



SCOTCH WHISKY REVIEW

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THE BRAND & THE BLAND

Let us hope that the global recession and the subsequent poor trading results are the only reasons driving the whisky industry into mediocrity rather than the new managers who, from the outside, appear to have reached their coefficient of inefficiency.

With the convulsions that surround the diabolical mergers (Highland/Remy/JBB included), both huge and small, the brand manager is finding the greasy pole (between appointments at Kleenex® and Andrex®) little challenge. Neurotic boardrooms are easy prey when panicked by low shareholder confidence.

Diageo, the company formerly known as Grand Metropolitan (for which Scotch Whisky is by far their biggest profit earner), has ground to a complete halt. In UD there was an exciting delivery of new whisky products which improved profits, stayed the competition, pleased the consumer and generated a real sense of excitement for the sector.

Now we have inertia, unless you count their dismissed rumours that they are going to develop the UK youth market with a brand launch of J&B. (There is no yoof market for Scotch in the UK; producers should be patient and woo young drinkers from the sidelines while drinking habits mature. Further, J&B is a naff brand to use, Johnnie Walker has much more credibility—but then that wasn't a GrandMet brand).

The brand orientated managers are bland managers and their domination causes a reduction in variety, an irreversible demise. This is evidenced by the low prices seen at Christmas, an unhelpful reaction to poor sales. A lack of profits causes inertia.

Senior dismissals and redundancies have ripped the business apart. The inadequates have been promoted with no understanding of a very special industry. They are propelling it into just another brand-led mono-business.

Many of these gits have reached the boardroom already and the effect is beginning to show. Time for action!



LOCH FYNE WHISKIES
in association with
The George Hotel, Inveraray
is proud to present the



1999 SEASON OF CELEBRITY WHISKY TASTING EVENINGS



*Friday 6th August, 7pm, Price £ 7.00**
RICHARD PATERSON, ESQ
Master Blender, Whyte & Mackay
"Your Dram"

Richard's dazzling delivery of the history of Scotch Whisky while tasting some rare samples of blend and malt is acclaimed world-wide. You will then play *master-blender* in a practical session to produce your own ideal blended Scotch for which prizes will be awarded.
Evening concludes with a light buffet and further dramming!

*Friday 28th August, 7pm, Price £ 7.00**
DR. BILL LUMSDEN
Head of Distilleries and Maturation, Glenmorangie plc
"Woodn't it be nice?"

A unique chance to explore the exceptional pioneering work on maturation, with reference to some hitherto unknown and secret examples from the Glenmorangie special wood finishes unit.
Concludes with a light buffet and some exceptional Ardbegs!

*Friday 13th August, 7pm, Price £ 7.00**
JIM MCEWAN, ESQ
Distillery Manager, Morrison Bowmore Distillers
"A tour of Scotch-land"

You are a passenger on an intimate and relaxed tour of some of the great malts from Auchentoshan, Glen Garioch and Bowmore distilleries reflecting the supreme quality and diversity of the Lowlands, Highlands and Islay.
Evening concludes with a light buffet and some very special tastings!

*Friday 24th September, 7pm, Price £ 7.00**
MURRAY McDAVID, ESQ
Underworld Bottler
"Pissst! If anyone asks - I'm not here!"

Assisted by Gordon Wright, the notorious McDavid makes a unique appearance and lifts the lid on the murky world of the independent whisky bottler. Lots of malts to taste.
Evening concludes with a light buffet and (possibly) a bungled assault by Inveraray C.I.D. & S.W.A.T. teams (should be fun!).

Date & price to be advised - November/December
IAIN "THE SPORRAN" STOTHARD, ESQ - Gourmet Evening - back by popular demand!

*Price given is that in advance, price on night will be £9.00. Price includes your whisky. Value for money guaranteed.
Tickets from The George or Loch Fyne Whiskies, Inveraray, Argyll, PA32 8UD. Credit Card bookings 01 499 302219.
Standing on tables & chairs prohibited. Sporrans over 1.5kg must be muzzled in accordance with local bye-laws.

GLEN SCOTIA TO RESUME DISTILLING

Campbeltown, one of Scotland's principal distilling regions, is bouncing back.

In early May a team of 'mercenary distillers' from Springbank will be employed for three months to test the quality of

distillate from the distillery.

Since upgrading in the 1950s, Glen Scotia has been poorly managed with low yields, but new(ish) owners Glen Catrine Bond have plans to reverse that.



Dr Bill Lumsden is changing the way malt whisky tastes. Somehow he managed to stop and talk to Loch Fyne Whiskies.

LFW: What's your job?

Since June last year my official title is 'Head of Distilleries and Maturation' at Glenmorangie plc. I am responsible for our three distilleries, for the maturing stock profile of whisky, the quality of that maturing stock, the blend styles and recipes and the make up of our whiskies, both single and blend. I am also responsible for the purchase of all raw materials; malted barley, wood, yeast and such like. I head the teams for the wet end of new product development, that is new whiskies or other products and, along with my boss who is the finance director, I am responsible for setting up the new filling programme and inter-industry cross deals for the company with a remit to make a certain amount of profit in the whisky brokerage market.

Basically everything to do with whisky up until it comes to bottling. Prior to that I was distillery manager at Glenmorangie and I did not think that I would get to this very exciting position quite so quickly. It is a bit of a change of life-style; before I wandered to work in Tain and now I battle it out on the Edinburgh by-pass!

I came into distilling after studying brewing at Edinburgh's Heriot Watt University (my PhD involved lots of brewery visits—all very difficult!) I first joined UD in 1986 and had a variety of jobs there as research scientist, trainee distillery manager and assistant maltings manager.

LFW: Tell us about the company of Glenmorangie plc.

Still very much a family company, with 51% of the shares owned by the MacDonald family, but we are stock market listed. A turnover of about £50m

makes us a small company when compared with most of the industry.

We have three distilleries: Glenmorangie, [pronounced as in orange-y] Glen Moray and recently Islay's Ardbeg and in 1996 the company moved to this former Bell's site at Broxburn, west of Edinburgh where the head office is as well as warehousing, blending, bottling and packaging operations. Our principal blended whiskies are Highland Queen (low cost brand), James Martin (export) and Bailie Nicol Jarvie (deluxe). We also produce Crabbies Ginger Wine. We are a branded company although we also do a little supermarket own-label business and a number of other blends. We also trade our whiskies with the industry, although our principal malt, Glenmorangie, is not sold as so in the brokerage market in order to maintain the integrity of the brand. We would not like it to be sold by an independent bottler at any substandard quality.

*Glenmorangie
is such
a terrific
whisky!*

LFW: Why do you think Glenmorangie does so well?

Firstly, along with a couple of other brands, it was first marketed in the '70s, a time when single malt sales were about to take off. The trail was blazed by Glenfiddich but we were close behind. More important now is that it is such a terrific whisky! Although it is very complex and delicate, the bourbon cask maturation and the fruitiness gives it a light sweetness that makes it very easy to drink. A lot of the many nuances will only be found by the more seasoned whisky drinkers.

Every malt whisky has its own unique character and I feel that there are three reasons why Glenmorangie is unique. The water source is uniquely hard; it rises through layers of limestone and sandstone and is collected in an area known as 'Tarlogie Springs' which is the size of a small swimming pool. As a scientist, I can't tell you why this hardness is significant. I know that Calcium salts help stabilise enzyme complexes during the initial mashing stage. From that we might expect a higher yield of spirit, but we don't. You do need a pure, uncontaminated source of water and ours is also unusually hard but it is difficult to quantify the effect.

