



SCOTCH WHISKY REVIEW

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REFLUX

I'm still struggling with the prices for these expensive bottles. Inevitably we get asked if a hefty purchase will appreciate in value. Our not being a member of any financial regulatory authority doesn't deter the question or our best attempts to answer, but it is difficult and dangerous, hindsight being what it is.

This is an old rant but one that increasingly concerns me. I am convinced that the market for new bottlings costing over £200 is static while the availability continues to grow. Our 'deals' page features heavily discounted Glenmorangie, Glen Moray and now Highland Park 1958 at £300 off the recommended price of £990. While it is a delight to offer these prices, those who paid the full price can justifiably feel a tad pissed-off. The Glenmorangie was initially an internet exclusive at £169 and at that time was bought enthusiastically by collectors loyal to the brand, yet for two years we have been offering the unsold stock for £74 less. So much for any future loyalty. Now I hear of Ladyburn '73 being sold in the US at a third of its asking price—3,500 bottles retailing at £390. That was predicted.

Fortunately I don't have to comment on the 36 new Macallan bottlings (up to £4,000) as I have been excluded from selling them. Despite giving six days as part of the think tank that guided their creation—but that's a personal gripe and yes, they were part of the group that made me a Keeper of the Quaich.

Too many still calculate that if one chap pays a thousand quid at auction for an old bottle then they can sell 600 similar bottles at that price. Yet when these 'grand' bottlings come up for auction they rarely achieve even the retail price! So what advice do I have for you, the consumer? Well, if you're a collector don't worry—buy what appeals (but beware of ancient bottles, these days it's very easy to create authentic looking bottles and flog them for grand prices!), but if you're an investor, hedge your bets and keep each under £200 or so.



HRH — A LOCH FYNE WHISKY MAN

HRH The Prince of Wales joined our appreciative audience when he was presented with a special bottle of The Loch Fyne by Jimmy Wilson MM and Major Jake Hogg, members of the Lothian Parachute Regimental Association who are great advocates of our award-winning blend.

SYMINGTON BUYS EDRADOUR DISTILLERY & WHITE-WATER CENTRE

At the end of July, Andrew Symington of Signatory Vintage Scotch Whisky celebrated the acquisition of Edradour Distillery from Campbell Distillers, a subsidiary of Pernod Ricard. Two weeks later he may have wished he had not. Exceptional rainfall caused severe flooding in the Pitlochry area and Edradour Distillery and Visitor attraction was damaged by flood water.

"It could have been worse," said a relieved Symington. "Another six inches and the distillery buildings would have been affected. The river rose and carried a huge tree down it, demolishing the banks and damaging the bridges; and the car park was washed away. Thankfully we were only closed for three days and I'm delighted to have survived my baptism of water!"

FARMERS THREATEN THE END OF 'GENUINE SCOTCH'

A mass protest of Scottish farmers took place outside industry leader Diageo's (UD) Edinburgh headquarters recently. The farmers' union is staging protests against a variety of industries to highlight their plight. They threatened that unless barley prices improved they would be forced to grow other crops or to set aside land. This, they argued, undermined the validity of Scotch being truly Scottish.

"This is very bizarre," a Diageo spokesman told SWR (well, Peter Smith actually). "We buy almost all our barley and wheat from Scotland, with contracts, but the price is determined by the world market and the harvest. Besides, we're union members too as we own nine farms!" The police attending put the numbers protesting at 110, the farmers claimed 250; presumably some confusion about the number of legs involved.



Andrew Symington was in very cheerful form when we met for our interview feature.

LFW: What is your job?

I am founder and Managing Director of Signatory Vintage Scotch Whisky. My business is that of an independent bottler buying and maturing casks of whisky and then selecting them for bottling with our own label. I keep about 1,100 casks in stock with ages from three or four years to as old as 1954.

Recently I acquired Scotland's smallest distillery, Edradour in Perthshire. I am now both a Scotch whisky bottler and distiller—an ambition fulfilled!

I started Signatory fourteen years ago with the ambition of having my own distillery. Now the transfer is complete I am a very happy chappie—despite my immediate baptism of fire; after just two weeks of possession of Edradour a huge thunderstorm caused a flash flood which caused about £300,000 worth of damage! **LFW: How did you become a bottler?** I became involved in this industry during my time as a Manager at the posh Prestonfield House Hotel in Edinburgh where many of the old whisky companies used to entertain VIPs and they usually brought along interesting samples. I was able to taste a lot of fine sherry cask matured malts and to take some of them home.

