



Newsletter of the Glasgow & West of Scotland Branch of the Campaign for Real Ale

Issue 29

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April 2005

## Our second "new" issue, a little later than planned but hopefully worth the wait.

The branch has been busy since the last newsletter; a very good meal at the Bon Accord set members up for Christmas. A visit in January to the Russian Tavern to present The Scottish Pub of the Year award was enjoyed by all and we were also able to check the Arran Blonde in The Black Bull, Rothesay. Successive Fridays in February saw us road-testing pub-crawls (on our website) devised for visiting members at the upcoming Members Weekend. In general the beer was good but occasionally none was available (on a Friday night!?). I am relatively new to the area and was pleased to visit several pubs that I had not heard about. We also had a social to The Royal Bar in Innellan, which has just changed hands. Members have also completed surveys for possible insertion in the 2006 Good Beer Guide., there are changes and we want all our outlets to provide good ale but we haven't reached nirvana yet.

### OUR WEBSITE

[www.glasgowcamra.org.uk/](http://www.glasgowcamra.org.uk/)

*This site, lovingly crafted by our Webmaster, Tom Ord, is full of information about the pubs in our area with links to maps, transport services etc. There is a 'What's On' page and reports about recent Real Ale related functions that some of us have been to. There is an email link where information about Real Ale matters in our area can be posted. **This is the best place to get up to date news.***

### **Members' Weekend 2005 (including National AGM and Conference) 22-24<sup>th</sup> April**

**John Anderson Campus, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow**

**Members Bar: Scottish Carnival Arts Centre, 34 Albion Street, G1 1HH**

This prestigious event is being held in Glasgow this year and a group of members have been working very hard with planning for this event both in the business and social sense. Details of what is happening and the venue can be found on our website. This event is a great way to promote Real Ale in Glasgow and Scotland and to show CAMRA that the Glasgow Branch is a force to be reckoned with.

Note the views expressed in the website are Glasgow & West of Scotland members' own, and do not necessarily represent the opinion of CAMRA either nationally or locally.

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**Branch contact: Secretary- Annabel Young, Tel 01301 702552**

**ON THE ISLE OF BUTE  
THE SCOTTISH PUB OF THE  
YEAR**

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**Supreme CAMRA Champion Winter Beer  
of Britain 2005  
Robinson's 'Old Tom' voted best winter  
beer in the land!**

**The National Winter Ales Festival,  
New Century House, Corporation  
Street, Manchester -**

Old Tom from Robinson's in Stockport was today named as the Supreme Champion Winter Beer of Britain 2005 by a panel of judges at CAMRA's national winter celebration of beer.

The barley wine has an ABV of 8.5% and is described in the 2005 edition of the Good Beer Guide as a 'A full-bodied, dark beer, it has malt, fruit and chocolate in the aroma. A delightfully complex range of flavours including dark chocolate, full maltiness, port and fruits lead to a long, bitter-sweet aftertaste'.

At the announcement, Steve Prescott, Organiser of the National Winter Ales Festival congratulated Robinson's on their victory. He said, "Old Tom is no stranger to awards. It's a fabulously rich beer and thoroughly deserves the top prize."

On hearing the news Oliver Robinson, Commercial Director at Robinson's Brewery, said, "I'm absolutely thrilled. We won the award back in 2000 and it's wonderful to achieve that once again. Old Tom is our flagship beer, we've been brewing it since 1899 and it's still very popular. It's great to get this recognition and I hope the award will help Old Tom to reach its true potential as a classic British beer and a great brand. My thanks go to our excellent brewing team and to all the staff at the brewery".

The silver prize went to Somerset based Bath Brewery for their superb Festivity, and the Bronze award went to Woodforde's brewery from Norfolk for their fantastic Headcracker.

### **Future Events**

**Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> April, social Paisley Beer Festival,  
8pm onwards**

**Sat 30<sup>th</sup> April, social at The George Bar, Hamilton.  
2pm**

**Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> May, Branch Meeting, Brandon  
Works, 61 Merry St, Motherwell, ML1 1JS  
7.30pm prompt**

**We are always keen to meet any  
members at these events, please  
turn up, all you need to do is drink!**

**Always refer to What's Brewing  
for future events**



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Not licensed but good for a bacon roll or  
coffee & cake on the way to/from Oban or  
The Village Inn in Arrochar !