A greater influence is that we have the tallest stills of any malt whisky distill-

ery in Scotland. When the distillery was established in 1843, Mr Matheson, being a canny Scot, acquired second-hand gin stills from London. They had a characteristic tall shape designed to give a highly rectified spirit (very tall necks give a much higher degree of reflux so that heavier or oilier elements do not make it over into the distillate). This gives a lighter, sweeter and fruitier result which is the house style of Glenmorangie; other distillers new-make tends to be heavier and oilier.

The other great influence is the type of wood we use for maturation. For many years we have been very active in choosing the type of wood we use, all ex-Bourbon and only first or second fill for single malt production, which is almost unique in the industry. The wood comes from an area in the States and is harvested to our specification, air seasoned (not kiln dried), made into hogsheads and then leased out to a Bourbon company for four years. That wood has a unique effect on the whisky and helps us maintain consistency.

LFW: Is the type of Bourbon used relevant?

I would say not. I think that as long as it had Bourbon in it to remove some of the undesirable elements, it doesn't matter; the Bourbon conditions the wood rather than contributes to it. Our 'designer' hogsheads are leased out to Heaven Hill distillery and matured in unheated warehouses and that also has an impact on the wood; the majority of American whiskey is matured in heated warehouses in order to bring about a more rapid development of the product.

LFW: So you don't use any sherry-wood at all?

In the case of the 18yo we do use some sherry. The extra six years gives a real nuttiness and a light spiciness. About one third of the maturing whisky is transferred into sherry wood for a number of years and this adds a slight sweetness, a nice delicate raisin and caramel note which adds to the overall complexity of the malt. There is no fixed formula but the amount of sherry maturation going into the bottle is only a small portion.

Bourbon gently seasons the wood, it removes the elements we don't want and doesn't mask our unique distillery character. If we take our very floral, fragrant, delicate, new make spirit and put it into a sherry cask that sherry will dominate very quickly, and so the concept of 'wood finishing' which we developed a couple of years ago.

LFW: Wood finishing?

'Finishing' was the vision of our previous Managing Director Neil McKerrow. A series of experiments was set up in the '80s. New whisky was put into port pipes and Madeira drums but very quickly we realised that new make into these casks was not right. Like with

sherry, the wine notes were dominating the whisky and so the concept of 'finishing' was developed whereby already mature whisky is transferred into the wine casks for a limited period of time. The wine-seasoned casks expand the range of flavours and aroma, adding considerably to the whisky and offering something quite different, particularly for after-dinner drams. It helps to woo new drinkers to the category and to the brand without losing the essential qualities which are uniquely Glenmorangie. We have three core wood finishes: port is the most successful—dangerously drinkable, Madeira—my favourite and sherry. We also produce what I call 'guest finishes', like guest ales in a pub, and last year we brought out a claret-wood finish (actually a top Chateau premier cru from the Pauillac Region). Before that we used *Tain l'Hermitage* casks from Cotés du Rhone ('Tain' being both the village in Hermitage and our home in Ross-shire) and at present we have a fino sherry finish. I have been very active buying various types of wood out on the market and we have one or two nice bits and pieces being developed so you will see more things coming through soon. I have stocks of casks from lesser known fortified wines and various red wines, many very rare and outrageously expensive.

We are currently developing an area here at Broxburn to be called the finishing area where the vast majority of our port, Madeira and sherry casks will be kept and we will also have examples of all our different and experimental types of cask.

You can expect to see a guest finish on the market about once a year; any more would be over-saturation.

LFW: How long does a finish take?

For our Glenmorangie finishes all are currently transferred at twelve years for finishing but the duration of finishing depends on the development of the whisky in each particular cask because the wines and casks vary so much. This is where the skill and dedication of my sampling and tasting team comes in—it's very arduous work!

Port wood varies a lot. Sometimes we find a very active cask can develop in as little as six months but the average is 12 to 18 months.

We have just launched Glen Moray finished (or 'mellowed') in white wine casks and we have been very surprised by the rapidity with which the product reached the desired specification. In this case we were starting to get to where we wanted to within six months.

LFW: How many fills do you get from a cask?

For the port, sherry and Madeira we get one fill and that's it, we can't use them again and I then sell the old casks. They are very expensive casks and there are potential savings to be made by refill-

ing with wine to revitalise them but it is not our practice at the moment; as a whisky purist I am uneasy about going down that route. In the case of the Glen Moray and the white wines we are investigating to see if we can get a second fill because of the speed with which we can attain our finish.

LFW: How 'empty' are these casks before you start?

My requirement is that the cask must not have been sitting around and be all dried out. Ideally the wine is emptied out completely, the cask resealed and shipped to Scotland within a couple of weeks. Most arrive dry but they do have a lining of crystals of tartrate and such like. The fortified wine casks are dry to moist but none of our casks has any lees swilling about in it. If that was the case you could ask if the flavour was coming from that but there must be some wood maturation for success. Any wine in the cask would be strictly against the law and the rules of the Scotch Whisky Association as it would potentially be considered as an additive.

woosh!

LFW: Tell us about your second distillery, Glen Moray.

We call Glen Moray a classic Speyside but in many respects it is not a real Speyside in style. I would argue that Glenmorangie has more of a Speyside character and I find that Glen Moray has more of an earthy, dryness to it. A lot of Glen Moray goes into blending and we trade it for other whiskies to go into our own blends.

We have just re-launched Glen Moray and have created a point of difference by finishing or 'mellowing' it in white wine barrels which is something I think works very well and has toned down the slightly peppery-bitter dry edge to the whisky. There is no sherry cask usage in Glen Moray, just bourbon, refill whisky and now Chardonnay in the unaged variant and Chenin Blanc for the 12 and 16yo.

LFW: And so to Ardbeg.

We bought Ardbeg in 1997 and generated a huge amount of positive publicity; people are very happy that the distillery is back in production and now it is being bottled and marketed it has given a boost to the whole category of Islay whisky. We have inherited a challenge in that the distillery did not produce anything between 1981 and 1989 so my job of managing the stocks is a bit of a nightmare!

Initially we brought out a 17yo and vintages from 1978 and then 1975, but it does not take a genius to work out that these bottlings are not sustainable so we are now looking at developing a new core

product for the range which will be launched in the Autumn. The brand manager has forbidden me to reveal anything about it, but I can tell you that it was not old enough last year! I have extensively tasted stocks and found them far more interesting than the neighbouring distilleries, even in direct comparison. It is not going to be like the old ten year old bottled by the previous owners, but it will be much more true to the old Ardbeg style than our 17yo is.

We will continue to bottle the 17yo for as long as possible. Stocks are limited but there is enough to support the current demand.

I would warn Ardbeg fans that, like Glenmorangie, Ardbeg is to be kept in-house and you will see fewer independent bottlings. We do trade Ardbeg with the industry but only to satisfy contracts which were previously in existence. Ardbeg is popular with blenders if used judiciously.

LFW: What type of casks are you filling—is there any truth in our Ardbeg herring-barrel finish story?

Not yet! It's almost all Bourbon being filled, very little sherry wood, as I'm not keen on sherry-matured peaty whiskies. In future we may do something with a different cask but probably not sherry; the Ardbeg style does not involve sherry. As for herring-barrel finish I think there is enough of the smoked fish character there already! Whatever we do do it must be something robust to overcome the phenols, rum perhaps. It will be interesting.