I was so enthusiastic that in 1988 I scraped together £2,500 to buy a cask of 1968 Glenlivet and arranged to bottle it. My good friend, Peter Russell of McLeods helped me by securing the cask and assisting in the bottling and duty considerations. Then I set about selling it, initially to friends. A few restaurants took a case, then I went to a World Food & Drink Exhibition in Europe and met a German and Italian company which was interested and bought the rest of the cask. One cask became two and then onwards.

As I got busier and was using a Glasgow bottling contractor, I realised that the first few cases to come off my nice dark sherry cask were quite pale! The

colour developed until the sixth case when the hue that I was expecting finally appeared. I was horrified to discover some was being 'lost' in the pipes and filters and I realised that some of what I was selling could have been cheapo supermarket blend or worse! I wasn't happy that I couldn't claim hand on heart this was a great product. I wanted complete control myself.

I reckoned that the only way for me to get round that was for me to have my own bonded warehouse with bottling facility and stock of casks which I could monitor myself.

LFW: And the name, Signatory?

With Signatory I thought that someone would endorse it as being something worth bottling but I gave up because we started selling long before we found anyone famous to sign a bottle! (I almost got Sean Connery once). Vintage, well, some producers complained you can't have a vintage whisky, but now they all have one. When I got my cask of Glenlivet 1968 I realised that I wouldn't always have a '68 but I would get some '70 or whatever and also to find a point of difference.

Unlike port, with whisky each year is just as good as the others but it does depend on the quality of cask it went into. Vintage as a term helps explain differences in bottlings.

We've been here in Leith since 1992 with offices, bottling plant and cased goods warehouse, plus about 130 casks—primarily things that are going to be bottled in the next month and the more venerable gems that I like to keep an eye on and sample every three to six months, rare treasures from the Fifties and Sixties.

The other 1,000 casks are scattered around Scotland in about 37 different distilleries and warehouses. If I buy a cask that I don't need immediately I'll leave it where it is, paying rent to have it stored. The rental is small if you have 100 casks or so with a keeper but there are set-up charges to keep out the small players and to reduce the risk of 'investor' scams such as we saw in the early Nineties.

Once a week we have a 'milk-round', a truck collecting a cask from all over and bringing it to Edinburgh.

LFW: How do you get to buy a cask?

Distilleries have always sold to anyone. Initially they sold to merchants who wanted it for blending; there were very little single malt sales. A pub in Scotland may have had casks of Glenlivet and Macallan in the cellar and jars to dispense from. It is that historical precedent that makes it possible today. Producers own many malts and the movement between distillers, merchants and brokers means I can buy Glenwhatever from either a big distiller or merchant like Berry Brothers, especially if they have surplus stocks of certain ages.

LFW: Does it upset the marketers?

In some cases justifiably so. I bottle malts at a different age from those done by the brand owner—but that is getting harder to do as they are extending their range to more and more expressions. I've stuck rigidly to that principle but some of the 'armchair bottlers'—those with no facilities beyond a telephone—have been mimicking the proprietors, sticking distillery names in big letters on labels with no respect for the trademark owners. There are quality issues on some of these products too, giving the distillers something to be very concerned about.

It's getting harder for the independents; anyone lucky enough to get any new Lagavulin will have restraints on them. Glenmorangie has never sold a cask of single malt; they add a tiny measure of Glen Moray and call it 'Westport' so 'Glenmorangie' cannot be found in the market. Glenfiddich do the same with 'Wardhead' and more are going to do it; Bowmore are just starting to do it now.

It will take about five to ten years to use up stocks in circulation from the late '80s then it will get very hard for a bottler. I'm also gathering casks from distilleries which are closed and so have no brand interest but that is getting harder too. In the last four years there has been an explosion of new bottlers or as I like to call them 'armchair labellers'. Some are already disappearing having realised there is no quick buck to be made. The big boys deal direct, leaving out the broker or merchant. It's in a smaller number of hands and if you don't have the connections then it is going to get very difficult.

