

The Old Inn, Gairloch.

Where good food and ales comes naturally

SUMMER 2011 NEWSLETTER

Stop-start spring turned to summer at last!

“After one of the coldest, snowiest Highland winters for many years, when the April sun started shining we all thought summer had come early. Sadly it wasn't to be, as any of you who were here in May know all too well. Fortunately though the return to cold wet weather was short-lived and for the past few weeks we have enjoyed the sunshine again – so much so, in fact, we're even having to water our garden! Let's hope the good weather will last for a few more weeks.

As for the economic climate, despite the on-going doom and gloom regarding the nation's finances – or maybe because of it – I'm pleased to be able to say that both The Old Inn and our sister hotel Gairloch Highland Lodge have been as busy as ever. Whilst several of last year's staff-members have returned, we have many new faces, including a number of 'locals', whose knowledge of the area is a real asset when our guests ask them about things to do and places to visit.

Our brewhouse continues to run to capacity and we have now added another ale to the range – but I'll leave it to our brewer to tell you all about that!

The kitchen too has introduced new dishes for this year, including a range of home-made pies which is proving extremely popular.

And finally, although we are only just over half way through the year, it's already time to start thinking about our year-end celebrations. Take a look at the fantastic programme we've got lined up for this coming Hogmanay – and come and join us! “



Sharon

Sharon Longley
Manager, The Old Inn

IN THIS ISSUE:

Looking forward to the best Hogmanay ever!

Brewing a legendary ale.

One of our team is conquering the peaks...

...and how a volcano is good news for Inverewe Garden.

Full steam ahead for the Glass Bottom Boat...

...and see eye to eye with a whale aboard the Orca.

--- Stop Press ---

In a Special British Seaside Issue of Stella magazine in The Sunday Telegraph of 17th July, 2011, The Old Inn was chosen as one of the 10 Best Seaside Pubs in Britain!



Our Best Year-End Celebration Ever!

There's only one place to be when it comes to celebrating the New Year – and that's here in Scotland, the home of *Hogmanay*. And what better way to ring out the old than by joining us at The Old Inn for what promises to be our best Hogmanay weekend ever!

Friday 30th December

Arrival

*7:00pm – Mulled Wine & Canapés by the Fire
followed by
7-Course Gourmet 'Taster Style' Dinner*

Saturday 31st December

*Breakfast served from 8:00 - 9:00
Day free for you to do as you wish*

*Gala Buffet Dinner, including a Rib Roast Carvery,
served from 8:30 – 10:00*

*Live Music in the Bar from 10:00pm
featuring Andy Duncan, well known throughout
the Highlands for his varied repertoire,
spanning traditional Scottish and Irish
folk-songs through to pop, reggae and soul.*



Sunday 1st January

Late Brunch served between 11:00 and 2:00

*7-Course Gourmet 'Taster Style' Dinner
Served from 7:30*

Monday 2nd January

*Breakfast served from
8:00 – 9:30*

Departure

This fantastic year-end weekend celebration comes at an all-inclusive price of just £225.00 per person*. Book yourselves in today either by calling free on 0800 542 5444 or e-mailing sharon@theoldinn.net

*Price includes accommodation and meals as described and is based on two people sharing a twin/double room.

Volcano Palm breathes new Life into Inverewe Garden's Entrance

Inverewe Garden is continually changing. That's the beauty of a garden, it never stops, looks the same one year to the next or does what you expect!

After a very severe winter, this spring arrived and many of the more tender plants showed little sign of recovering. We "enjoy" snow here most years but it is unusual to have such a depth or for very low temperatures to prevail for such a prolonged period.

However, every cloud (or snow drift) has to have a silver lining and whilst we lost some old friends this gave us the opportunity to introduce some new varieties.

This is nowhere more true than in front of the Visitor Centre. Cordylines (big palm-like things to those, like me, lacking in the finer points of horticulture) which had stood sentinel as guardians of the entrance for a number of years became so frost damaged that their centres were rotting and beginning to smell. Removing them was quite a job as they had to be felled and then the root system winched out.

Never one to miss an opportunity to plant something different our Head Gardener sourced some Volcano palms and by careful planning has created a luxurious look to our entryway.



In fact, this removing and replanting has been repeated throughout the Garden. Thought you knew a route, way or path? Think again as you realise old friends have gone and new plants greet you.

Bindweed, every gardener's bug bear, is being fought ferociously in the Walled Garden and whilst one of our beds has been completely cleared of plants to allow the "enemy" to expose itself little does it realise that it will be "zapped" with every missile in the gardener's armoury! To make up for the loss of colour the other beds have been given particular attention and are a blaze of colour.

