

**FREE Magazine  
from the Tayside  
Branch of CAMRA  
Winter / Spring 2023**



**Campaign  
for  
Real Ale**

# Hooked **ON ALE**



**All the latest  
Real Ale News  
and Features  
from  
CAMRA Tayside Branch**



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# **Hello and welcome to the latest issue of Tayside CAMRA branch magazine HOOKED ON ALE**

It has certainly been a hard couple of years for everyone, so I hope you came through it OK. I would like to open by thanking Stephen Robertson (our previous chair) and Jim McMahon for stepping up to the plate and keeping the branch going during the pandemic - Thank You!

Bad news first. Two Tayside breweries, Blunt Chisel and Redcastle have both sadly ceased brewing in recent months and Inveralmond have decided to stop brewing Lia Fail. Hopefully this decision is just temporary and demand for Lia Fail will bring about a change in heart.



Good news (apart from the return of Hooked on Ale) is that CAMRA's Members Weekend, Conference and AGM will be returning to the Dundee's Caird Hall in 2024. We must have done it all right in 2019. Colin Valentine (former CAMRA National Chair) is the 2024 organiser and would like more local input. So, if you can offer any assistance, please do get in touch with myself or any of our branch committee.

In attempt to attract more members to branch meetings, we are organising these for different days and start times and at different locations. I hope that you will find one that suits you and you can come along and find out more about what Tayside CAMRA is doing to promote real ale and support all those that produce and sell it.

Can I also commend all branch members who are contributing to our "green credentials" by traveling about the branch using the Ember electric bus service. Ember have now added Glasgow to their destinations and those of you who know me will be surprised to learn that I managed to reserve a seat with ease!!!

Finally, I would like to end by encouraging you all to support the establishments and breweries who have taken the decision, during these difficult financial times, to support us by advertising in Hooked on Ale.

Keep enjoying "Good Ale",

CHEERS THE NOO,

***Kenny Smith Branch Chair***

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**Disclaimer:** The views contained within **Hooked on Ale** do not necessarily represent the views of CAMRA, the editor or the Tayside Branch.

**Advertising:** If you would like to advertise in the next issue of Hooked on Ale due to be published in July, for more information, please contact us at:

[newsletter@tayside.camra.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@tayside.camra.org.uk)

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## **Tayside Pub News By Jim McMahon**

Yes, a lot has certainly happened since the last issue of Hooked on Ale. The number of pubs and hotels selling real ale in Tayside has reduced by around 30% and many of the survivors now have less hand pulls on the bar so possibly that amounts to a 50% reduction in consumption. You can talk about COVID apprehension, supply issues, shortages of staff and transport difficulties but at the end of the day, if the in-pub demand is there then I'm sure publicans will increase supply. Hopefully in those where real ale has been withdrawn, it soon makes a welcome return, and we are starting to see some signs of recovery in this respect. All Hooked on Ale readers can help by being sure to remind the former real ale pubs what your preference is!!

This period has also seen some good small breweries ceasing to trade. Locally, Strathbraan was a huge loss, and it has now been followed by Redcastle and the smaller microbrewery, Blunt Chisel. Many pubs used to the reliable delivery service provided by Strathbraan suddenly needed to source their real ale from further afield. Some pubs changed to smooth flow and others opted for the likes of Stewart's, Orkney and Harviestoun. The exception being Highland Perthshire where Moulin and Wasted Degrees cask ales have been spotted away from their home but not too far from home. Moulin even reaching the Twa Tams in Perth.

In the cities, Dundee has seen less changes than Perth. Central Dundee is now relatively

near to what it was pre pandemic although a notable omission is the 71 Tap Room which stopped doing real ale altogether.

Perth however has seen the Kirkside ceasing real ale. Greyfriars was closed for 18 months before reopening without real ale. However, a name change to Malky's Bar has coincided with real ales returning. Another name change saw Dickens becoming the Silvery Tay (left) although still under the same ownership.



On the plus side in Perth, the Twa Tams usually has two Cromarty ales and Cairn O Mohr cider. Nearby the Bunker has just introduced real ale which is selling well. Since the last issue of this magazine, the Cullach Tap Room has become established, and the Craft Beer Bottle Shop has moved to larger premises. Key keg being offered in both venues.

In the sticks, a monthly pop up operates at Cleish Village Hall and the Wasted Degrees Tap has become a summer weekend fixture in Blair Atholl. However, the Strathardle Inn is now a cake school, a big change from the past when it brewed its own beer. The Loch Leven Tap has gone into a partnership with C\*ld Town Beer Brewing where their keg beer is on draught in the Tap and Loch Leven ales are available in their Edinburgh Bars. Seems like a good deal for Loch Leven.

Further out, the Breadalbane area has been a bit of a surprise with it being a busy tourist area. The only guaranteed real ales over the summer were at Ailean Chraggan and Ben Lawers where their opening times are much shorter but worth making the effort as they're selling Tempest ales all the way from Tweedbank.

Quite often between lockdown, Forfar's Osnaburg had no real ale but a new landlady from summer 2022 has changed this with two handpulls offering changing national ales and the return of food.

All during the periods that pubs were allowed to trade, Dundee's Bank Bar always had 4 good quality real ales available so duly deserved the 2022 Pub of the Year award.

No award was made in 2021. A deferred 2020 award was made to Blairgowrie's Ericht Alehouse which provided an opportunity for Kenny Fraser (right) to celebrate his 20 years tenure there. Due precautions were taken when making the award.

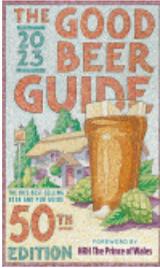
Current real ale pubs that we know of are listed on page 8. Full details of these pubs can be found on our website [www.tayside.camra.org.uk](http://www.tayside.camra.org.uk)

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Remember, if you have any news about your local please email: **whatpub@tayside.camra.org.uk** And finally, both myself and the branch are reliant on you whether CAMRA members or not, passing on information about pubs and breweries in the Tayside area. So even if not having a beer, if you are passing a pub and it is convenient, why not just pop your head around the door and see what is going on.

Hooked on Ale welcomes updates from all Tayside breweries producing cask or bottled conditioned real ale. If your brewery has not provided an update for this issue of Hooked on Ale but would like to do so for future issues, please contact:-

**newsletter@tayside.camra.org.uk**

## **Tayside Real Ale Pubs**

As at 1 January 2023, the following Pubs, Hotels and Clubs (in some cases members and guests only) are known to sell cask conditioned ale. Those known to serve real cider and perry are annotated C. Those known to serve real ale on a seasonal basis are annotated S. Those when real ale not always available annotated O. W denotes real ale usually served at weekends. K denotes Key Keg dispense.