My first taste of Ardbeg was the 17yo and I just could not believe how good it was. A great evening on the island with the writer Jim Murray and Ed Dodson, our manager from Glen Moray, in which we did the entire island! Even before we bought the distillery Jim used to visit me at Tain and extol the virtues of Ardbeg but I just paid him lip-service. Finally when I tried it I thought 'woosh!'

LFW: It seems you have plenty of new products to deliver.

This company is committed to encouraging more people to drink Scotch whisky. We are a branded company and very innovative, so watch this space as we are always doing something different while trying to maintain the balance between tradition and innovation. I think we get it right.

LFW: Your desert island dram?

I would like to list a few of my favourites first: Glenmorangie, particularly the 10yo. I have tried some utterly outstanding Glenmorangies straight from the cask, and my favourite, a 1981, was bottled on site last year. I am very fond of Mortlach, Glenfarclas or Highland Park—it's got a little of everything.

For my real desert island dram I'm afraid I am now a total Ardbeg convert. The 1978 in particular, but any will do!

LFW: I'm not surprised. Thank you.

THE INDUSTRY TODAY

by Alan S Gray

Scotch Whisky remains one of the UK's major export earners and contributes around 20% of the UK's total exports of food, beverages and tobacco. Scotch exports were in excess of £2bn last year. In addition, Excise Duty and VAT contribute some £700m to the UK Exchequer. It is therefore an extremely important contributor to the UK economy and this makes it all the stranger that the government does not do more to help it in the domestic market by reducing duty which is amongst the highest in Europe. Around 12,500 people are directly employed in the whisky industry but it is estimated that the industry effectively employs a further 40,000 to 50,000 in a wide range of businesses ranging from farming (producing malting barley) and transportation to packaging and tourism. Currently there are around 86 operational malt distilleries and 8 grain. Twenty years ago 114 malt distilleries were working and 11 grain.

The closure of so many distilleries is obviously a cause for considerable regret as it reduces the number of malts available both to the public and for blending purposes.

As a result of closures there are now only two Lowland distilleries in production and one in Campbeltown, Springbank, although it is hoped that Glen Scotia may reopen. On Islay the good news is that although Port Ellen distillery will not re-open, six are operational whilst Bruichladdich which has been mothballed for several years actually produced a little last year.

The largest number of distillery closures has, however, been in the Highlands with 20 distilleries no longer in production. Many of those will not reopen but several hopefully will and indeed a recent example of this was the re-opening of Benromach by new owners Gordon and MacPhail.

Classification	1980	1998	% Change
Highland	96	76	-21
Lowland	7	2	-71
Islay+Jura	9	7	-22
Campbeltown	2	1	-50
	114	86	-25

There have been several bottling hall closures over the past 10 to 15 years which is the main reason why the number of jobs in the industry has fallen from 20,000 to the present level. However, whilst these losses dwarf those at the distilleries in numbers the latter have been hard hit on the job front and of course job losses in such rural communities have a huge impact on the local economies.

EXPORTS

After a very buoyant 1997, exports of Scotch Whisky had a difficult time in 1998, a result of economic problems in various parts of the world, in particular

the Far East and South America. The result was that export volumes declined by 8.1% last year to 254.2m litres of pure alcohol (lpa), a figure which was almost exactly in line with the 1994 total.

Industry figures released by the Scotch Whisky Association show that shipments to the Far East (excluding Japan) declined by 58.2% from 30.7m lpa to 12.8m with the weakest markets being Korea and Thailand, both of which fell by two-thirds.

As for Central and South America, total shipments declined by 6.5% from 39.6m lpa to 37.1m after having been 13.3% ahead for the first six months of 1998.

The USA was also a weak market with a decline of 9.4% in the main category Bottled in Scotland (BIS) Blend but this was largely a reaction to the much better than expected shipments in 1997 when BIS Blend exports improved by 13.8%.

In our view, a more realistic pattern emerges from comparing 1998 with 1996 and on this basis BIS Blend volumes showed a gain of over 3%.

EUROPE PERFORMS WELL

In contrast to these declines, the European Union, which accounts for over 40% of total Scotch Whisky exports, performed well last year, advancing by 3.4% from 110.3m lpa to 114.1m. Spain proved to be especially buoyant.

The table below details the movement in export volumes and values over the past five years. This shows that although 1998 volumes were bang in line with those achieved in 1994, values were actually lower at £2.03bn compared with £2.19bn.

Year	Exports £m	Exports m lpa
1994	2191	254
1995	2277	262
1996	2278	257
1997	2394	277
1998	2030	254

Source: Customs & Excise

The decline in export values in 1998 can be mainly attributed to the fact that sales to Asia are predominantly in the form of high value premium products such as Chivas Regal and Johnnie Walker Black Label and clearly the sharp fall in volumes to these markets translates into a disproportionately greater decline in values. However, part of the blame is also due to the industry's failure to raise selling prices by anything approaching realistic levels with average increases of only 1% to 2% being achieved in 1998 and with actual price reductions being recorded in Asia. Weak prices are not a new factor, however, as they have been a feature of recent years and emanate from two main sources: resistance in the marketplace to price increases in the face of a more benign inflation environment, this affects most consumer products and not just Scotch; second, unduly aggressive competition within the industry itself as

companies have sought to maintain volumes and market share.

Weak pricing could well be described as the industry's Achilles Heel in recent times and has adversely affected profit margins.

Failure to achieve adequate price rises has also been a feature of the UK market and there was again heavy discounting over the 1998 Christmas and New Year season.

The industry badly needs to adopt a somewhat more aggressive approach to pricing in order to maintain Scotch's image as a prestigious product rather than simply a commodity.

NEED TO APPEAL TO YOUNGER CONSUMERS

In an effort to appeal to younger consumers in both the UK and USA, a category which has been largely ignored over many years, companies have resorted to using television advertising. This was first carried out in the UK by Bell's in Autumn 1995 and marked an end to the unwritten agreement within the spirits industry not to advertise spirits on television.

Many other brands have since followed suit and this trend will undoubtedly gather momentum although it will take several years before the impact of TV advertising will be fully felt.

TV advertising has also been complemented by several innovative advertising campaigns aimed at making Scotch more appealing to the younger consumer and we believe that major initiatives on this front will be made by Diageo in the not too distant future. A lead by the industry leader would be most welcome and would encourage rival companies to follow suit.

EXPORTS WILL RESUME GROWTH

Prospects for the current year appear brighter than in 1998 with exports likely to improve slightly, benefiting from an upturn in the Asian economies whilst Europe should continue to record modest growth. Latin America, however, looks like remaining soft for most of the year.

Looking to the medium term, export shipments can be expected to continue to recover from the particularly difficult time in 1998 and in the longer term Asia and South America look promising whilst India and China will hopefully become important markets in due course.

Single malts have grown by 4.4% per annum over the past decade but they still account for under 5% of total world consumption. Prospects for this category must be regarded as particularly encouraging as more and more people discover their undoubted attractions and sales look set for further substantial expansion.