Whilst the Garden Team produce a world class display, the Estate team are busy both regenerating the all important Shelter Belt which protects Inverewe from the ravages of the North Atlantic – we are on a higher latitude than Moscow – and creating three wonderful wildflower meadows. These used to be let for grazing however with careful planning and in consultation with both other countryside experts and the farmer who rented from us, we now have a wonderful array of flowering plants to attract insects, birds and butterflies. This is the first year and the scene is captivatingly colourful.



Our Visitor Centre has a fantastic range of merchandise this year and our restaurant team have been enhancing the lunch menu. All in all, the Garden and Estate are looking blooming wonderful!

It's "Full Steam Ahead" for The Glass Bottom Boat...and a new Vision!

"What a start to the season! The Highland weather was at its most extreme during May, with three weeks of strong winds and rain....brilliant! But now we are fully underway and steaming ahead with daily cruises from Gairloch Pier aboard *Sealife*.

During June, a dolphin and her calf took up residence in the bay. No one knows why but both seem happy to be here, entertaining passengers on *Sealife* with their amazing aquatic skills.

Activity underwater is equally as spectacular. Recently we have seen an incredibly large spider crab covered in an enormous amount of growths, testament to its ripe old age!



We are constantly amazed by the enthusiasm of our younger passengers as wildlife spotters, armed with their Creepy Crawly Checklist and information for our Jellyfish survey, they help tremendously in our ongoing research to collect data to forward to The Marine Conservation Society, who use our recordings to assist in monitoring the movements of the elusive leatherback turtle. The jellyfish are an important food source for leatherbacks.

Therefore, by recording which type of jellyfish and how many are in our waters, the leatherbacks movements can be monitored.

Vision, our new boat, has finally completed all the tests for its licence to trade. It's a really exciting time for us, launching a new type of cruise. We've had great fun working out what we are going to do to make it a fantastic experience for our passengers. New to the boat will be a hydrophone which will allow us to listen underwater. Just imagine being able to hear whale and dolphin sounds for real!

Lastly, after the success of being awarded Four Stars as a Wildlife Experience, we have been advised to go for 'The Green Tourism Award.

In August we will be inspected and interviewed and, hopefully, the outcome will be good, having worked really hard on our Green Tourism strategy already. We are also in the process putting together our application for the Highlands and Islands Tourism Awards, Best Visitor Experience—Small. It's a real prestigious award, again we have been advised to 'go for it' It's brilliant to find out that people have confidence in us and *Sealife* as an attraction and encourage us to go for such an award."

Richard & Jill

Sealife Glass Botom Boat

Keep up to date on
the new
interactive website
www.sealife-gairloch.co.uk

 Find us on
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sealife.gbb

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Email: sealife.gbb@gmail.com
Tel : 01445 712540
Mobile : 0773 3240 621



BREWING A LEGEND

Having had good success with our initial brews – The Erradale, The Flowerdale and The Slattadale – we have recently introduced a fourth ale which we have named after the legendary Blind Piper of Gairloch.

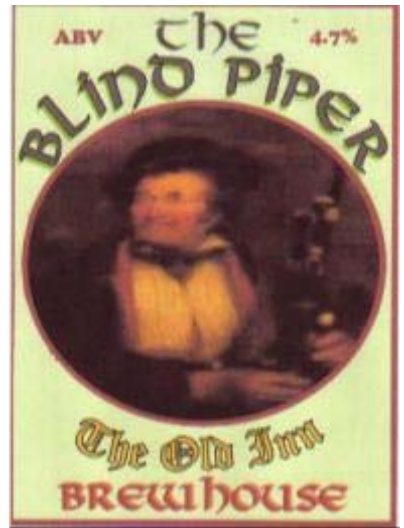
John Mackay was born at Talladale in 1656. He was not born blind but was deprived of his sight by smallpox when about seven years old. He was to become known as "Iain Dall" (blind John), or "Piobaire Dall" (the blind piper). Having mastered the art of pipe music, he assisted his father in his office of piper to the laird of Gairloch. After his father's death he became piper to Sir Kenneth Mackenzie, the first baronet of Gairloch; and after Sir Kenneth's death to his son, Sir Alexander, the second baronet and ninth laird of Gairloch.

He died in 1754, aged ninety-eight, and was buried in the same grave as his father in the Gairloch churchyard.

During his life he composed twenty-four pibrochs, as well as a number of strathspeys, reels, and jigs.