### **Angus**

#### **Arbroath**

Corn Exchange  
Old Boatyard

#### **Brechin**

Brechin Arms  
Brown Horse  
Caledonian Hotel

#### **Carnoustie**

Station Hotel

#### **Forfar**

Osnaburg

#### **Glen Clova**

Glen Clova Hotel

#### **Hillside (by Montrose)**

Hillside Hotel (O)

#### **Kirriemuir**

Airlie Arms Hotel  
Thrum's Hotel

#### **Letham**

Commercial Inn (C)

#### **Memus**

Drovers Inn

### **Montrose**

George Hotel  
Market Arms

### **Dundee & District**

#### **Broughty Ferry**

Anchor  
Fisherman's  
Jolly's Hotel  
Royal Arch  
Ship Inn

#### **Dundee**

Bank Bar  
Beefeater (Discovery Quay)  
Counting House  
Market  
Pillars  
Phoenix  
Speedwell (Mennies)  
Taybridge (O)

### **Kinross-shire**

#### **Cleish**

Up In Arms (W) (O)

#### **Kinross**

Loch Leven Brewery Tap  
Muir's Inn

#### **Milnathort**

Village Inn

#### **Scotlandwell**

Well Inn

#### **Wester Balgedie**

Balgedie Toll Tavern

### **Perth City**

Bunker  
Capital Asset  
Cherrybank Inn  
Craft Beer Bottle Shop (K)  
Cullach (K)  
Glover Arms  
Malky's Bar

Old Ship Inn

Silvery Tay

Twa Tams (C)

### **Perthshire**

#### **Abernethy**

Crees Inn

#### **Ardler**

Tavern

#### **Auchterarder**

Auchterarder Golf Club

#### **Balbeggie**

Macdonald Arms Hotel (W)

#### **Bankfoot**

Bankfoot Inn

#### **Blair Atholl**

Atholl Arms Hotel  
Wasted Degrees (K) (S)

#### **Blairgowrie**

Blairgowrie Golf Club  
Ericht Ale House (C)

Fair o Blair

Stormont Arms

#### **Bridge of Earn**

Cyprus Inn

#### **Comrie**

Melville, Royal Hotel

#### **Crieff**

Quaich Bar  
Tower Gastro Pub

#### **Dunkeld**

Royal Dunkeld Hotel (O)  
Perth Arms  
Taybank Hotel (O)

#### **Dunning**

Kirkstyle Inn  
Dunning Hotel

#### **Fortingall**

Fortingall Hotel

#### **Glendevon**

Tormaukin Hotel (O)

#### **Glen Farg**

Bein Inn

## Kirkmichael

Kirkmichael Hotel

## Lawers

Ben Lawers Hotel

## Meigle

Kinloch Arms

## Meikleour

Meikleour Arms Hotel

## Moulin

Moulin Inn

## Pitcairngreen

Pitcairngreen Inn (C)

## Pitlochry

Auld Smiddy

Old Mill Inn

## Weem

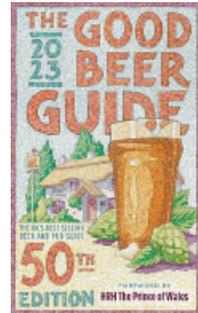
Ailean Chraggan

If your local pub, hotel or even club serves 'real ale' or 'real cider or perry' and is not included in this listing please let us know.

**Up to date information  
can be viewed on  
[www.whatpub.com](http://www.whatpub.com)**

To find out which of the above pubs are listed in CAMRA's Good Beer Guide 2023, why not buy the guide

or download the Good Beer Guide App. For more information, visit CAMRA's web-site



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## **Further Adventures of The 'Thirstday' Group.....Still Going Strong!**

Hello everyone and welcome back. We in the Thirstday Group came through the dreaded lurgy quite well with only a mild case between us. During the lockdown we made regular use of the home delivery service offered by various breweries. The Bank Bar, our home from home, were also doing food deliveries, which I for one used several times. When the rules were relaxed a little, I called in for soft drinks, mainly ginger beer & lime, I even tried a Becks Blue ---- NOT RECOMMENDED.

As soon as outdoor drinking was permitted, we were right in there (so to speak) even though some of us often turned a lovely shade of blue due to the cold.

Since returning to some form of normality, we have organised a trip along to Broughty Ferry, a couple of trips to St. Andrews, one to the Bridge of Allen, and just recently we undertook the Forth Valley CAMRA "Dark Ale Trail" which you can read about in this issue of Hooked on Ale

But mostly we have been at home in the Bank Bar enjoying Titanic's Plum Porter on a regular basis so if you are at a loose end on a Thirstday afternoon in Dundee, why not pop in and enjoy a good ale and some dubious banter.

### **Kenny Smith (Branch Chair)**

For information - All our 'adventures' are undertaken by public transport and journey details can be planned via the Traveline Scotland website or App.



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## Tayside Brewery News

Sadly during the preparation of this issue of Hooked on Ale, we heard news that two Tayside breweries, **Redcastle** and **Blunt Chisel**, had decided to call it a day due to increasing economic uncertainty. Roy Herd (Blunt Chisel) explained that it was a combination of outgrowing the site, constant rising and unexpected operating costs and the financial and emotional pressure of running a small brewery single handed had forced him to consider whether to continue the business or to move on. John Anderson (Redcastle) cited the rising costs of brewing materials and ingredients, ever increasing electricity costs and a reduced demand for cask ale.

**Inveralmond Brewery** - Richard Barnes (membership secretary & former Inveralmond employee) reports that he called in at the brewery recently and was introduced to the new site supremo Alex Cox. New vessels have appeared for cold hopping Innis & Gunn IPAs, along with an improved CIP (cleaning in place) system. A familiar face has returned in the shape of Craig Rothney, after a spell brewing with 71 Brewing, to add to his coffee roasting skills. With the site looking spick and span, there was no mention of any impending doom for Lia Fail a well-loved cask ale.

**Law Brewery** ([www.lawbrewing.co.uk](http://www.lawbrewing.co.uk)) - Danny Cullen (brewer / owner) advised that times have been tough over the last few years but Law Brewing have managed to upgrade equipment with some of the Covid grants on offer and purchased a 625L steel unitank and four 625L steel fermentation vessels. In addition, equipment now includes a portable canning machine enabling them to package most of their beer styles into 440ml or 330ml black cans like most breweries. The lockdown periods enabled Danny to develop his brewing skills further to formulate many new recipes, improve old ones, and dabble in barrel aging and sour beers! Danny mentioned that there has definitely been a downturn in sales over the last few months, (although they actually find it easier to sell cask beer over kegged beer which he thought real ale drinkers would be pleased to hear), but this may be more related to pubs buying cheaper products from the multinationals. The next few months will see Law Brewing concentrate on more on-line sales and distribution outside of Tayside, but challenging times lie ahead.