Alan S Gray of stockbrokers Sutherlands Limited is the author of the Annual Scotch Whisky Industry Review, now in its 22nd edition. The current edition is priced £395. Available from;

*Sutherlands Limited, Lismore House,
127 George Street, Edinburgh EH2 4JX.
Telephone 0131 527 3000, Fax 0131 527 3001.*



The LOCH FYNE™

Blend of

SCOTCH WHISKIES



THE DISTILLERY

Our label depicts the Glendarroch Distillery sited on the Crinan Canal that links Loch Fyne with the Sound of Jura. Also known as Glenfyne, the distillery was built in 1831. A succession of owners held the distillery until 1919 when it came under the ownership of the Glenfyne Distillery Co.

The cameo by Gail Gordon depicts the distillery at the time of Alfred Barnard's visit in 1885. Barnard's detailed description of the buildings enabled us to recreate the floor plan and Gail was able to complete her task from this combined with etchings in his book.

Barnard was clearly taken by the setting, the distillery and hospitality afforded him. His book devotes six pages to his visit, much taken up with details of the buildings e.g. "a new kiln, one of the finest we have seen in Scotland, it is 51 feet square" but also with the location: "It is built at the foot of the Robber's Glen which runs upwards from the banks of the canal into the heart of the hills in the background; this glen was once the haunt of smugglers, and no more romantic spot could have been chosen for the distillery."

Glendarroch was complete and well laid out. Barley was unloaded from the canal direct to the malt barns then moved through the process clockwise around a courtyard to the kiln, tun room, still house and warehouses. Whisky was then shipped to market via the canal. Eight houses were available for the workers and two for the excisemen. There was also Glengilp House and Glendarroch House for the manager and the owner respectively. At the end of his day's visit Barnard's party "donned our 'war paint' and proceeded to Glendarroch House to enjoy the hospitality of the owner".

The distillery closed in 1937, unusually as there was a distilling boom at that time, although the warehouses continued to be used for storing whisky until the mid seventies. A brief life as a joinery followed until the eighties when a salmon hatchery made use of the buildings and water which was also the drinking water supply for Lochgilphead.

In 1990 the Regional Council acquired the water rights and every last trace of the distillery has since been removed.

Additional Information

Brian Townsend, SCOTCH MISSED.

THE MALT DRINKERS BLEND™

We're very proud of our unique blend created for us by Professor Ronnie Martin, O.B.E., former Production Director of industry leader United Distillers.

Slightly sweet and slightly smoky, The Loch Fyne appeals to malt whisky fans as an easy-drinking, well flavoured blended whisky; something to drink and enjoy rather than concentrate on. We have given The Loch Fyne to the three top professional tasting writers and while all enjoy it, their tasting notes are completely different—proof that it is something for everyone!

Michael Jackson's note is characteristically analytical;

Colour: rich, sunny, gold.

Aroma: fruity (honeydew melon?)

Body: medium, slightly syrupy.

Flavours: light heather-honey, grassy, fragrant, smokiness develops, especially in the finish.

With typical eloquence, Charlie MacLean's tasting note wins by a nose: "The deep amber colour of this whisky, (darker than many blends) implies age and this is supported by the (undilute) nose, which is rich and vinous, with no trace of grain. All the indications of mature fillings. There is an interesting aroma of apple dumpling (suet crust), and this remains when water is added, enlivened by lighter citric notes (oranges and tangerines), and by some oil-related aromas (walnuts, linseed oil). Phenolic notes are slight, and express themselves more as 'roast meat' than peat smoke. Medicinal phenols are present in a very slight trace of oilskins. Overall the nose is subtle and relatively closed. Not much water is needed for this whisky.

The mouth-feel is smooth and well balanced, engaging the whole palate with acidic, salty, sweet and dry flavours, and coming down ultimately on the side of sweetness. The overall impression is fresh and smooth—mellow without being flat. The finish is quick and clean, and surprisingly warming. It is extremely easy to drink.

Conclusion: A true premium blend which has clearly used well matured fillings. There is no harshness in it, no cereal notes or feints, no artificial caramel notes. A whisky which is appropriate for any time of the day.

Perilously smooth, mellow and easy to drink."



IWSC BRONZE 1996

Soon after its launch The Loch Fyne won the bronze award in the blended whisky class at the influential International Wine & Spirit Competition. The Gold Medal went to the world's top selling Scotch, Johnnie Walker Red Label.

More praise comes from Carol Shaw's Collins Gem 'Whisky' which describes The Loch Fyne as 'A malt drinker's blend, full flavoured, with a raisiny, sweet spiced nose, mellow smoothness of taste and a warming finish. A very easy to drink whisky.'

All this praise is supported by the rate of sale in the shop after a wee taster!



LOCH FYNE	70cl	£ 14.60
GIFT PACK + DRAM GLASS		£ 17.60
LOCH FYNE	20cl	£ 5.90
LOCH FYNE	10cl	£ 3.90
LOCH FYNE	miniature 5cl	£ 2.60



“The wonderful thing about whisky, apart of course, from drinking it, is that it contains more bluffing elements than almost any other subject—far more than supply-side economics, more even than wine. Wine breeds envy, discord and snobbery, whisky promotes fellowship, amiability and quiet, unassuming superiority. Supply-side economics produced Donald Trump.”

David Milstead

Bluffer’s Guide to Whisky

NEW CUSTOMER PAGE

Our marketing blitz in *Whisky Magazine* and the busy summer season in the shop gives Loch Fyne Whiskies the chance to welcome new customers to our growing band of happy whisky fans. The following pages are for those who are developing an interest in the marvels of Scotch Whisky. We feature some explanation of the bottlings from our Stock List—OB, A, C, G&M, MM, S etc., but we’ll start with by far the most often asked question:

I can’t remember the name but it came in a dumpy green bottle, can you help?

Bunnahabhain! (Boo-na-ha-venn).

What is whisky?

Literally the alcohol spirit produced by distilling fermented cereals. Whisky is produced in many countries, historically those with climates more suited to growing cereals rather than grape-into-wine production.

Scotch Whisky is the world’s most popular spirit and by law must be (amongst other things) made and matured in an oak barrel for not less than **three years**

and **in Scotland**, otherwise it cannot be called *Scotch*.

How is whisky made?

Easy—mix some processed grain with water, add yeast and let it ferment in the same way that beer is produced. Boil up your beer and collect the steam which will be mostly alcohol. Voilà, whisky! Throw this away as it is probably poison, your hair will fall out—and apart from that it’s illegal.

Scotch whisky must contain barley and *Malt Whisky* must be made exclusively from water, malted barley, yeast and nothing else.

What is the difference between a single malt and a double malt?

A **single malt** is the product of one malt whisky distillery and that one distillery only. There is no such thing as a double malt unless you are with your rich father-in-law at the bar (technically—‘a large one’). Single malts are enjoying considerable acclaim at the moment, they are no longer Scotland’s biggest secret. Their intensity and complexity of flavours, previously thought to be a handicap to wider sales, are now being sought throughout the world.

Malt whisky is one of four types of Scotch. The most common is **blended whisky**, a mix of many different single malts and grain whiskies prepared by a blender using his sense of smell and years of experience. 95% of all bottled whisky sold is blended whisky and it is appreciated the world over for its satisfying subtlety and complexity.

Grain whisky is industrially produced from a variety of cereals including malted barley. The spirit is not fully distilled—a degree of impurity is required to add character. It is also matured in

Scotland in oak barrels for three years or more before being used for blending. Occasionally you may come across a bottle of single grain whisky (which will taste light and slightly oily) but its use is mainly as a carrier for malts in blends. The fourth category of whisky is a **vatted malt** which is a blend of several malts but no grain. Malt bottles lacking the word ‘single’ may well be vatted; other clues are descriptions such as ‘Pure Malt’ or ‘100% malt’.