With time, I began to get a reputation for bottling quality whiskies from good casks and that's what made me accepted, that and the investment in a bottling line and the commitment to the industry. I showed I wasn't after a quick buck, buying the odd cask here and there. Once people realised I wanted to buy my own distillery, I was taken a lot more seriously. I've much more credibility now I've joined the circle. Although I'm the smallest player, it's great fun. Edradour is the perfect size for Signatory, the two can fit hand in hand.

LFW: Describe the bottling process.

A cask will be pumped in to a vat at which time we assess the strength. If required it will be reduced to bottling strength of 43 or 46% with de-mineralised water and allowed a day or two to settle. Reactions between whisky and water are slow; fatty acids convert into esters and aldehydes and there is a lot of heat generated. If we are doing a lot of single casks and I can't afford for a vat to be tied up we will put it back into a holding butt for a week and return to it when ready. That marrying time makes a big difference. Single malt is a very delicate substance and we will not push it through our system at full speed, it agitates the spirit to push it fast.

If bottled at 43% we will chillfilter it somewhere between zero and +4°C depending on how oily the whisky is; in bigger companies it might be anything from -5 to -10°C.

LFW: Why chill it at all?

Without it, an oily whisky will go cloudy as the fatty flavour congeners come out of solution and give a haze; there's nothing wrong with it, but it's not very appealing in the bottle. By reducing the temperature, the oils solidify and are separated out in filter plates. The result is a clear and stable product. 'Unchillfiltered' and cask strength whiskies are bottled at the ambient temperature. All our whiskies are barrier-filtered to remove solids, bits of wood and charcoal from the cask.

From the filters it goes to a holding tank and then on to our new bottling machine which is (nearly!) fully automatic. We had a bigger machine scaled down to fit the space available. It's about 6.5 metres long and looks like a model railway with bottles chinking along—sometimes I believe I can hear it choo-choo! Happily the new labelling machine copes with most labels and so the number of people required has fallen to just four, one third that before. Previously every label had to be applied by hand—sit down, knees together, take label from the gumming machine and place it on. You can bottle about 600 bottles in an hour that way but it is very tiresome.

LFW: Your labels are very detailed.

Cask strength bottlings have to be done unlabelled because the final alcohol strength is determined after filtering and it may lose up to 1%—I don't know why, it just does. Unlabelled bottles are boxed onto pallets while our friendly printer produces the labels. Then we will unpack and run the bottles through the labelling line again. The information of strength and quantity is absolutely accurate because we bottle it first. Other bottlers will guess the quantity or the strength and reduce it later if necessary; is that a true cask strength whisky? I don't think so.

Each label is individually hand numbered and that writing could be mine, Annette's (my girlfriend), Lorraine (my assistant) or my brother Brian—anyone who's willing! A bit boring and we wanted to stop it but so many said it is a unique Signatory thing. We no longer do it on the big run stuff, the value for money bottlings and no longer on miniatures, thank goodness!

LFW: Who does your selling?

Most of the selling is done by myself and Brian. Recently we employed a finance man who is taking on the sales of Edradour. We sell to about 100 shops in the UK and to 27 countries. We find ourselves doing more and more trade shows. To begin with they were a novelty but now they are a chore—Germany will have four whisky fairs next year at which

you will be meeting the same people! Too many fairs are done just for the money.

LFW: Why buy a distillery?

It seemed like a nice idea. There's a magic to it; an industry that's 100 years old, a lot of history, a great story, full of Scottishness, and a great product.

Our first attempt was to buy the old Caledonian grain distillery in the middle of Edinburgh but we were too late, it went to developers.

Then Ardbeg, which was won by Glenmorangie who have since done such a marvellous job. To achieve what they have would have taken me twenty years and Ardbeg is better off with them.

Next, we nearly bought Glencadam on the East coast, a great but little known distillery with nice gardens. However that was the point when Brian and I differed so strongly that he left the business. I realised I couldn't run both on my own. With hindsight Brian did me a favour.

Then Glenturret, that got very close but Highland Distillers changed hands. After which point I realised that if I was going to make my dream work, I needed a small production unit like Glenturret. So I kept looking, flicking through Jackson's book and it kept falling on Edradour, the smallest of the lot.

I badgered the managers at Campbell Distillers about it. They said 'unlikely'. After six months it was known that they were to take on all of Seagram's facilities; I reckoned then that Edradour would be surplus to their requirements. I was told it probably would be available and that my name was at the top of the list but they were talking an Ardbeg price—but it's not Ardbeg! However at that time I had no idea that they had about 100,000 visitors each year!