**I make no excuses for reprinting the unexpurgated version of this article, the pub is just the centrepiece of a great day out!**

### **Port Royal Hotel, Isle of Bute via Wemyss Bay**

The trip to the Port Royal Hotel on The Isle of Bute is an easy journey of two hours at most from Glasgow and provides a great day out combining real ale, scenic, historic and rail/transport enthusiast interests.

The Port Royal Hotel is currently CAMRA's Scottish Pub of the Year and has won too many other awards to mention. Otherwise known as The Russian Tavern, this unique pub lies at Port Bannatyne, two miles north of the ferry port at Rothesay and overlooks an attractive yachting harbour. Dag Crawford and his Russian wife Olga run it. The range of local microbrewery ales is served by gravity from casks on and behind the bar; the only pub in our vast area - from Glencoe to south Lanarkshire including Kintyre and many islands - to do so. There are authentic Russian and continental bottled and draught beers, including Imperial Russian Stout, (now brewed by Harveys of Lewes, East Sussex) cider and often perry (rare in Scotland) and traditional real fruit soft drinks, e.g. dandelion and burdock.

The food is also first class. A perfectionist, Dag prepares dishes from scratch, using fresh local ingredients. None of your freezer to microwave stuff here. Just order an extra pint before he disappears into the kitchen! His local meats, fish, spicy sausages and special Russian dishes are moreish. He also makes amazing salads. Prices are reasonable, so aim to arrive in time for lunch. NB: Before departure, we advise ringing ahead on 01700 505073 to let Dag know you are coming.

Glasgow and its surrounding towns are blessed with an efficient and extensive local rail network, covered by five timetables, free at stations. Get the one titled "West & Clyde Coast." This has details of the Glasgow - Wemyss Bay - Rothesay (Bute) rail/ ferry connections.

To get to Bute, catch a train from Glasgow Central Station to Wemyss Bay. Trains which connect with the Bute Ferry from Wemyss Bay are ten minutes to the hour from Glasgow, but check in case of change since time of writing.

You can buy a return ticket including the ferry, but if you have a railcard, use it for the journey to Wemyss Bay and get a separate ferry ticket there.

You have up to ½ hour between arrival and ferry departure depending which train you get (but check for your actual train/ferry). Spend some of this viewing the magnificent glass domed roof of Wemyss Bay Station with its radiating ironwork. This goes beyond architecture, it is art. In these days of demolished historic stations replaced by cheap, boring, brick and steel boxes, the fact that this Edwardian masterpiece not only survives, but is maintained such that it looks almost as good as when built in 1903, is a tribute to the foresight of

the authorities that maintain it. Even if you can't manage the full day to visit Bute, it is worth the modest fare this far, just to marvel at how stations used to look. Photographers take your widest angle lens - 20mm preferably.

But hopefully, you will continue to Bute. The ferry crossing takes 35 minutes and provides wonderful views of the Firth of Clyde, Kyles of Bute and Argyll mountains. As you approach Rothesay, Port Bannatyne can be seen along the coast to the right.

Descend the ramp and another preserved wonder is on your right. For a mere 15p you can experience the splendour of the well-maintained Victorian superloos. With body luxuriously relieved and mind aesthetically enhanced, continue across the main road where half hourly buses run to Port Bannatyne and on to Ettrick Bay (routes 90 and 490). There is a stop at the harbour opposite The Port Royal.

However, you may prefer to walk along the seafront for ¾ hr or so, depending on how many times you stop to admire the scenery. If you just missed a bus there is not much in it. Don't be surprised at palm trees and other exotic flora. The inner isles are warmed by the Gulf Stream.

For the adventurous who get an early ferry, the nearby tourist office staff will explain how to take the West Island Way to Port Bannatyne, over the hill. There are sign-posts, but it is handy if you have OS map 63 (Firth of Clyde) with you. It takes about 2 hours with stopping to enjoy scenery and wildlife (buzzards are common) and includes a walk along what appears to be a disused rail embankment. In fact it is an old tramway, closed in 1930. Yes, trams used to run between Rothesay, Port Bannatyne and Ettrick Bay (historic booklets available in tourist office) and you can still see the rails of two lines round the back of the former tram depot, now the Stagecoach bus depot, from the hill above. As you descend the hill you come to a T-junction with a larger footpath. Turn left and take the downward paths to come out quite near The Port Royal.