**Loch Leven Brewery** - While cask ales are penetrating further into Tayside, the brewery has ceased kegging operations completely, at least in the short term. Agreement has been reached with Signature Group to replace with craft keg from Cold Town Beers, and supply cask into Signature pubs, which are concentrated in Edinburgh. Cold Town Lager and New England IPA, and Loch Leven Gin may be of alternative interest for those visiting bars in Kinross.

**MòR Beers** ([www.morbeers.co.uk](http://www.morbeers.co.uk)) - Did you know that MòR Brewing is one of Tayside's longest running independent craft breweries? And probably it's least well-known beer brand too as MòR beers aren't available in supermarkets. MòR continue to self-distribute all their draught cask ales and there are huge areas where they simply have

no access to market, even though they pass through weekly. If you're sitting in your local reading this right now wondering what MòR beers taste like, and why you've never heard of them before, then make your voice heard!

If you haven't tried MòR beers in the last year, then you haven't tried their beers now. Not content to rest on the laurels of a flagship brand, Dominic (owner & brewer) has the freedom to explore new ingredients and make tweaks to recipes. Every two months MòR release a special cask ale. These beers explore the malt, hops and yeast that aren't in the core range. Sometimes the outcome can be very polarising as MòR found with their recent fruit beers or they can directly influence changes to their core beer recipes. Despite being an established brewery, MòR beers are constantly evolving, as is the range of beer styles which have become acceptable as cask ales. Some of MòR beers are brilliantly clear, others are intentionally hazy. Some are malt forward Scottish modern classics like Auld Money 80 Shilling, and some are hoppy citrus led Craft style ales like Scode! Pale Ale.

Their next seasonal release is Thirsty Footings. This year's release is a 4.4% New World IPA brewed with malted oats for a smooth and silky mouth-feel. The New World refers to where the hops are from, which for this beer will be the new Australian hop, Eclipse. It has been brewed yet, but according to Dominic, the hops smell amazing – full of fresh citrus and pine. Thirsty Footings is a bit of a play on words of the popular Scottish past time, and in breaking from tradition, this winter release has a pale summery vibe, after all it is Summer down under!

**Moulin Brewery** ([www.moulinhotel.co.uk](http://www.moulinhotel.co.uk)) - The past year for the Moulin Brewery has seen positive progress and many exciting events with a busy summer being rounded off with a limited addition Blair Atholl Horse Trials beer which was white labelled for the event. A number of local pubs, delis and hotels across Perthshire have started taking Moulin beers which has enabled Moulin to double production. With their new white label service and 4.5 polypin kegs, the Moulin Brewery is offering more ways to be accessible for home and events. They have also made the big venture onto social media with Facebook and Instagram pages posting regular updates and stories with new offers, what beer is being brewed and where they are selling their beer next. Overall, it

has been a year of exciting development and new ventures and Moulin Brewery can't wait for more.



**Wasted Degrees** ([www.wasteddegrees.com](http://www.wasteddegrees.com)) - Another year and another doubling of tank capacity at Wasted Degrees Brewing. Owned and operated by brothers Conall and Jack Low (Inset left) – both natives of Pitlochry – Wasted Degrees, now in its sixth year and with

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## Tayside CAMRA Branch Diary

**For details of branch meetings and social events, please visit the branch website:**

[www.tayside.camra.org.uk](http://www.tayside.camra.org.uk)

**All Tayside CAMRA members are welcome to attend meetings and social events but please always check the Tayside CAMRA branch website or the branch Facebook page prior to meetings and socials to confirm venue and start time.**

8000 litres of tank capacity, crafts limited-edition beers from its 100% renewables powered brewhouse in Blair Atholl. Supplying keg & canned beers across the UK and now Europe – following the team’s first export of 12,500 cans to The Netherlands in September 2022 – you’ll also find Wasted Degrees in cask at select pubs in Perthshire.

Known for its diverse & ever-changing line-up of brews, the brewery supports local agriculture by brewing with locally grown ingredients where it can (including Perthshire grown hops), working with farms and suppliers to reduce food miles and to champion the region’s resources. Having purchased a brand-new UK designed & manufactured Microcan canning line in late-Spring 2022, the team transitioned their small pack packaging to 440ml cans away from glass bottles (cans having 20% less associated carbon emissions) showing that the brewery continues to pursue sustainable and responsible growth. For the cider fans out there, keep an eye on the brewery’s Facebook and Instagram @ WastedDegrees for their fourth annual Perthshire cider coming in February 2023.

Open year-round for free tours and the brewery shop (Monday – Friday 10:00 – 16:00), you can also visit the brewery’s Taproom for draught beer and hand-made pizzas on Saturdays April – September.

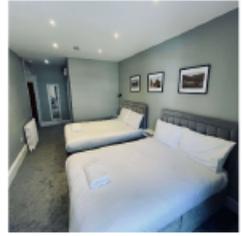
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Hooked on Ale welcomes updates from all Tayside breweries producing cask or bottled conditioned real ale. For future issues, please contact:-

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## Up in Arms – Cleish Village Hall Pop-up Pub

This pop-up venture returned after lockdown with a cask or two of real ale served by volunteers once a month at Cleish Village Hall, which makes it Tayside's most southerly hostelry. Recent openings have been in the evening on the first Friday each month, with ales from Harviestoun, Broughton and Williams Bros, at prices less than you are unlikely to find beyond Wetherspoons, but once the cask has gone, it's gone!



A real challenge to get to, best bet is to book your bike onto an Ember bus to Kinross (see Ember bus article on page 30), and 4 mile warm-up (or chill out) along cycle-friendly lanes to Cleish.

Failing that, there are alcohol-free beers and other offerings in can and bottle for the designated driver, and even chance of a carry-out ale, so bring your own plastic bottle.

For all details check [www.facebook.com/cleishvillagepub](https://www.facebook.com/cleishvillagepub)

## A Brief Guide to Drinking in Perth by Jim McMahon

Pubs in Perth can be divided into roughly three groups: real ale pubs, craft beer pubs, and others. I don't know much about the others, except that some of them serve meals, while some don't, and a few have outdoor areas. There are three out-and-out craft beer pubs:

**BrewDog**, small and frequently busy with BrewDog fans and people who like pizzas.

**Craft Beer Bottle Shop**, which has a small bar/counter with a few taps, usually dispensing very strong beers from keykeg, as well as several fridges with bottled beers from the UK and beyond (including usually quite a good selection of German beers of various styles), and a small room with tables at the back.