Then I met Georges Nectoux, the new boss of Chivas, at Whisky Live in London. He told me that he would like to take matters further. I was very calm but inside I was leaping about! I explained I was having difficulties making the figures stack up. After some discussion a price of £5.4m was agreed, including roughly £3m for stock. I was delighted! Edradour is well run and a real commercial proposition. Visitors help the cash flow and profitability which is important because making whisky at Edradour is a lot more expensive than anywhere else. Being so small it doesn't have the economy of scale; I can only do five mashes per week but still have to pay two people who could produce twice as much with bigger equipment.

LFW: And selling for blending?

I plan to keep it all for single malt sales. After all, I can't have those damned independent bottlers making profit from my brand! Actually, I'd have no objection to someone else bottling my whisky, providing it was a good example of Edradour. People delight in asking if my attitude to independent bottlings or bottlers has changed. No it hasn't—it would be the

pot calling the kettle black.

LFW: Any funny finishes or such?

It's all going into sherry casks just now, we will fill our first bourbon barrel soon and will try a balance between sherry, bourbon, a little port and maybe the odd rum cask, just to see what happens. Nothing innovative but the beauty is that nothing has been done with Edradour yet—it is unique with a super spirit.

I want to make a peaty whisky; soon we will spend three weeks producing about 45 hogsheads from heavily peated malt.

LFW: And will you charge visitors?

I don't have any plans to introduce charging, the tour will remain free. Fortunately we have a high spend in the shop which balances the cost of guides. Edradour will become the Home of Signatory and I feel the more enthusiastic whisky fan expects and deserves something extra so we will try and do more in the evenings for them.

LFW: How do you view the sudden upsurge in independent distillers?

If you want to stay in the industry then you have to become part of it and that may explain the increase in the number of distillery owners. In my case it is a way of securing my future and that makes sense for Gordon & MacPhail buying Benromach too. In time I see Signatory's sales declining but now expect Edradour to fill that. Admittedly it has given me access to more stocks for bottling than before.

LFW: Any reaction from the rest of the industry?

A lot of nice comments and letters of congratulations but I don't think we are any threat to anyone. In two or three years we have the potential of 20,000 cases to sell and that is tiny compared with the big brands.

LFW: Will you be bottling on site?

I have no plans to leave Edinburgh, although our bottling facility is (again) too small and we are going to have to rearrange it to cope with increased production. Edinburgh is central, our staff are from there, there is no space to do it at Edradour—near Perth maybe one day, but not in the near future.

It's great at a weekend to come up here, it's an escape. I'm known as the 'new laird' locally, I love that!

LFW: Desert Island dram?

I'm a great fan of sherry cask whisky. I like my 1976 Glenlivet and Glen Grant at cask strength, and my 1990 unchillfiltered Glenrothes. I didn't drink Edradour before but I have become very partial to it especially my new unchillfiltered Edradour. It's quite heavily sherried and I have been drinking a lot of it to get acquainted! Of the other producers I particularly like Ardbeg and Springbank.

LFW: Thank you.

The full text of our fascinating discussion can be read at lfw.co.uk/swr.

DEVIL'S ADVOCATE



Turnbull Hutton

PARASITES, PROSTITUTES, SLEAZE AND ETHICS

So what's rattled my cage during the summer months I hear you ask. Well, just about everything. Pension scandals, accounting trickery, obscene bonus payments... the usual fripperies of Corporate big business. Then a letter arrived from Harvard and I can do no more than to quote the first paragraph:

"Dear Harvard Business School Alumni, Nearly every week, it seems another tale of corporate misconduct is uncovered. As the reports increasingly make clear, an unsettling number of business leaders apparently have put their own motives and profit before integrity. In so doing, they have undermined the trust and harmed the well-being of their employees, communities, and investors. At the same time, mounting evidence indicates the possibility of systemic flaws in our processes of governance and compensation as well as our accounting standards. As a result, the faith of people around the world in the economic system that forms a crucial element of our society has been damaged."

And so it went on... you get the drift... Solution was, of course, a set of workshops exploring the complicated issues underlying leadership, values and corporate governance, and to work toward new frameworks of thought and action in this arena.

So that's OK then... somebody's looking at it. The fact that it was probably the same crowd who arguably planted the seeds of greed and financial re-engineering in the first place by churning out smart business consultants... I think possibly the irony was lost on them.

