

The Hebridean Brewing Company **History of the brewery**

The idea and background

My family originated from the Isle of Lewis and although being born and raised in Kent, I felt a love and belonging to the Island from a young age, travelling to stay at my Grandfathers croft for family holiday's and as I got older spending every chance I had to return.

I originally tried to move to Lewis when I was 18, unable to find work I returned to Kent after six months.

The idea of the brewery first raised its ugly head when a few years ago I took two friends of mine to sample the delights of Lewis. It was during the British Lions tour to South Africa and as we are all avid rugby players much of the time was spent in pubs watching the matches (a poor excuse I know). After a few sessions it became apparent the choice of beer within the islands was seriously lacking any diversity or flavour and the conversation arose of why nobody had started a local brewery. The light bulb had appeared over my head.

I had by this time inherited my Grandfathers croft which had been in our family since the 1890's and thoughts turned to living permanently on the island. On taking redundancy from a large Pharmaceutical firm where I worked for nine years, I worked on a temporary basis in London. This allowed me to attend courses and seminars dealing with the Independent brewing industry. I met Don Burgess of Freeminer Brewery fame on a Brewing Seminar where he was one of the speakers. Since then we have become firm friends. Don is well respected in the independent brewing industry with many awards for the beers he produces and the help he has provided has been invaluable. I spent time at both the Freeminer and Flagship brewery in Kent, to gain a more practical experience of brewing.

The Brewery History

2000 – 2001 Brew plant is sourced and work starts on the brewery building improvements.

May 2001 Brewery plant delivered and installation starts.

October 2001 With delays in the installation of the brewery, a batch of beer is produced at a friends plant to celebrate the Royal National Mod, held in Lewis. The first beer produced under the Hebridean Brewing Company badge.

January 2002 On the 26th January the first batch of Clansman Ale is brewed in Stornoway, soon followed by the first batch of our award winning Islander strong ale. The following year is spent establishing the brewery name and its reputation for quality island brewed beers.

October 2002 The brewery puts forward its beers for their first competition and gets bronze for Islander Strong Ale in the Society of Independent Brewers Beer of Scotland 2003, Premium cask conditioned category.

Plans for the development of a bottling plant within the brewery are started.

A third beer is added to our range, Celtic Black Ale is brewed for the first time.

November 2002 Bottling plant commissioned and bottling trials started.

June 2003 Hebridean Brewing Company wins silver for Islander Strong Premium Ale in the Society of Independent Brewers beer of Scotland Competition 2004, beating the previous years gold into third place.

July 2003

The brewery makes a special beer for the Hebridean Celtic Festival. Called Celtic Festivale it goes down a storm both at the event and in local pubs.

The brewery shop is opened selling beer and brewery merchandise. Plans are in the pipeline to enlarge the range on sale by stocking independent beers from around Britain and the continent.

November 2003

The Berserker is brewed for the first time and unleashed on an unsuspecting public. Now one of our best selling beers and along with Islander Strong is waiting to be supplied across Scotland in Safeway stores.

2004

Demand has grown consistently through wholesale, mainland and other island outlets. Our beers have now reached as far as Cornwall, Kent and even Finland. Initially expected growth locally was measured against Stornoway as the major Town in the Islands however outside of Lewis our cask ale sales have grown much more significantly in comparison. This is especially significant in the Ullapool, Skye, Uist and Harris areas.