A single malt is a happy accident of science, nature and circumstance. Blended and vatted whiskies are one man’s opinion of what he thinks you think a good whisky should taste like. Many members of the industry claim to appreciate blended Scotch the most.

Why don’t you stock a certain brand I had once?

Whisky brands tend to fade away faster than get created as the industry changes from hundreds of brand owners to just a few. As big companies expand by the acquisition of small they find that they have two brands on the same shop shelf at the same price so one has to go. Some brands are only available overseas because they are better established there than in the UK.

How many Scotch Whiskies are there?

The Scotch Whisky Association draws attention to the Clave Vidiz collection in Brazil of over 4,000 bottles of Scotch. Not all of these will be available today and Campbell Evans of the SWA reckons that there are about 200 in the UK and 2,000 around the world.

Loch Fyne Whiskies has the most comprehensive range of UK available malts with examples from about 120 distilleries. There are currently about 85 open and working; others are either mothballed, closed or demolished. There have been about 750 distilleries licensed since Ferintosh in 1689.

How am I supposed to drink my malt whisky?

How you like! Although it does seem a shame to mix a £25 malt with a sweet, fizzy mixer. Addition of water (anything from a drop to 50:50, depends on the bottling) often reveals more character because your nose is happier at lower alcoholic strengths, so experiment with each new bottling. Bear in mind you have four senses of taste and these are on your tongue, not in the back of your throat. Plus you have some 30 or more senses of smell so use the schnoz. Ice in malts is a no-no; you put ice on bruises and in blended Scotch in hot climates.

How do I know which malts I will like?

Most single malts will have the region of origin on the label, either Lowland, Highland, Speyside or Islay and these give a clue to the character of the contents—but there are many exceptions to the rule. The **Lowlands** are the most gentle; mild, almost wine-like. The



OFFICIAL, OWNERS OR ORIGINAL BOTTLINGS (OB)

When bottled by the owner of the distillery, we call such bottlings official, owners or original bottlings. These ‘official’ presentations are examples of the best in quality, packaging and design and a guarantee of consistency and quality. Here is a range of ages, finishes and commemoratives from Glenmorangie.



THE INDEPENDENT BOTTLERS

(Where's Cadenhead's/Connoisseurs Choice/Gordon & MacPhail's Distillery?)

Loch Fyne Whiskies favours five independent bottlers who buy the malt whisky from a distillery by the cask and bottle outwith the supervision of the distillery owner. With all independent bottlings look for the distillery name which will be in smaller print.

ADELPHI (A)

A relative newcomer to the sector, The Adelphi Distillery Company has no distillery but is very fussy about the quality of the malt they bottle at cask strength, and so their releases are only occasional. Their minimalist labelling allows the whisky to sell itself.

MURRAY McDAVID (MM)

The most recently incorporated on our list, Murray McDavid is gaining great respect for a small range of excellent and unusual whiskies bottled at 46%. In our view this is the perfect bottling strength, just strong enough to tingle the tongue!

CADENHEAD (C)

Campbeltown in Argyll is home to independent bottler Cadenhead's, who buy and also mature casks of whisky and bottle each cask individually at natural cask strength, occasionally as high as 67% alcohol. At 150 years, Cadenhead's are the oldest bottlers in Scotland.

GORDON & MACPHAIL (CC, Cask, G&M)

The leading and most respected independent bottler, G&M bottle a bewildering

range of single, vatted and blended whiskies from their Elgin home. G&M are unique amongst independent bottlers in that they mature all their whiskies from new and have done so for over 100 years. G&M still hold stocks of long gone distilleries—history to take advantage of! In 1998 G&M became distillers with the revival of Benromach Distillery. Shown above are examples of their G&M, Cask and Connoisseurs Choice ranges.

SIGNATORY (S)

For ten years Signatory of Edinburgh have bottled malts at both 43% and at cask strength. They have produced some outstanding and very rare whiskies and are consistently good value.

Highlands can be further divided; those from the south are akin to the lowlands, those from the north are fuller flavoured. **Speyside** is a category of its own within the Highlands. These whiskies are complex and half of Scotland's distilleries are found here. The most fully flavoured whisky is produced on the island of **Islay** (pronounced eye-la). Islay whiskies are unguided missiles in the wrong hands—you will either love them or wonder what the attraction is in smelling hospitals.

How come they taste so different?

Malted (germinated) barley has to be dried before milling and fermentation and traditionally this has been done over an open fire. In Scotland a variety of fuels is found locally including peat (decomposing heather) and coal. The amount of **peat** that is used to dry the barley has a big influence (on Islay it is the only source of fuel). Other influences are the style of apparatus employed in the production, particularly the **still** and how that still is operated by the stillman. The final major influence is the type of oak **cask** or barrel employed to mature the spirit; it could be one of many categories from a brand new barrel to a well-used second-hand sherry or bourbon cask.

What are 'Cask Strength' Whiskies?

Whisky matures in the barrel at about 65%. Prior to bottling it is diluted to 40% so as to incur the least alcohol duty (originally a wartime measure). Cask

strength whiskies are at natural, barrel strength which provides more impact and immediate flavour. These whiskies should be diluted in the glass after exploratory sips otherwise anaesthesia will numb the pleasure. Because of the variety of casks employed in the industry, each *single-cask* bottling will have the character of the barrel variety as well as that of the distillery so there is great variation.

Why are some whiskies so expensive?

The first thing to check is the age of the whisky. If it is say 21 years old (the time spent in the cask—once bottled it does not 'age'), it will be dearer because of the additional storage required. Also whisky evaporates in the barrel by about 2% each year so after 21 years only two thirds remain. The other thing to look out for is the degree of alcohol strength as duty is applied according to percentage alcohol. Most whiskies are bottled at 40% alcohol by volume (abv), some at 43% or 46%—15% stronger and so dearer than the 40%. We stock many whiskies with strengths of up to 65% so these are the equivalent of over a bottle and a half!

Does a whisky improve with age after bottling?

No. Unlike wine, spirits are fixed once in the bottle and there is no benefit in keeping it. You should open and enjoy it as soon as possible!

How long can I keep the whisky in the bottle?

Unopened, a bottle should stay as good as when bottled assuming the seal is in good condition. Keep the bottle away from direct sunlight, heat or variations in condition. Once opened, oxidation will act on the whisky with a noticeable effect in between one and three years. The balance of characters will change, not always for the worse, but eventually a whisky will become 'flat'—another good reason for enjoying your dram without delay. Saving the last inch of a very special malt is usually disappointing when finally poured, so enjoy it now!

Books are useful sources of information and we recommend in particular:

Value for money—*Collins Gem Whisky* £4.99. Most informed—Charles MacLean's *Malt Whisky* £25.00 or *Scotch Whisky Pocket Guide* £8.99.

Taster's bible—Michael Jackson's *Malt Whisky Companion* £12.99.

To keep you up to date read *Whisky Magazine*. Phone 0171 563 2975 and ask for a 'Loch Fyne deal'—nine issues for the price of six.

"The proper drinking of Scotch Whisky is more than indulgence: it is a toast to civilisation, a tribute to the continuity of culture, a manifesto of man's determination to use the resources of nature to refresh mind and body and to enjoy to the full the senses with which he has been endowed."

David Daiches
Scotch Whisky, Its Past and Present





Who or what is LFW?