**Cullach Brewery and Tap**, with its own beers and the occasional guest beer, all on keykeg though cask ale expected to be available from Easter 2023. The Cullach is the largest of the three, with sofas and tables along one side, and wooden tables and chairs on the other. After reopening following Covid lockdown, table service and ordering via their app became standard for a while, but there are now a few seats at the bar. It's family and dog friendly.

The real ale outlets at the time of writing although subject to change are:

**Cherrybank Inn** – mostly laid out as a restaurant, though dining is not compulsory, but having a separate bar area with sports TV and a range of well-kept ales. There is a covered balcony, and the beer garden is due to reopen after being flooded in September 2022. Popular with office workers from nearby.



**Glover Arms** - also a restaurant, but with a separate small bar, where dogs are welcome.

**Capital Asset** - a typical Wetherspoons outlet.

**Silvery Tay** (formerly Dickens Bar) - currently has only one changing ale on handpump, usually from Stewarts Brewery. Not far from the bus and railway stations, and worth a visit.

**The Twa Tams** – has live music from Wednesday to Saturday. A big pub with a large outside drinking area. A popular Perth venue.

**Malky's Bar** (formerly the Greyfriars), which is gradually expanding its range of ales from Loch

Leven Brewery, with others to be added, depending on sales.

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**The Old Ship Inn** - the oldest pub in Perth, which was an oasis for ale-drinkers in the bad old days of the 70's and 80's. It is now larger downstairs than then, with a function room upstairs, and is a Greene King outlet with (usually) a GK beer and a guest, frequently Fyne Ales' Jarl or Harviestoun Bitter and Twisted. The Old Ship also has one of Scotland's foremost gin selections.

There are some other good places for cask ales close by Perth city and fairly easily accessible by public transport:

**Pitcairngreen Inn** (with food) (bus 14).

**Cyprus Inn** (without food) in Bridge of Earn (buses 17, 36, and 56)

**Bankfoot Inn** (bus 23, including 23A and 23B, and less frequently 34A and 27)

**Kirkstyle Inn** and **Dunning Hotel** both in Dunning (bus 17), all with food, and which are also within comfortable cycling range.

If your timing is right, there is even the **Macdonald Arms** (no name-sign, just a big red 'T') in Balbeggie (bus 57, 57A, and 57C) which has only limited opening hours, but is worth a visit.

For more details check [whatpub.com](http://whatpub.com) or the GBG app, or the pubs' own Facebook entries or websites for opening times.

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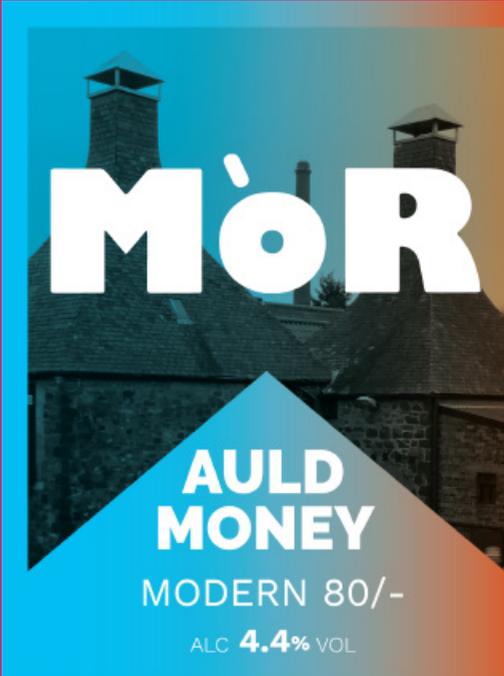
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## Mike Jarron's Edinburgh Pub Reminiscences - The Diggers

The highlight of my working week was a Friday lunchtime run through Colinton Dell followed by refreshment and steak pie at the Athletic Arms (below left), usually just called The Diggers as it was opposite a cemetery. The Diggers then had 13 tall fonts serving McEwans 80/- which they just called 'heavy'. In those days many pubs called their 70/- 'heavy'. The reason for so many fonts was the very fast turnover which required reserve casks to be available immediately as required. There was no time for pipe and tap cleaning during serving hours. The manager, Bill Farmer, stood operating the till to the rear of the bar while two or three bar staff served the pints and shouted the orders back to him so there was no delay in getting change. Famously at busy times you entered the door, caught a barman's eye and held up fingers indicating how many pints of heavy you required. Often, they would already be poured by the time you pushed through the crowd to reach the bar. The steak pies came from a small baker, Andersons, in Gorgie Road. As they tended to sell out, we used to phone ahead and order them. We said they were for the guys with wet hair as we had just showered after our run.



The back room had tables onto which dominoes boards could be slotted. Doms games could get quite tense and anybody disturbing one or interrupting concentration would catch an earful. This included the slightly simple chap who collected empties. I don't know whether he got paid for this or did it just to get the odd free pint, but he was invariably met with "get oot the way ye silly auld c..t". I never heard him called by any other name!

The most notable barman was Wee Davie 'the Mekon' – so nicknamed because his skinny frame surmounted by a large bald head gave him some resemblance to the alien character in the Eagle's Dan Dare. He could be quite fierce – on one occasion a customer was heard asking for a pint of lager. Davie's response "Whit's wrang wi the f'n heavy then?" Another time a group of us were in for a stag do when the prospective groom being somewhat inebriated, planted a kiss on Davie's bald head rendering him quite ballistic.

Presumably the renowned quality of the Heavy was due to the pub's proximity to the brewery and its turnover. The beer would be served relatively quickly after delivery and settling and thus remained full bodied and slightly sweet. I recall that if any was spilt there would be a sticky ring on the table (much stickier than in most bars). However, those more expert than I may have better explanations for the quality aspect.

There were some Hearts memorabilia on show on the walls and of course the busiest time for the pub was after Heart's home games. This aspect of the pub's traditions survive although the 80/- is now brewed as 'Digger's Heavy' by Stewarts and there are guest ales. Pies are still available (sadly a rarity in pubs these days).

**Mike Jarron**

## Thirstday Group Adventures .....The Forth Valley "Dark Ale Trail"

After a couple of years in abeyance due to Covid restrictions, Forth Valley CAMRA restarted their "Dark Ale Trail by Rail" (formerly "Mild Ale Trail") on Friday 18 – Sunday 20 November. With a couple of the 'Thirstday Group' having prior appointments on the Friday we opted to go on the Saturday. This year there was also the added temptation of bus connections to Tillicoultry and Bo'ness.