However you get there, you will receive a warm welcome from Dag and experience the real thing - a totally individual, family run pub.

For the return, you should check the times of the last ferries, which will be running to the times of the Summer 2005 timetable, not available at the time of writing. Note that there may be a later ferry back on Fridays and Saturdays. But even in the unlikely event that you miss the last ferry (time does fly at Dag's) there are far worse fates than spending a night at The Port Royal Hotel!

[Robin Jones]

**The George Bar**

would like to congratulate Tim and everyone who has helped get the Guzzler up and running again

**Next Beer Festival**  
**Fri 29<sup>th</sup> Apr to Mon 2<sup>nd</sup> May (Bank Holiday)**

- Real Ales
- Homemade Lunches
- Children's Menu
- And a Warm Welcome

**18 Campbell Street, Hamilton, ML3 6AS**  
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CAMRA Award  
 Winning Ale Pub

## Lanarkshire News

(Or maybe Lanarkshire History in this case)

Since the previous manifestation of the Guzzler back in nineteen something, there have been some important changes in the beer scene in Lanarkshire. Most of these changes have been for the better.

The most dramatic change is that there is no longer a great desert in the centre of the county around Motherwell and Wishaw. These are both fairly big towns but until recently neither of them had a single pub offering beer that was fit to drink. Now they have reached the dizzying heights of a single Real Ale outlet each. This might seem pitiful to people used to drinking elsewhere, even Glasgow, but compared to what the twin towns used to be like this is serious progress.

This change is entirely due to the expansion of J D Wetherspoons into the area. While the appearance of a big pub company like this might be a mixed blessing in some areas, in central Lanarkshire it has been an unqualified benefit. Obviously the standard has varied as the quality in Wetherspoons pubs does tend to go up and down depending on who the manager is this week. However even at their poorest neither has been outside the ten best pubs in Lanarkshire since opening and at their best they have been able to mount a serious challenge to the George and the St Andrews for the No 1 spot.

Wishaw Malt in Kirk Road, Wishaw is the older of the two having opened towards the end of 1999 in a converted furniture store. It is a single large room but is divided up into a number of separate areas on two levels with a different feel to each area. There is also an outdoor drinking area for those wishing to enjoy Wishaw's legendary weather with their drink.

The Brandon Works opened in Merry St Motherwell on 3 Dec 2001 and between then and the end of that year, the present writer drank more in his home town than he had in the previous two decades. Like its slightly older sister, it is a single large room split up into separate areas on two levels. It doesn't have the outdoor drinking but instead offers the most easily accessible toilets I've ever come across in a Wetherspoons pub – veterans of the Esquire House will surely be impressed by this feature.

Both of these pubs have such big sales of Real Ale that it raises the question of why none of the smaller, local, licensees in the area are interested in selling good beer. They surely don't think that your money and mine isn't good enough for them. Possibly they either think that Real Ale is really difficult to look after or else, going to the other extreme, they think it can be treated as cavalierly as keg. Yet five minutes talking to an existing Real Ale licensee, or even an experienced CAMRA member, would soon put them straight on this. Probably there is more than one explanation (and I would like to here yours if you can come up with one). However perhaps we can learn something from the few pubs around Motherwell that have tried selling beer in the past and have failed. Leaving aside their failure to let anyone other than existing (keg) customers know that they were selling it, the main problem seems to have been the fact that they have tended to take in the kind of third rate ales that are supplied by the big breweries. These are not beers that will stop anyone getting a train to the Bon Accord or the Three Judges. Wetherspoons on the other hand can normally be relied on to offer a selection of beers from the smaller breweries (the ones who care about beer) – if there are less than three microbrewery beers on sale it tends to be a cause for complaining to the management. A bit of imagination on the part of a Motherwell or Wishaw licensee could therefore pay big dividends for them – after all Lynn and Colin have been pretty successful with that formula just across the river. There will be more information about what has happened elsewhere in Lanarkshire in a future edition of the Guzzler. And further in the future, we hope to provide up to date details of changes as soon as they occur.

**“We have kept the Real Taste of Beer for You”**

Slogan of The Stepan Rasin Brewery.

