rosemarkie is also listed, considered to have a nationally important historic interior.



Dornoch Castle Hotel Bar Manager Ollie (right) receives their award from Keith Morrell

Dornoch Castle was built around 1500 as the home of the bishops of Caithness. It was set alight during a 16th Century feud, but was rebuilt and extended before being allowed to fall into decay. It was restored in the early 19th century and served as a school, then a jail, and then a court house.

Further rebuilding and additions took place at around 1880 and the castle became a hunting lodge for visiting sportsmen. Finally in 1947 it became **Dornoch Castle Hotel** and has been refurbished to provide a luxurious interior.

The hotel is said to be haunted by the ghost of a Sutherland sheep rustler. A thief called Andrew McCornish was imprisoned within its



Phoenix Ale House Owner George Maclean (right) receiving award from Simon

dungeons and then killed for stealing ewes and rams from some nearby estates. Marion Mackenzie, the daughter of his jailer, was the first person to see the ghost at the close of the 19th century. She claimed to see the grey-haired man with a "weird face" sitting in her father's study.



Our Chair and Angus McGhie (left) taking advantage of the February sunshine outside the **Stein Inn** when Simon visited to present Angus with his 2016 Pub-of-the-Year award.

The Stein Inn, which dates from 1790 and is the oldest inn on Skye, benefits from a stunning lochside location on the north-west coast of the Isle of Skye.

The grid-plan layout of the village of Stein, or Lochbay as it was originally

known, was designed by Thomas Telford and is one of three fishing settlements founded by British Fisheries Society in 1787. (Ullapool and Tobermory are the other two).

Thomas Telford recommended that an Inn should be built first. *A wise man! Ed.*

Good Beer Guide 2018

Thank-you to all the CAMRA members, from near and far, who have taken time to log scores in **What?ub** or sent in beer reports during the past year.

The committee has just finished the annual task of deciding which local pubs merit our recommendation for entry into the next Good Beer Guide. By the time you read this our submissions, along with the pub details and descriptions, will be with the CAMRA HQ staff who are compiling the 2018 edition, due to be published in September this year.

As the number of pubs within the Branch area serving real ale continues to grow, so we become ever more dependant upon the beer reports we receive to provide a true picture of the quality of beer on offer. In particular we need regular reports to help us to gauge the consistency and quality.

If you are a publican serving real ale in top condition, it is very likely that you will be complemented by drinkers. Please encourage your clientele to send us an e-mail or, if they are CAMRA members, to score your beers in **What?ub**. If we hear that good real ale is on offer we will certainly make every effort to visit your pub to find out more. You may even see your inn or hotel mentioned in this widely read newsletter!

As noted above, our recommendations for inclusion in the Good Beer Guide 2018 have been submitted - but please keep sending in reports, the process is ongoing and collection of scores for use when deciding which pubs to recommend for Good Beer Guide 2019 has already started.

Your local CAMRA branch needs you.

Protect your pleasure! Help us support our local pubs & brewers.

Become actively involved with your local branch.

We need your input. Not a massive time commitment, just an hour or two a month will help our small committee in supporting the local publicans and brewers who together provide us with such a wonderful range of real ales to enjoy.

Meeting schedules can sometimes be changed - Please check our branch website to confirm the dates, times and places of meetings and socials.

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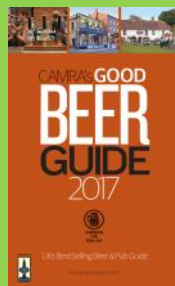


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What's Yours Then? is a magazine produced by the **Highlands & Western Isles Branch** of the **CAM**pagin for Real Ale.

The views & opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the editor, CAMRA, nor its Branches.

We hope you have enjoyed reading our magazine. Unless you intend to keep it, please **DO NOT** throw it away. Why not pass it on to a friend, or just leave it in a pub somewhere for others to read?

Our magazines are often found many miles from source!

And Finally..

Thanks again to all of you who have sent e-mails or letters. If I have truncated your article to fit it in or if I have only included extracts, through lack of space, then I hope that I have not in any way detracted from the original sentiment. My sincere apologies to those of you who have taken trouble to send in articles which have not been published. I do hope we have found time to respond to all your e-mails - if not, please do write again and let us know.

Please be assured that all beer reports we receive are logged and taken into consideration when recommending pubs for inclusion in the Good Beer Guide. We are strongly committed to high quality real ale being available in Highlands & Western Isles pubs and hotels.

Wherever possible the Branch follows up reports of poor beer quality. Hopefully you are enjoying a good pint of real ale or real cider as you read this magazine. Cheers, Ed.

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

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