After the horrendous weather the previous day, Saturday started a wee bit overcast as we gathered at Dundee Tay Bridge Station to board the 10:18 due to arrive in Stirling at 11:20. Engineering work put paid to that with the train terminating at Perth, and a bus replacement onwards to Stirling. The original plan had been to get a No. 52 bus at 11:49 but this had to be amended to the 12:19 from Stirling bus station to Tillicoultry, having met up with Des from the Edinburgh and Lothians branch. (The bus turned out to be a former Explore Dundee bus (No. 4111)).

Departing on time and after negotiating roadworks in the Causewayhead area, we progressed along the foothills of the Ochils through Menstrie and Alva, a picturesque run, to arrive about 12:51 where our local expert Garry took over. Getting off at the first stop just past The Royal Arms, we passed said hostelry round the corner and up the hill to our first port of call, the Woolpack Inn (right). This is a cracking wee bar with a cosy side room which we occupied. Stewarts 80/- was the dark ale on offer plus Carronade 4.2% ABV from Tryst. We decided that as we had made the effort to get here then we should sample both ales on offer.



Back down the hill to the Royal Arms (below), we



were met with a good welcome and jovial banter from the regulars before adjourning to the lounge to enjoy Theakston's Old Peculier, the dark ale on offer. Turning left out the door, we then headed down to the Volunteer Arms for Sesh 60/- 3.6% ABV and Magic Porridge 4.7% ABV, both dark ales from Hybrid. This completed the listed pubs in Tillicoultry.

We aimed to catch the 15:26 bus back to Stirling, but as we were debating a return to the pub as there was no sign of it, and my comrades with modern technology could find to trace of it, like



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magic it appeared, an ancient double decker in "Midland Bluebird" colours.

Getting back to Stirling it stopped across the road from the Curly Coo where Orkney Dark Island 4.6% ABV was available on the single hand pull. We decided against the hike up to the Settle Inn and instead headed back towards the station and No.2 Baker Street where Magic Porridge (again) and Landlord were on tap.

On to the station and the 18:30 to Linlithgow. Foregoing the walk along to the Four Marys (time constraints) we popped into Platform 3. Not on the trail and therefore no dark ale, Jack Back from Stewart was had. On to Haymarket, where Des left us, and then the 20:07 back to Dundee. Garry and I popped into the Bank Bar, where we were greeted by the sight of Garry's "favourite beer of all time" March of the Penguins. A great way to end "a grand day out".

**Kenny Smith**

**Thirstday Group 'adventures' are undertaken by public transport and journey details can be planned via the Traveline Scotland website or App..**

**With the recent news that CAMRA's Members Weekend and AGM is returning to the Caird Hall Dundee in 2024, local member and branch committee member, Bill Hoy, reflects on his memories of the 2019 event.**



### **Reminiscences of CAMRA AGM and Members Weekend 2019 in Dundee**

Now that it has been announced that the 2024 CAMRA Members Weekend & Annual conference is to be held in Dundee, I thought that I would share some reminiscences of my small, but interesting, to me at least, role in the previous one in 2019.

I was a relatively new member of CAMRA and had attended meetings in our branch when it was announced volunteers were needed to help run the Dundee conference. I had plenty of spare time so I offered to make myself available as required throughout the weekend.

No information was forthcoming about where I might be needed but when, as a result of a phone call to see where I could help, I was asked if I could drive, and particularly if I could drive a van. My response to both questions was yes and I added that prior to my retirement I was often called to drive a van, including in the Dundee area. So, I was recruited as a van driver to collect

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beer which was being amassed in St Andrews from various brewers prior to delivery to the Caird Hall. No problem says I. Then I was told about the small catch. Could I also go to Harvieston Brewery in Alva?

I suggested hiring the van from Perth as it was 25 miles nearer Alva than Dundee and I could use the van to get home. So, on the day Jake and I collected the van in Perth and went to St Andrews via Alva, all routes that I had driven for the Bakery, but it was usually darker, with less traffic than when I did regularly drove it.

After a second trip to St Andrews, it was then “what can I do now?” Next was packing jute bags for the delegates with all the documentation and of course Marmalade samples (Jute Jam and Journalism). Next, it was helping to assemble the member’s bars, and a training course to get my personal licence. On Conference days I was manning the pumps in the members bar, then after the conference finished, it was the rush to dismantle everything, return the empty casks to St Andrews and clean up, with a strict handover deadline for the halls.

All in all, a very busy weekend but rewarding for all the new experiences, and great camaraderie and friendships with fellow ale devotees. I only touched a small part of the many jobs needing done to make the weekend a success, and I hope to be able to fulfil some roles again this time, although unfortunately with less spare time available.

I would recommend all local CAMRA members with some spare time to get involved for what is an interesting and varied weekend with great company.

**Bill Hoy**

## Meanwhile, in Andalucia

Visitors to Malaga and the Costa del Sol bored with the formerly ubiquitous San Miguel now have a lot more choice. Lager or pilsner-type beers still dominate the beer scene, but San Miguel (of Phillipino origin, although a Spanish brand since 1953, and brewed in Madrid since 1957, and in Malaga since 1966) is no longer the only option (though it is still very widespread). Alternative drafts from Cruzcampo (based in Sevilla, now owned by Heineken, Spain), which is pretty big in Andalucia, Mahou (Mahou San-Miguel and Estrella Galicia (from A Coruña and not to be confused with Estrella Damm, from Barcelona), can also be found in most towns (though not every village).



Longer established in Malaga is the Victoria brewery. Although it has been around since 1928, Victoria has only in recent years become more widely available along the coast and elsewhere. If you are tired of the San Miguel headache (a well-known and painful symptom of even moderate indulgence, and not just among tourists), then this is a superior option. The same can be said for Cruzcampo and Estrella Galicia, as well as Ambar which are all becoming steadily more available on draft throughout Andalucia.



There are also a number of craft beer bars and microbreweries in Malaga city, and a few rumoured to exist elsewhere (though I haven't been able to visit those yet). In fact, I've only visited three specialist beer bars in Malaga so far, but new ones spring up from time to time. A good place to start is El Rincon del Cervecerero on C/Casas de Campos, which has a quite impressive selection of bottled beers from around the world, including over 50 from Spain, and eight draught taps of mainly Spanish beers. Others are Birras Deluxe (formerly Cerveceria Arte y Sana) on Plaza de la Merced, and Central Beers, nearby at C/Carcer 6.