I worked for an organisation that was keen on bonus payments. Indeed I benefited from them myself over the years. What I could never understand however was why I would do a better job with a bonus than I would do for a basic salary. Did the organisation not take me on to do a proper job for a fair reward on an ongoing basis?

It is always interesting that irrespective of when a major whisky company's financial year ends, the production end

of the business has to brace itself for an upsurge of orders. It is even unlikely that the whisky will actually reach the market it is intended for within the specific financial year, but as long as it is on a boat or even a quayside that's probably sufficient to constitute a "sale"—thus ensuring some country manager has exceeded his no doubt soft budget target and thus triggered a better bonus payment as a consequence. It's not that you, the customers, have necessarily taken cognisance of your supplier's year end and/or changed your drinking habits accordingly!

In the last organisation I worked for one individual actually pulled the pipeline loading stunt two years in succession... for which he was duly rewarded. A change of senior management—probably advised by Harvard graduates masquerading as Business Consultants—then decided that high in-market stocks tied up working capital and one of the bonus measurements that particular year would be driven by the amount of stock managers could get out of the system. Yes, you've guessed it... our man scored again! Thanks to his foresight—or greed—the previous two years (for which he had already been rewarded) he scored a hat trick of bonuses! Own motives and profit before integrity? You bet!

*If we can't
trust the
independence
of the
whisky scribes
who can we
trust?*

Now that I'm on a roll, let's move closer to home. I read with interest the opinions of that ever growing band of whisky writers... and yes, the irony of the situation is not lost on me. I would point out at this stage that I don't actually make a living from this!

Whether specialist Whisky Magazines, colour supplements in weekend newspapers, web-site and TV appearances, or the latest book by whoever is in vogue at the time... it is fascinating to look at what is being churned out. There are of course the good scribes; knowledgeable, informed, witty, and independent. And then there are the others... and I have to wonder if they have any idea

as to what they are about.

I read a review of Black Bottle in one of the weekend supplements recently. Our "expert" left me wholly confused as to whether the blend was indeed a blend, or a vatting of various Islay malts, or a vatting of malts generally. I'm damn sure he hadn't a clue either and had been given a steer by some marketing type who was probably equally unsure as to what the particular product contained. I well remember similar confusion years ago with the mighty Bell's Islander... no-one seemed very sure whether that was a blend or a vatting either.

It seems reasonable that the public at large should be able to rely on the "experts" to help educate them—assuming of course that the public don't necessarily believe what the brand owners tell them! If the "expert" is truly independent—and honest—the reader can, and should, make up their own mind as to whether they value the opinion of the "expert". But what if the "expert" establishes some credibility as an opinion former and is then retained in some capacity by a company. Should he declare an interest? Arguably, there is little harm in an "expert" being associated with a particular company. Where I struggle somewhat is when I see the same "expert" extolling the virtues of competing products, sometimes on successive days! Or stating that his all time favourite whisky is Glenwhatever, whilst in another publication alluding to much the same thing with a completely different product! Call me a cynic but... I then find that on the strength of something nice having been written about a product, the producer of that product then employs or retains the services of the "expert" to lecture to in-house marketeers that the product they are selling is good because the "expert" says so... so get out there and build on that! It seems to me the industry is paying for a service—by the hour or by the day—which gets me back to my title.

It's cash for questions, it's lobbying gone mad, it's part of the corporate sleaze that is suddenly high profile again. If we can't trust the independence of the whisky scribes, who can we trust?

So come on guys, let's have a breakdown of retainers paid, percentage of income from writings as against endorsements, cost of trips paid for, freebies received. A register for us all to peruse. Copies of web-site endorsements—English or Japanese versions! You've nothing to hide... have you?

I'll even start the ball rolling myself. Income from whisky companies : 100% Diageo Pensioner. Income from writing: the odd beer from the editor and a few kind words now and then. Availability for endorsements, sleaze, free holidays, trips to Japan... speak to me. I may even say something nice about your product!

Editors note: In the piece below, the contributor was asked to write on a topic of his choice; spookily he appears to have responded to some points made so trenchantly by The Advocate. This is pure coincidence, since he did not have sight of Turnbull's piece. (Conspiracy theorists will reckon otherwise).