Loch Fyne Whiskies is a small privately owned shop in Inveraray, a popular visitor stop in the West Highlands of Scotland. The business is owned and managed by Richard & Lyndsay Joynson and is not part of a chain, has no shareholders to satisfy and does not have any branches (I hear mutterings of 'one centre of excellence'). We employ Andy Burns and Laura Simpson throughout the year and Darren Pirie joins us for the hectic summer season. Our greeter Donald, pictured above, is 'voluntary' rather than employed; his job is distributing drams of the Loch Fyne.

Our shop stocks all the whiskies in our Stock List, at the published price, as well as a range of other whisky related items — glassware, hip flasks, whisky flavoured confectionery and preserves and the most comprehensive book shelf possible. There is also a gallery of collectors' and rare bottles on display including a selection of whiskies from around the world with such unlikely places as Malta, Poland and Austria represented! Visitors to our shop enjoy our service and most get to do some sampling from our extensive tasting stock before they buy. We pride ourselves on our attention to our customer requirements, principally sound knowledge of our products, a fair price for our goods and a top class and speedy mail order service.

We are proud of our business, the respect we have earned, this newsletter and our blend 'The Loch Fyne'. Our customers are worldwide, are very loyal and very much appreciated.



OUR HOUSE MALTS

from INVERARITY VAULTS



Inverarity 10yo & Inverarity Ancestral 14yo
Top Quality and Great Value

Our two house malts are both bottled under the responsibility of Inverarity Vaults, based in Edinburgh. Professor of Distilling at Heriot Watt University, Ronnie Martin O.B.E., has retired from a lifetime as a production man in the Scotch Whisky Industry to establish a new company with his son Hamish. They have been bottling Inverarity whiskies for five years and we are delighted that they have a name so suited to our home address.

Both whiskies are Speyside single malts produced at Aultmore Distillery. This is the pick of the portfolio that Ronnie Martin managed.

The 10yo is a bourbon cask matured medium-light malt with a good light heathery-honey sweetness to it. It is very much appreciated by our experienced customers and is also a perfect dram to demonstrate to novices the benefit of a top quality malt. A good dinner trick is to serve the Inverarity with a fruit dessert such as a trifle or fruit salad instead of wine. The 14 year old 'Ancestral' is now a LFW exclusive—it is so good we have secured the entire stock! This is without argument one of the very best whiskies we sell. Sadly there is no more available with this unique entire sherry cask maturation and we expect our stock to last only until the end of the year.

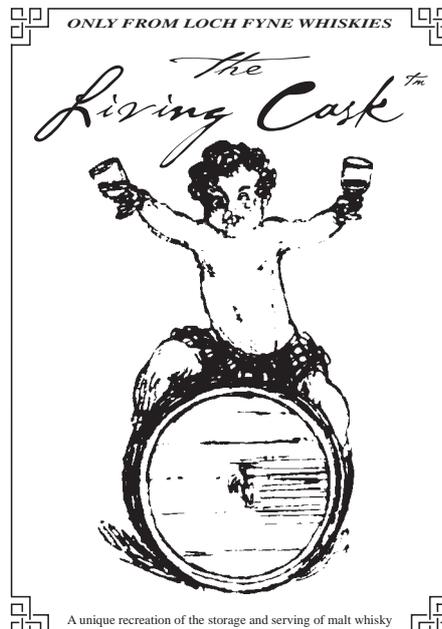
We have never seen sherry matured Aultmore and that is why this is so unique and so special. Not over sherried or sweet, there is great complexity and a very long and changing finish—overall a spicy sort of cherryade!

Prices: 10yo: £19.90 14yo: £27.90



OUR LOCH FYNE MARMALADE

The Loch Fyne makes a great whisky marmalade and two are produced for us, a standard (£2.50) and our deluxe thick-cut, dark, spicy *Double Scotch* (£2.90)



Not a single malt, but a living vatting of suitable malts, The Living Cask takes its inspiration from *Notes on a Cellar Book* by renowned connoisseur Professor George Saintsbury, published 1920, in which he writes:

"... The more excellent way—formerly practised by all persons of some sense and some means north of the Tweed—is to establish a cask,... fill it up with good and drinkable whisky,... stand it up on end, tap it half way down or even a little higher, and, when you get to or near the tap, fill it up again with whisky fit to drink, but not too old. You thus establish what is called in the case of sherry a 'solera', in which the constantly changing character of the old constituents doctors the new accessions, and in which these in turn freshen and strengthen the old."

And that is what we do. When half drawn down a new malt is introduced and the character changes. Each top up is described as a Volume and this is marked on the 'spine' of our book-style label which has Saintsbury's instructions on the back. Each 'Volume' is bottled as a 20cl sample, dated at the time of drawing from the cask with the prevailing strength noted. As this is the natural strength it is in the region of 60% alc.

Living cask enthusiast Jack Magnus writes, "The folks at Loch Fyne Whiskies have cleverly produced a continually marketable and intriguing vatted whisky. I can't wait for the next volume! Thanks to Professor George Saintsbury for his inspiration and LFW for The Living Cask!"



LIVING CASK™— 20cl
@ cask strength £14.90
A subscription service for the automatic despatch of each successive volume is also available.

COLLECTING WHISKIES

Some points to consider

The satisfaction of collecting whiskies holds considerably more pleasure than all of today's 'manufactured' collectables (e.g. plates, thimbles or die-cast models) as here we have a legitimate and scholarly subject with no less than five hundred years of provenance. But wait!

If you buy whisky as an investment opportunity—walk away now, buy lottery tickets. Every collector has gems worth several times the cost but the whole collection may not have improved at all. You should assemble your collection for your pleasure not your future.

So what do you want to collect? A question worth considering early on otherwise you will create a diverse, confused and near worthless collection that has near bankrupted you in its creation.

The sooner you can focus, the more pleasurable your collection will be. Specialise, create a set of rules for your collection and try to stick to it. Generally the thoughts are: malt or blend? (usually malt); single malts or any? (usually single); only official bottlings or any? (usually OB first choice, then independent if necessary); what maximum price? (are you prepared to be victim to a lavishly presented rarity, fifty times more expensive than the norm?)

One simple specialisation may be fancy shaped bottles. Other collections are of ranges such as the Rare Malts series.

The most popular choice is to seek a representative of every possible distillery, first choice being the official bottling but it will be necessary to default to independent bottlings in some cases. Some may then go on to collect cask strength bottlings only, trading in their first specialisation to finance the next project.

Others home in on one region or even one distillery; Glenmorangie, Macallan & Springbank are favoured for a steady trickle of interesting releases. By contrast, in this case, Glengoyne have blown it because of too many, too expensive and too frequent variants.

Limited or numbered editions are not always desirable; the ratio of number released to price is an important factor and you should be advised the total number produced in the world (don't be fooled by the UK number.) A release of up to 600 uniquely presented bottles is scarce; 2,000 bottles and a sensible price is worthwhile. Bowmore's release of 300 bottles at £4,000 is wrong (there aren't that many fools in the world,) however Macallan's '1874' release of over 20,000 at £64 was a winner because many were opened and soon after the supply finished prices had leapt three-fold.

Whatever your choice, you are guaranteed much pleasure in something that will add decoration and interest to your home, and you shouldn't lose money to boot!