There is even a local Cruzcampo craft brewery (La Fabrica) in the SoHo area, at C/Trinidad Grund 29, which has a selection of its own craft brews for sale alongside the regular selection from Sevilla.

Beer-lovers don't have to go with just what's on tap, however. In bars throughout the region, it's also worth checking which bottled beers are available, since most places do have other brews available, and often better versions of their standard beer (for example, the standard Mahou is the "green label", but a stronger and tastier "red label" is usually also available, in bottles, if not always on draft.

Two outstanding bottled beers from Alhambra are Alhambra Reserva 1925 (widely available), and Alhambra Barrica de Ron



Grenadino, which has been stored in rum casks. So far, I've only seen the latter in Alhambra branded outlets - but just treat them with respect at 6.4% and 6.0% respectively. Much harder to find is their Baltic Porter (7.8%!).

In Baeza (a small city well worth visiting for a day or so), there is a craft beer pub, La Abadia - in a back street but not difficult to find – which sometimes brews its own beer and also sells DouGall's beers from Cantábrica. It also has (more basic) tapas. There is also a local brewery called Tormo

There is/was a local brewery in Benalmadena (it's a year since I was last there), their beer is/was called Benal-Hop, though it can be hard to find (try Tarara in



Benalmadena Pueblo, which also has Alhambra beers and pretty good tapas).

Just along the coast in tourist-crowded Fuengirola there is a newish craft beer outlet, Birramania (below left) away from the main drag in an unnamed side street off C/de Lamo de Espinosa and an older – though small - Belgian Bar (above left) just around the corner on Bar Belga, on C/Lamo de Espinosa. Practically next door to this one is a small and friendly Spanish bar called Paco's, which is open

before the Bar Belga, should you get there too early.



For craft beer in Granada visit Capitán Amargo (above right), C/Molinos 28, which has 36 beer taps including a good selection of Spanish craft beers. Tapas are sometimes available, but not all day. The chef needs his siesta.

Of course, the local Alhambra beers are almost everywhere. And then there's this (right) which I think is intended to be an annual event

Note: I've found the apps "Untappd" and "Ratebeer Official" useful in locating

beer bars in Spain - although neither one is completely reliable, if a bar is listed in both, there is a good chance that it will exist.

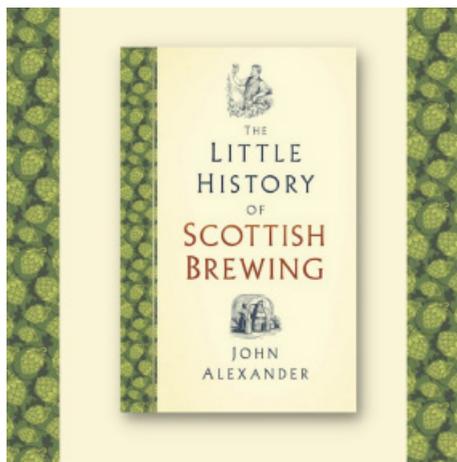


**Ken Donald**

**The Little History of Scottish Brewing by  
John Alexander  
(The History Press 2022 £14.99)**

This wee book about brewing is well-researched if a bit dense in the detail it goes into about the processing of the ingredients of varieties of beer.

Drawing from a number of sources – the Scottish Brewing Archive, the Labologists' Society and the author's own research in, but certainly not only in, Dundee and Edinburgh – he gives us an overall picture of brewing in Scotland. He begins with a mention of the voyage of 4th Century BC Greek explorer, Pytheas of Massalia, who found the Shetland Picts making a strong liquor and ends in the 22nd Century



Chapters are devoted to the development of Scotch Ale, India Pale Ale, Porter, Lager and bottled beer. Also dealt with are military associations with beer (the armed forces were a great market for Scottish brewers), technical innovations beyond the tall fount and water engine -and even a nod to the Prohibition Movement, of which Dundee's MP Neddy Scrymgeour was a stalwart.

He attempts to pick a way through the labyrinthine complexities of the Scottish "shilling" beer nomenclature, and I was unaware that this was also sometimes used south of the Border. Another interesting fact is the creation in 1943 of a floating brewery and club for the troops.

This involved the "Menestheus", built by a Caledon Shipyard firm in 1929, being converted into a minelaying vessel in 1939 and then into Davy Jones's Brewery!

This book will appeal primarily to aficionados of brewing and brewery history but has much to interest the general beer fan – and he gives credit to CAMRA's role in the ale revival. My sole criticism is the absence of a glossary. I have a modest familiarity with brewers' terminology, but many of the esoteric terms were unknown to me.

**Reviewed by Forbes Browne**

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## **Good Pint??.....Bad Pint?? Good Beer Guide Pub Selection**

CAMRA branches across the country will soon begin selecting the pubs which will appear in CAMRA's Good Beer Guide (GBG) 2024 Edition. What you may not know is how those pubs are selected to appear in the Guide. GBG selection is often a very difficult task and can occasionally lead to heated discussion amongst branch members. The beer scores submitted on WhatPub by CAMRA members from all over the country are an important aid in helping local branches with their deliberations.

In Tayside, our GBG quota is only 30 entries and we have to whittle down our selection from all the real ale pubs and hotels in our area, many of which are worthy of GBG selection. It's important to note that just because a pub is not listed in the GBG doesn't mean that it isn't worth a visit.

With Tayside CAMRA covering such a large area and with many rural pubs, we can't be everywhere all the time, so we rely on the feedback CAMRA members give us which in turn can help inform our annual selection of Tayside pubs for the Good Beer Guide. If you are a CAMRA member and you've wondered why your favourite pub isn't in the Guide, this may well be because you, and others, haven't entered scores rating the quality of beer there. By beer scoring, you contribute to the process of selection of pubs that go in the Good Beer Guide.

Beer scoring on WhatPub is easy, just log in as a CAMRA member and get your opinions known with scores from 0 being No Real Ale to 5 the perfect pint! It's very useful for your local branch as the National Beer Scoring System (NBSS) is fully integrated with WhatPub and the branch can review the results from the NBSS and see which pubs are doing well or indeed badly.

You can use WhatPub to search for pubs across the UK and view opening times, descriptions and details of the real ale and ciders on offer. The mobile version also has the facility to find a nearby pub should you be somewhere that is not familiar.

If you are a CAMRA member, you can also help your local branch by checking that the information held on WhatPub or in the GBG is accurate. If you find any discrepancies, you can notify amendments to the appropriate CAMRA branch by submitting updates on WhatPub.

Over 191,000 members have access to WhatPub and that's what makes it so much different and we think better than any other online guide!