A FAR FROM EXPERT VIEW

John Allen—Editor, *The Quaich*

A few years back, scanning my e-mail inbox for anything resembling a worthwhile communication, the word 'whisky' caught my eye. In hope, I clicked on the sender's name, Hans Kneesan.

It was obviously someone masquerading as a humourless German whisky fanatic to enjoy a joke at my expense. How could I tell? Because the sender referred to me as 'an expert'. After e-mailing back to ask whether he knew a friend of mine listed by Deutsches Telecom as 'Boomsah, Daisy' (geddit?), I contacted the others listed as recipients of the e-mail. All chums connected with the whisky business, they hadn't spotted it as a hoax, despite the atrocious comedy-English and the obvious inanity of the questions. Going through their e-mail records, it seemed they'd been rewarding the joker by responding politely to his enquiries for some time.

Part and parcel of being recognised as an expert, is answering endless questions about archaic pieces of equipment

at defunct distilleries or being asked to undertake unpaid research about an obscure 1997 Derbyshire bottling of Glen Matlock for punk rock fans. (I just made that up, so please don't pester Joynson.)

I rumbled Hans because I'm unaccustomed to being addressed as 'an expert' and I don't consider myself one. OK, around 200,000 malts drinkers read my and others' ramblings in *The Quaich*, the newsletter of the Friends of The Classic Malts which I've edited for some six years now, but that only makes me a writer on the subject. I was selected because of a skill and something of a track record in communicating complicated subjects—and encouraging a response.

Writers in any sphere get labelled as 'experts' because of our—yes, I'm included—relative ignorance and desperate quest for inside information. At its worst, many of us go down the road marked 'celebrity endorsement'. I'm not above choosing a wine from an off-licence shelf because a glowing review of it from a columnist I rate is displayed. However, nothing, but nothing, beats tasting the stuff for yourself. Going into Oddbins and getting them to open a bottle of 25 year old Talisker so you can make up your own mind doesn't work. So, we use the tasting notes of those lucky enough to be sent a review bottle. Reading is never a substitute for being

closer to first hand experience.

When I started working on malts I decided to inform and educate—not too grand a concept in this field—as well as entertain myself in the hope of doing the same for others. I read the best books. But I have also learned from talking to the famous scribes, collectors and even anoraks. The more accomplished collectors know a lot about, well, collecting. And the anoraks? Well, quite a few punters I have met really *are* fascinating, but only when talking about anything other than whisky.

Not surprisingly, I've gained most from those who offered more than opinion. The only *real* experts are those whose job is to make the stuff, or ensure its quality and—heaven forefend—a few of those who market and sell it. And the more they talk from experience, the better.

Writers are just that. They write. Good ones do it well; the others don't. And I find the debate about their independence rather pointless. The industry and they are interdependent, in much the same way that film directors and reviewers are. My preferred stance is far closer to the scepticism of Andrew Jefford than the *Hello*-style gushing of some hacks. Readers can surely discern from the article whether the author is objective, or possibly in someone's pay.

Incidentally, did I mention that the Loch Fyne blend puts all others in the shade?



FESTOPHOBIA

Marcin Miller—Editor, *Whisky Magazine*
(covering, lower right)

Initially, when I first got tangled up in the unchillfiltered world of whisky enthusiasts, I thought it was all about a civilised, contemplative appreciation of the distiller's art. Single malt whisky, a mood drink. I'll just commune with the spirit of the ancients. Aaah.

Just goes to show how naïve one can be. No, to be a true whisky enthusiast you have to spend a day wandering around a Whisky Festival, weighed down with logo-bearing carrier bags stuffed with bits of paper you are never going to read about products you never intend to buy. Oh, and a couple of golf tees. You have to wear a badge or a sticker. If you are a genuine zealot you will wear your tasting glass around your neck. You may catch the occasional glimpse of someone you really would like to talk to, like Jim

McEwan or Alistair Robertson or Stuart Thompson but, by the time you have fought your way through to the relevant stand, they are no longer around and you are poured too large a measure by a vapid girl in a tartan miniskirt who can't remember her shoe size let alone the size of the stills at wherever.