Last year Olga, the landlady of The Russian Tavern on the Isle of Bute, was a guest at the Kalinka Brewery in St. Petersburg, now renamed after Stepan Rasin, the leader of an unsuccessful rebellion against the Tsar in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and now a folk hero. This brewery was nationalised after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, yet kept its traditional methods brought from England in 1795. At that time Tsarina Catherine II had a young Swedish apprentice baker from the Baltic island of Rugen. Each day his task was to bring in a selection of breads and pastries for the Empress to choose from. It is recorded that one day in front of favoured courtiers she said that the very next person to be shown into the room would receive a Royal Boon. And very next person happened to be Abraham Kron carrying his basket of bread .

Not used to receiving favours from Empresses, young Abraham asked for five days to consider the wish he would have granted, and wandered the streets of St imported from London, and that he would wish to start a new brewery to make the finest Beers, there in Russia. “But you are a baker!” Her Majesty objected. But the five days of considering his argument had not been wasted. He explained the brewing process, the action of yeasts both in beer and bread, and asked permission to bring an English friend to the city, with all the arts and skills of beer brewing. Catherine, who had a taste for strong English ales of the period, favoured her baker with 30,000 roubles, a fortune at the time, and papers to invite the English brewer Frederick Nicholas Danielson to Russia.

He duly arrived with his own coveted stock of yeast, and the Kalinka Brewery was born. We do not know from which town or brewery Danielson came from, but his gravestone still stands in St. Petersburg so he had a lifetime’s work provided him. Indeed within a few years they were making a quarter of a million litres a year, and a second brewery was opened in Moscow.

These Russian beers are of particular interest because the recipes, yeast and strains of barley and wheat have remained unchanged for two hundred years and so give a faithful reproduction of how beer would have tasted here. At the brewery on Stepan Rasin Street you can sample a full range of beers, from a malty porter at 8% up to Kalinkin Light, still with a hefty 7%!

Should you fancy a trip to St Petersburg\* Galina Klyarovskaya, the Directress of the Beer Museum gallery would be delighted to show you the many artefacts they have dating back to the 1780s. Her Email is: [kondir@razin.spb.ru](mailto:kondir@razin.spb.ru)

- There is now a no-frills Airline flying from London to Tallin, and

an economic ferry that runs from there to St. Petersburg, returning via Helsinki. So it's possible to go Easyjet or RyanAir to London and connect up to Tallin at an impressive fare, if booked in advance.

Next issue: IMPERIAL RUSSIAN STOUT

**Meeting Members**  
**We intend to start regular Monday Meets to enable members to meet for a beer and a chat, please check the next What's Brewing for dates and times**

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Please delete as appropriate:  
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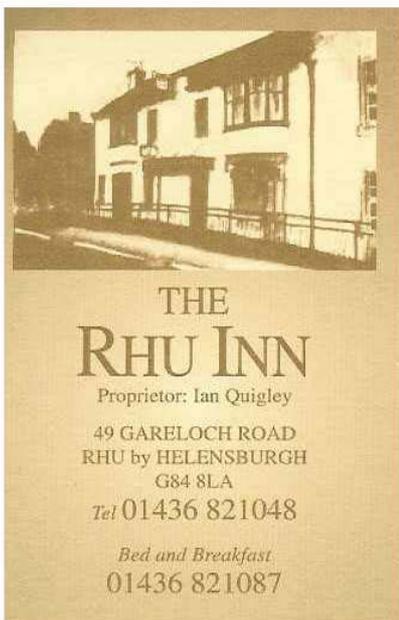
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## Cooking with Beer Bitter & Lime Ice Cream

*12 oz caster sugar  
 ¼ pint of water  
 4 limes, finely grated rind  
 ½ pint of light bitter  
 ½ pint of double cream*

1. Grate the lime rind, and squeeze the juice out of the limes into a small dish.
2. Place the sugar, water and lime rind in a medium sized pan and gently heat until the sugar has dissolved.
3. Bring to the boil and simmer for five minutes, add the lime juice and bitter, mix well and leave to cool.
4. Pour into a rigid freezerproof container, cover, seal and freeze for 2½-3 hours or until slightly firm.
5. Spoon into a food processor or blender.
6. Whip the cream until thick. Add to the blender.
7. Process until smooth.
8. Return to the freezer and freeze until solid.
9. Serve in glasses garnished with lime slices.

**Serves: 4**  
**Preparation time: 2¼ hours**  
**Cooking time: 5 minutes**

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