Like John Mackay, the ale which bears his name is full of character. Full-bodied, with earthy Notes and a crisp finish, it has become a firm favourite with locals and visitors alike. So much so that we shall be brewing it not just as a seasonal offering but throughout the year.

Unfortunately we do not have any pictures of John Mackay so our pump-clip is not a true representation of what he looked like – but, who knows, maybe it is a good likeness afterall!



Kitchen Assistant Pawel Scales New Heights...



Exchanging his whites for his hiking gear, Pawel Olejniczak has been taking to the hills around The Old Inn on his days off. Pictured left atop Sgorr nan Lochan and below looking out from the summit of Baosbheinn, Pawel admits he has never been to the Tatra Mountains of his native Poland. He has already "bagged" a some local Monroes and plans to add more to his collection as long as the weather – and his stamina – hold out!



...while our Chefs go the Whole Hog!

“This summer seems to be flying by and already the leaves are beginning to turn and the chanterelles are poking their orange heads up through the earth.

Still it is lovely weather to explore the walks around the area with the cooler fresh air leaving one feeling refreshed and revitalised. With the evenings now starting to draw in upon us, I enjoy a lovely warm pudding and my favourite is the traditional Cloutie Dumpling for which I have included a recipe on the next page.

We have also held the first of our Hog Roasts. This entailed the overnight roasting of a whole pig on a spit. Unfortunately the weather was not very kind to me for the night was raining on and off. At least the spit roast was enclosed and it was just me that got wet tending it!

At 10:30 the next morning the sun appeared and, thankfully, the weather stayed dry for the rest of the day. The results were mouth-watering: the pork melted like butter and the crackling crispy.

Assistant chef Vlad (pictured right) and I served the pork with jacket potatoes, ciabatta roll, mustard sauce and salad. Delicious!!



The season also signals the arrival of local autumn fruit and the start of chutney making. This activity keeps us busy getting enough prepared and stored away for the next season.

On the seafood side we managed to get in a large langouste or crawfish as it is also known. This lovely – not to mention expensive - crustacean is very like a lobster but a brilliant orange in colour, extremely long antennae but no claws.

For more news, check out my blog which can be accessed from www.theoldinn.net.



Christopher Bentley
Head Chef

Chef's Recipe: Cloutie Dumpling

This dish gets its name from the fact that it is cooked in a cloth or *cloutie* as it's called in Scotland. Unlike most 'dumplings', however, the cloutie is light in texture and not at all gooey.

Ingredients

500ml Self Raising Flour
500ml Raisins
500ml Sultanas
250ml Margarine
500ml Granulated Sugar
30ml Mixed Spice
3 Slices Wholemeal Bread, crumbed
15ml Treacle
1 Apple grated
250ml Milk
5ml Salt



Place all ingredients in a bowl and mix well. Take a piece of muslin or an old pillowcase cut into a large square, scald by pouring boiling water over it, lay out flat and sprinkle flour over it.

Place mixture in middle of cloth and tie tightly with string but leaving room for expansion. Place a plate in the bottom of a pot, place dumpling on this and place on heat. Pour in boiling water until it is 1/2 to 3/4 way up dumpling. NEVER let the water go over the top of the dumpling and keep topping up with boiling water, NEVER let it go off the boil and NEVER let it dry up.

After 3 hours remove from pot into a colander to drain for five minutes then untie the string and gently fold the cloth away from dumpling. Place another plate upside down on top of the dumpling and with both hands turn the whole thing over. Once this is done, remove the cloth completely and place in a warm place to form a skin on the outside.

Your cloutie can be eaten cold as a cake, warmed and served with custard or ice cream or even fried and served with bacon and eggs for breakfast!

The Old Inn

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ANOTHER WHALE OF A SUMMER FOR THE ORCA!

Despite the, at times, unfavourable weather and a couple of mechanical problems, it's proving to be another fantastic season for whale watching. Perhaps the most spectacular sighting was a pod of over sixty dolphins which surrounded us on one of our trips – that and the whale which came right up to the stern of our boat to take a close look at us.

You can see both of these wonderful events by clicking on the link below and watching the video.

<http://youtu.be/JWm3ieLEUFO>

But, there's nothing like seeing it all first-hand. So join us on the *Orca* the next time you come up!



0800 008 6833

www.hebridean-whale-cruises.com

Here's an Inn-valuable Gift Idea!

An Old Inn Gift Voucher makes the ideal gift for your family and friends.

Available in any amount from £10 to £100, even more if you wish,

the voucher can be redeemed against either the cost of a stay at The Old Inn or simply a meal in the Restaurant.

To find out more, call us free on 0800 542 5444 or e-mail sharon@theoldinn.net