\*\*\*\*\*

The Good Beer Guide 2023 was published in October. To find out which Tayside pubs are included amongst the 4500 entries from across the whole UK (England, Wales, Scotland, N. Ireland, Channel Islands & IoM), why not treat yourself to a copy which can be purchased on the CAMRA website at a special member's rate. In addition to the pub listing there is a Breweries section listing almost 1900 UK real-ale breweries (large and small) and their regular beers, along with hundreds of CAMRA tasting notes.

## Ember.to - Are 'Friends' Electric?

So much has happened since lockdown with bus services around Tayside and beyond. For many months, diesel buses flew through Kinross, devoid of passengers, with essential travel rules meaning that we were not allowed to catch them. It seemed that as soon as the restrictions were eased, those services were cut right back, and several axed altogether. It is now impossible to travel directly by bus to Stirling or St Andrews, and a visit to the recent Alloa Beer Festival was only made possible with the help of a neighbour who did all the driving.

Latest changes to the X56 service, connecting Kinross with Perth and Edinburgh, provide a welcome return to an hourly service, but be wary of staying out after dark – the last buses are earlier than they ever used to be. Do not even think about travelling on a Sunday, when services are wiped altogether from the new X56 timetable. At least the Kinross buses that survive do seem to turn up eventually, even after long delays in Edinburgh, with relatively few cases of cancellations at the time of writing.

The stories from within Perth and around Dundee and Angus are far less encouraging, with buses regularly cancelled, apparently down to driver shortages. Branch members have been unable to travel to meetings and socials because of cancellations, and fear of becoming stranded far from home.

A beacon of light appeared as we emerged from the first lockdown, with a new service called Ember



which launched in October 2020. The concept is an inter-city bus service run on main roads, only deviating to pick up and drop off for bookings made online. Their buses are all battery-electric; they operate most of the evening and night, reliably and with increasing frequency as the services become more popular. Ember buses (left) run generally on time, can be tracked without downloading apps, and if delayed more than five minutes, you can opt to receive a notification.

For us young and older people with concessionary bus passes, travel is of course free, and we do not even have to dig out a card to pay a token booking fee. Even for those who have to pay their fares, they look considerably cheaper than conventional services. Each electric bus can carry a wheelchair, and at least two bicycles, at no extra charge, opening up possibilities for visiting pubs slightly off the beaten track, especially once the days are longer.

Ideal from Kinross is the Ember service between Dundee and Edinburgh. Buses call in at the Park & Ride, but (to repeat) only for those who have booked – otherwise the Ember bus purrs straight along the M90. In Edinburgh I can alight at the Zoo, if not meeting friends for a few ales in the many city centre hosteleries. A last-minute booking to Dundee with Ember.to is ideal for Thirstday Group gatherings – for the return journey, you just need to leave enough time to walk back to the Greenmarket (by the Science Centre), where the buses recharge between trips.

Dundee is the Ember hub, with a new service launched in 2022 to Glasgow, via Broxden, which

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should also be of interest to our Perth members. The Edinburgh service has already proved popular with our Dundee squad, enabling them to visit Bridge of Earn for a branch meeting at the Cyprus. The Glasgow service stops conveniently for Stirling and Dunblane, and also close to Gleneagles Station. Maybe an opportunity to plan loading up those bikes for a visit to the elusive Auchterarder Golf Club?

**Richard Barnes**

Title credit to Gary Numan and Tubeway Army 1979 (if anyone spotted)

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Cullach - Craft at its Best**

A chance correspondence was struck up last September with Tayside CAMRA Branch, after an enthusiast had visited Cullach, feeding back his views on the craft beers brewed on the premises, and the chosen keykeg dispense system. This led to protracted debate by email, and at branch meetings. Much of this discussion brought in personal preferences for more traditional beer styles, questioned if newer craft beer styles could ever be real ale, and whether breweries using keykeg should be in the Good Beer Guide at all.

It all struck me as rather unfair that a spotlight should be shone on Cullach proprietor Will in

this way. From the outset in 2019, his craft beers have intentionally been cutting-edge styles, designed to appeal perhaps to the younger drinker, but arguably exactly what CAMRA needs to embrace. Moreover, several prominent branch members have developed a preference for such craft specialities, and are now rarely seen in any Perth real ale pubs other than the Cullach Taproom (below).



The original discussion topic started to grow arms and legs, so first I have decided to limit the scrutiny of keykeg and its technicalities to one paragraph. The term keykeg has been adopted as the generic name for a variety of bag-in-a-keg bulk containers, where a gas is applied on the outside of the bag to dispense the contents. Please someone tell CAMRA that keykeg should be in lower case; KeyKeg is the trade name of the Dutch originator and market leader – other brands exist! The applied gas might be CO<sub>2</sub>, which is readily available in most bars and cellars, or compressed air which is cheaper; either

way, the opportunities for gas to find its way through the bag into the beer or cider under dispense are minimal. From the outset, opposition to keykeg came from real ale traditionalists to whom cask venting and secondary fermentation were crucial to cask conditioning. While kegkeg might be considered real ale, it could not be counted as true cask conditioned beer. However, at a national members' weekend back in 2015, CAMRA passed a motion about the labelling of "real ale in a key-keg". Yet as we shall see, the acceptance and implementation of that decision has been somewhat half-hearted, both at national and branch level.

Next let me try to clear up one distinct area of confusion: several comments were received as to what should or should not "be in the Good Beer Guide". There have always been two distinct sections to GBG – pubs and breweries. When considering what should be included and what we actually prefer, it is easy to muddle up our thinking about the brewery tap with the microbrewery itself. The new 2023 edition of GBG actually makes this potential confusion worse by bringing the brewery section within each CAMRA area. CAMRA itself works in strange ways - while each branch is responsible for the selection of the pubs within its area, the brewery section is the domain of the Brewery Liaison Officer (BLO), quite independent of the branch for historical reasons, and responsible for determining if beers are real as well as cask, keykeg or keg. Each cask beer is then categorised into "styles"; that is beer types for judging purposes, if and when beers are nominated for Champion Beer of Britain.

Fine in theory – the trouble is that the computer systems behind the beer listings for each brewery will not allow keykeg packaged beers to be named or listed, in either section of the Good Beer Guide, or selected for beer scoring in WhatPub, or nominated for Champion Beer of Britain – hardly fair on breweries supplying draught beer in keykeg, and actually discriminating against the likes of Cullach. The last few editions of Good Beer Guide have muddied the waters further on keykeg terminology, using the dispense term "membrane keg", but adjusting submitted pub entries which specified this dispense method, or mentioned the terms in pub descriptions.