'COLLECTABLES' SEEM TO BE GETTING EXPENSIVE

Either it is the onset of the millennium celebrations or apparent success of such releases as last year's Macallan '1946' (a 50yo Mac' for £1,575) or Glengoyne's first spirit safe presentation, 'The Middle Cut' (100 bottles @ £490) but there is a whole raft of similarly priced, sumptuously presented, limited editions due out in the next few months.

To dispense with the known millennium bottlings first: Glenmorangie's Millennium Malt is a drinkable, sensibly priced (£25.90) 12yo presentation. As usual 'Mo leads the field with no more than a simple labelling and bottling operation, cheap and clean and satisfies any such demand for the Hogmanay.

Interestingly enough many distillers claim that they have considered a millennium bottling but have decided against it. It will be interesting to see how many are panicked into the usual bout of me-tooism.

Glenfiddich have 2,000 cases of Millennium Reserve 21yo (£79) ready to roll out mid-summer. Also from the 'fidds in June is a 1967 Vintage (£200), the UK gets 150 bottles, no figures confirmed for the world.

Now how about this?...



Tee Hee! Glengoyne steal the show on packaging again with the '2000AD Millennium' presented in a Grandfather clock! Wacky or what?

Bottled at 51.3% the blurb states 'the ages of the whisky add up to 2000' (it's best not to dwell on that bit). Priced at £555 with a world availability of 2,000 they may just have hit on a winner.

Highland Park is a rising star in the collectable market; a near full collection can be found in our Stock List excepting the '1967' which you may still come across in your local Arndale Centre.

This 1958 presentation is limited to 665 bottles (world-wide) and includes a very elegant Caithness Glass decanter with Orkney's standing stones hand engraved into it and a hardback book of the Islands. We think a price of £890 and the brand's supreme quality place this bottling in high demand.



We have a novel offer on the 1958 HP, see May's Whisky Magazine for details.

HP's stablemate Macallan have followed their 1946 bottling rather too swiftly with a 1948; similarly labelled and certificated it comes in a wooden cylinder. A number of 366 is small (one for each day of that (leap) year), a price of £1,750 is high.

A 1959 (a good year, the frisbee was invented!) Glen Moray is well presented, limited to a total 400 and with a price of £525; the right ratio of price, age and availability. It comes with a 'tasting miniature' which of course you can't open otherwise you'll devalue it. What a shame!



Dark horses Loch Lomond Distillery have rolled out their oldest cask and found a measly 250 bottles in it. To raise the attraction it is being presented in a hand made real copper still decanter (glass lined) and sold for £490. An attractive, novel and limited presentation. Also in stock, Glen Garioch's bicentenary 200 bottles at £500. Please ask for details of this, or any others mentioned.

THINK AS WELL AS DRINK

Pip Hills, founder of the Scotch Malt Whisky Society, suggests some methods of post-purchase gratification...

I have been asked if I would write something to guide you in the matter of enjoying your dram. This is not the sort of thing I usually do, believing that people should be left to their own devices in such matters. We do it naturally; so do most other critters. If you've ever seen a pig with its nose in the swill, you will know what wholehearted enjoyment is about. Or some pompous diner with his snout in a balloon of expensive cognac. What the two have in common is the conviction that it's good stuff, and the absence of any critical faculty. (I can count on my fingers the people I've met who know anything about brandy.)

I think what Richard wanted was a few hints from me as to what to do with the bottle you've just paid him fifty quid for, so as to enhance what the marketing geeks call post-purchase gratification. That shouldn't be too difficult, for it is liable to be very good stuff and the chances are you will like it, irrespective of how you consume it. However we enjoy different things in different ways. The enjoyment of fine liquor is augmented when, by the addition of experience and understanding, it becomes appreciation. Experience allows us to compare what we taste against some standard—or at least against previous, similar tastes—and understanding allows us to organise and inform the experience. So if you want to enjoy your dram properly, you will have to think as well as drink. The pleasure is as much intellectual as sensual. When we set up the Scotch Malt Whisky Society, the Tasting Committee was a bunch of my chums who met in my kitchen. I chose them for their literary ability as much as for their knowledge of whisky. Indeed, they didn't have to know much about whisky at all—though of course all of them did. What was important was that they could produce words to describe what they tasted. That said I remember one, certainly one of the finest scholars and poets of his generation, who could come up with nothing better than the comment that, "It's chust a lovely whisky, chust a lovely whisky." He should have known, having had more than half a century of drinking the stuff, but we could get nothing better out of him all night. So you don't have to be able to describe it to appreciate it.

I suppose if you are a relative novice, what you want is the word from the horse's mouth; somebody to tell you what the rules are and what is the right and only way to drink a malt. Well, despite what you may have heard from the born-again malt buffs (a species which emerged a few years ago), there are no rules and there isn't a right way. There

is only what is right for you; what, after consideration, you find most pleasurable. The following are a few thoughts which you may find helpful.

Malt whiskies and blended whiskies are usually treated rather differently; blends being taken with ice and mixers. This distinction has become something of an orthodoxy, though it is worth mentioning that in the Scotland in which I grew up all the men (and most of the women) drank blended whisky with only a little water. Ice, soda, ginger and stuff like that was for nobs and foreigners. When I drink I mix it with whatever will make it palatable. Cheap in blended whiskies as in malts doesn't necessarily mean nasty, just as dear isn't always good. Blended whisky is much better than it used to be and I think a lot of the better blends are best taken with only a drop of water. But if you like the stuff with pineapple juice, fine. I have drunk Bell's with diesel oil, though I have to say I prefer it without.

*If you subject it
to the plodding
circumscription
of the train
spotter's mentality,
you merely waste
good drink*

The same goes for malt, but you lose a lot of the quality—and therefore the interest—if you mix it with anything other than water. Ice kills it and mixers mask the more subtle flavours, so if you wish the sensual to be augmented by the intellectual, you should take your dram with a little water. Make sure it's decent water, though. Most water tastes, so before you have any with your malt, taste the stuff. If you don't have good water on tap, buy bottled—but taste that as well, for some of the bottled waters are lousy. And don't use sparkling water; fizz is for infants and the gas produces carbonic acid, which is fine for lemonade and champagne, but not for seriously good liquor.

As important as the water, is the glass. Contrary to what you might think, the glass you drink out of has a great influence on what you taste. Best is the nosing glass used for generations in the whisky industry. It is based on the copita,

a sherry glass, but a bit bigger and not so narrow in the mouth. Various of the distillers (Glenmorangie and Bowmore come to mind) have produced fancy variants, but none are an improvement. However, they aren't dear and perfectly good. If you can't find a nosing glass, use any wine glass which keeps the spirit in while allowing you to slosh it around and thus saturate the air in the glass.

Which brings me to a very important point; most of what you will learn about a whisky you will get by sniffing the air in the glass, not by drinking the whisky. As with wine, whisky tasting is predominantly about nosing. We get most of what we call taste through our nose. We may be smarter than the pigs, but our noses aren't in the same class as pigs', so that we may fairly say the chap with his nose in the balloon may actually be experiencing enjoyment of a lower order than the porker with his in the trough. On which point; do make sure you can smell before deciding to become a whisky buff. If you can't, do something else. (If you think this is a daft thing to say, I can tell you that I know two people, one in this country and one in the USA, both of whom have managed to pass themselves off as experts on whisky, neither of whom has any sense of smell. It just shows how gullible is the public in general and the malt buff in particular.)