If a CAMRA member has a strong preference for or against any pub being chosen for Good Beer

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Guide, or a challenge to the validity of its dispense method, then there are plenty of avenues to influence the next year's selection, in particular by Beer Scoring through WhatPub. However, if there is a challenge to the validity of the brewing techniques, for example use of pasteurisation or micro-filtration, then the CAMRA member and branch have far less direct control – time for the branch to lobby the BLO.

As Cullach BLO we are fortunate to have Perth brewmaster, entrepreneur and long-standing CAMRA member Fergus Clark. Fergus was able to verify Cullach's brewing techniques, writing: "I'm delighted to see Cullach as an important part of the Perth beer scene and the role it plays in helping produce real ale for the local discerning CAMRA drinker". Don't forget also, that uniquely in Perth, Will has pioneered "crawlers" – real craft beer in cans, filled to order.

Returning to our correspondent, he was in no confusion about the separate sections of the Good Beer Guide, or how they are put together. While it was confirmed by BLO Fergus that the enthusiast was wrong in his assertion that as dispensed, Cullach beers could not be brewed without external carbonation, he correctly recognised that keykeg beers were unlikely to be chosen as Champion Beer of Britain, and has challenged us to put one forward for nomination, if we genuinely believe in Cullach's excellent craft beers.

**Richard Barnes**



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## Of Lighthouses, Bells and Booze.

Several years ago, I was enjoying a pint of Belhaven 80/- with David, a friend and former colleague, in the Anchor Bar, Broughty Ferry (then under the eccentric but benign stewardship of "Ormie" Webster). David told me a story about a mutual acquaintance which has a strange resonance with a famous local legend.

I was reminded of this a few months ago at a reading by local writer and librarian Erin Farley from her recent publication, "Angus Folk Tales". The particular tale was "The Inchcape Rock", which gives the backstory to the poem of that name by Robert Southey which I remembered from school – though being educated in England, I didn't realise at the time that "Aberbrothock" was Arbroath!

You may read the details in Erin's book, but the gist of the story is that Henry, the public-spirited Abbot of Aberbrothock, single-handedly established a bell on the treacherous Inchcape Rock to warn shipping in the vicinity of Arbroath. This worked well, but unfortunately, a Dutch pirate named Ralph Vandergroot, known as "Ralph the Rover", thought it would be a merry prank to remove the Inchcape Bell and sell it for scrap, which he duly did. You may know, or guess, the consequences!

Returning to the Anchor Bar, the acquaintance – let's call him Dougie, for though deceased he still has family in the area – was quite a character. I first heard of him when I started teaching in Dundee as he was a school swimming pool attendant, and the buzz of the staff room was that he had been convicted on a charge of smuggling. Combining socialist politics, (he was a communist) and free enterprise practice, he would often be welcomed aboard visiting Russian ships, returning laden with vodka which he would duly supply to regular clients. The story went that the only reason he kept his job with Dundee Council was because the Director of Education was one of these!

The next stage of the story involves a fixture about 1/3 of a mile NE of Ferryport-on-Craig, better known as Tayport, which is the Pile Lighthouse or Larick Beacon, directly across the Tay from Broughty Ferry. This is interesting architecturally as it is one of a few built around the British coast in the mid 19th century. It consisted of an octagonal wooden building, topped by a lantern and mounted on timber stilts – piles - which were "screwed into" the sea bed.

It replaced the East, or Low Light, one of two more conventional small lighthouses, the West and the East, when shifting sand and silt led to a change in navigation channels to the harbour in the 1840's. The High or West Light, built in 1823, was a creation of Robert Stevenson who had earlier built the Bell Rock Lighthouse on – you guessed it – the Inchcape Rock off Arbroath, updating Abbot Henry's work. Interestingly, the pub nearest to Tayport harbour is the Bell Rock Tavern in Dalgleish Street. Sadly, this is currently closed but real ale is available in Cobbies's Inn in Tay Street.

But we are concerned here with the Pile Light. This was probably built by one James Leslie of Dundee and operated from 1848 until decommissioned in 1960. According to oral history, it was originally a candle-lit device, the candle being in a glass prism, later replaced by oil or paraffin. Opinion differs about whether it was permanently manned, and it probably was at one point, though older Tayport residents have stated that retired seamen undertook the role of looking after the light, latterly rowing out to it when it was due to be lit.

And now we get to the nub of the matter: again, from oral history: "there was a bell rang from the tower...in case of fog." Not a lot of people knew much about the Pile, and fewer still knew

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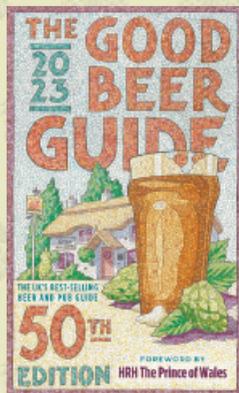
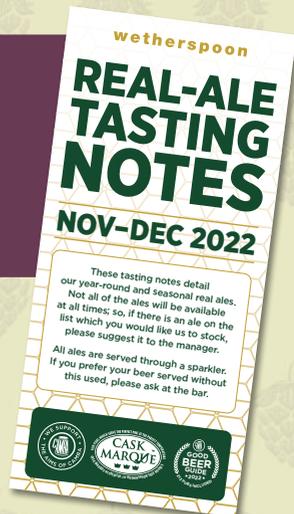
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about the bell, but according to David, Dougie had a friend who DID know and saw an opportunity to raise some cash from scrap! So it was that the pair acquired a rowing boat, set out one dark night and reached the Light. It sounds no mean feat to row over the Tay and manoeuvre a rowing boat carrying a heavy iron bell, though Dougie, like David, was a powerful competitive swimmer. Moreover, it cannot have been a particularly pleasant operation in that inspections of the tower have reported there was about a foot of guano from gulls and cormorants lining the floor!

Nonetheless, David assured me that it happened (possibly in the 1980's) and that the operation was successful, though details of execution and any monetary reward are absent. Also, unlike the case of Ralph the Rover, there were no tragic repercussions.

I know this because the light had long been decommissioned and Dougie survived long after the purported time of the operation. Though I don't think he ever joined CAMRA, he, like David, was a great enthusiast for real ale and always sought me out to purchase the latest Good Beer Guide. At a time when real ale was regarded by many Dundonians as a middle class fad, he was a discriminating working class drinker – and a likeable rogue.

### **Forbes Browne**

#### **Discounts for CAMRA Members**

The following Tayside pubs currently offer discounts on real ale for CAMRA members.

**Perth- Glover Arms 20p per pint**

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