So you take some good whisky, and you put a little of it in the bottom of the right sort of glass and you add a little sweet water, and you slosh it around and you sniff. That's about it. Do it quickly, for the more volatile odours will soon go off. First impressions are the most valuable, for so will your nose (go off that is). A really good malt will continue to provide smells of interest and variety for twenty or more minutes after it is poured. When I visited Loch Fyne Whiskies the other day, Richard poured me two malts; after half an hour, one was still producing interesting odours while the other was completely dead. (The latter, significantly, was one of the few malts I don't much like.) (*And the former, our own Living Cask™ – 'Proud' Ed.*)

If you want to write about your whiskies (some folk keep a cellar book—a practice which I would deplore, were it not for my gratitude to the admirable and eccentric Saintsbury) then do try to use your own words and wits. If there is anything that smacks of the pseud, it is the malt buff who reads in a book descriptive terms culled from someone else's experience, and then tries to apply them without knowing what they mean. Myself, I think whisky is a thing of the spirit, in more senses than one. If you subject it to the plodding circumscription of the train spotter's mentality, you merely waste good drink. It is after all, an intoxicant and it holds infinite possibilities in the realms of song, speculation and, eventually sleep.

THE RIGHT TOOLS



GLASSWARE

A traditional whisky tumbler is fine, even a pleasure, for a blended whisky but for malt whisky appreciation there is a better glass for the job.

Our *classic nosing glass* has a generous belly to accumulate aromas, a narrow rim to focus those delights for consideration and a lid to keep them for you rather than the fairies. Engraved graduations allow accurate dilution.

For more relaxed malt drinking we recommend our *port glass*. Its wider rim and better balance aids contemplative enjoyment.

We also enjoy using our simple *water carafe*, far less fuss than a lipped jug.

Classic Nosing Glass £7.90

Port Glass £3.50

Water Carafe £3.50

When evaluating a dram it is helpful to have more than one kind in order to prevent familiarity setting in. Sampling in increasing intensity and then going back again will reveal more than concentrating on one alone. Many LFW customers enjoy 'one-to-five' parties where whiskies are selected according to our taste score of 1 to 5 from our stock list for a convivial evening of descriptor bandying.

LFW Tasting Mat & Cellar Book

The LFW melamine tasting mat is a white, wipe clean mat for five glasses and an aide memoire of descriptors to assist discussion and note taking.

Finally, to record those inspired sensory discoveries, *Neil Wilson's Malt Whisky Cellar Book* is a handsome tome to treasure those thoughts and memories of your most special tasting sessions.

LFW Tasting Mat £4.90

Malt Whisky Cellar Book £15.00



Special! Five classic nosing glasses, a carafe, tasting mat and cellar book £55.00

WHAT'S OUR FAVOURITE?

If you know about whisky you know about Ardbeg, Springbank and Glenfarclas.

If you *really* know about whisky you know about Aultmore, Bruichladdich, Clynelish, and Johnnie Walker Black Label (and Loch Fyne Whiskies).

Bound to stir controversy and debate, here's a list of our more esoteric favourites which should feature in any self-respecting whisky buff's cellar book. We've tried to list them by way of a developing portfolio towards the ultimate booze cabinet.

Hopefully you will be encouraged to try something new as a result.

The streamline drinks tray

For those in a boat or bed-sit accommodation, three whiskies to impress the expert and yourself (and the only ones we keep at home—honest!) Loch Fyne Blend £14.60, Inverarity 10yo £19.90 and Inverarity Ancestral £27.90.

No surprises there. Now we have the self promotion out of the way we can expect some respect for our independent advice.

For the corner cupboard

Next to that collection we would add our 1998 bottling of the year, OB Highland Park 18yo £36.90, rich and spicy, a truly superb after dinner dram. Then the magnificent OB Ardbeg 17yo £28.80; not a great Ardbeg, not peaty enough, but a supreme single malt and suitable for all malt fans.

Something with such softness, no mouth feel just a wash of flavours, is the OB Old Pultney 12yo £22.20. Time to include the proprietor's past and future (once the Ancestral is all gone) favourite; Clynelish, either the OB or CC £24.50 which is as good, but better value. A Lowlander should be represented about now and the OB Auchentoshan 10yo £21.90 fits well, light and creamy—typical of the region. Progressing through our taste rating to—2 brings G&M's Scapa £22.90; our—3 would be OB Glenfarclas 15yo £28.90; —4 the sublime OB Bruichladdich 15yo £33.30, the favourite of drinkers on the Island of Islay (when you can find them!) and completing our one-to-five matful would be the cheeky but very quaffable S Ardbeg 8yo £19.90.

Now a few to suggest before we start to spend some real money.

Sherry fans need the smoky and sherried OB Dailuaine £29.90, OB Glendronach 15yo £23.50 and the champion OB Macallan 18yo £39.90. They (and others) should also have a bottle of OB Glenmorangie's port wood finish £29.90.

More sophisticated Speysiders (or style of) will delight in the complexity of OB Glen Rothes 1982 £34.50, Adelphi's Macallan 9yo at cask strength £34.90, and G&M's water loving Strathisla £25.00.

NOW YOUR RICH OLD

UNCLE'S DIED

and answered all your prayers...

Those of you who have more money than a horse has hairs—but still seek the canny value that made you a millionaire, will have a special display cabinet to show off your...

OB Glenfarclas 30yo £69.00 (that's almost cheap!) Hold it in your mouth and chew it until you nearly drown! OB Glenlivet 18yo £42.20 shows just why all the other distillers wanted *the* name. The juicy OB Glenturret 1966, £86.60 and OB Springbank 21yo £44.90, one of our top sellers, but for a real champ drink, OB Springbank 1966 £95.00, umpteen flavours—go on count them!

More sophistication in the nectar of the distillers, OB Knockdhu 21yo £46.90.

Those sherry fans have to buy the cream of the Macallan—Gran Reserva £76 or the Loch Fyne lookalike Mac' 30yo £157 and, combining sherry with peat, OB Bowmore 30yo £154.

Finally, Whyte & Mackay's 21yo £59.90 is the (blended) whisky that I will be drinking when my ship comes in.

It's distressing the number of visitors to our shop who reject any suggestion that blended whisky is as good or better than the best single malts but many in the industry will call for a Johnnie Walker Black Label long before the majority of malts. Subtlety and complexity with a drinking cleanness make blends immensely satisfying.

Next time at the bar, ask for a 12yo blend and take some time to enjoy its company. Personal recommendations are Black Label, Grouse-Gold Reserve, Spey Cast and the very peaty Black Bottle 10yo.

SINGLE BLENDED WHISKY

Think about it!

Loch Lomond Single Blended Scotch Whisky, the world's first single blend has been released. What's a single blend? All the whiskies used to make this blend have been produced at the Loch Lomond Distillery at Alexandria. It is five years since the grain distillery was completed and now the hopes of owner Sandy Bulloch to produce his own unique single blend can be realised.

By adjusting the peating level at the malting stage, or controlling the reflux in their sophisticated stills, they can produce seven styles of single malt from the one distillery. They are named (in increasing order of weight): Loch Lomond, Inchmurrin, Glen Douglas, Rhodhu, Craiglodge, Inchmoan & Croftenga. The last is malted to 100ppm peat, three times that of Laphroaig! Only Inchmurrin and Rhodhu are bottled at present.

These seven malts and the grain have been blended to produce a very palatable medium-light blend, clearly not just a gimmick.



We get many requests for back-issue SWRs (must be doing something right). Copies are available for a reasonable £1 per edition (no charge for UK p+p).

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