Ladies and Gentlemen, welcome to WhiskInferno. Yes, I am aware of my guilt. *Mea culpa*. I have nothing against the whisky exhibition per se. That's why I set up *Whisky Live*. But I try to make a virtue of its, ahem, exclusivity. We only get around 900 people or so along to our London event and we just break through the 1,000 barrier in Tokyo. That way, the visitor has time to enjoy the experience and has time to speak with the blenders and distillers. For the exhibitor, it is of greater interest as they can have a dialogue with you, the customer. Whisky companies are genuinely interested in the views and opinions of readers of the *Scotch Whisky Review* and of *Whisky Magazine*. Of course they are. They would rather take the time to hold a proper conversation with you, to learn about your likes and dislikes, to find something unusual for you to taste. Ultimately, even to sell you something! But they are wasting their time at the bun-fights. I've seen it. Thousands of ill-mannered lunatics crammed into a cheesy hotel for a tasting frenzy: "Pour me your

best whisky!" they roar, eight deep at the trestle table laughingly referred to as a stand, as they thrust an empty glass into the face of the unassuming Distillery Manager. These are the sort of people for whom appreciation of whisky is being able to relate to their friends that they tasted a 60 year-old Mortlach the night before—if they remember. You know the type: they know the price of everything and the value of nothing.

You talk to the organisers: it was a great night. We had 3,000 people through the turnstiles. The quality of the audience is seldom assessed. Only quantity. I mused on this as I attempted to avoid the vomit on my way out. You know it has been a great whisky festival when the gents is out of commission midway through the event.

The trouble is, I'm supposed to attend ALL these bloody things. Of course, I'm not one to moan and I'd like to be everywhere all the time but as every High Street in the world is having a whisky festival in November it is not feasible. And, naturally, when you don't visit The Norwich and Norfolk Ultimate Single Malt Extravaganza they always take it personally. I get snotty e-mails from Danes saying "we had 30 whisky lovers at our fair and you didn't dedicate a 12-page supplement to it".

Hey ho. Perhaps December will be quieter...



MIDDLE SHELF				LOWER SHELF					
OB BRUICHLADDICH—Δ	15	46%	£ 29.90	£ 3.00	OB GLEN MORAY	'59/40	51%	£ 435.00	£ 90.00
OB BUNNAHABHAIN — 4	12	40%	£ 18.90	£ 5.00	OB GLENROTHES	'89/12	43%	£ 30.20	£ 5.00
OB CAOL ILA — 5Δ	12	43%	£ 23.90	£ 2.00	OB GLENTURRET	12	40%	£ 22.90	£ 1.00
OB CAOL ILA	18	43%	£ 33.20	£ 2.00	OB GLENTURRET	18	40%	£ 44.00	£ 10.00
OB CAOL ILA - Δ		55%	£ 29.50	£ 2.00	OB HIGHLAND PARK — 3Δ	12	40%	£ 19.90	£ 5.00
OB CARDHU	12	40%	£ 22.30	£ 3.00	OB HIGHLAND PARK, WB+D (right)	1958	42%	£ 690.00	£ 200.00
OB CLYNELISH — 4Δ	14	46%	£ 24.70	£ 2.00	OB INVERARITY — 2	10	40%	£ 17.90	£ 2.00
OB-d CLYNELISH	14	43%	£ 29.90	£ 2.00	OB INVERARITY — ISLAY — 5	10	40%	£ 20.90	£ 3.00
OB-d DAILUAINE — 3	16	43%	£ 27.90	£ 2.00	OB INVERARITY — Ancestral— 3	14	40%	£ 23.90	£ 4.00
OB DALMORE — 3	12	40%	£ 19.60	£ 6.00	OB ISLE OF JURA	10	40%	£ 17.50	£ 4.40
OB EDRAOUR	10	40%	£ 27.60	£ 3.30	OB ISLE OF JURA	16	40%	£ 27.70	£ 4.50
OB GROUSE VINTAGE MALT	1989	40%	£ 19.80	£ 2.50	OB KNOCKANDO	'90/12	40%	£ 18.60	£ 3.00
OB FETTERCAIRN	12	40%	£ 21.90	£ 1.20	OB KNOCKDHU — Δ	23	57%	£ 40.00	£ 8.90
OB GLENFIDDICH — 2	12	40%	£ 19.90	£ 2.00	G&M LINKWOOD	15	40%	£ 23.50	£ 4.00
OB GLENFIDDICH—Caoran	12	40%	£ 21.60	£ 4.00	OB LOCHNAGAR (Royal) — 3	12	40%	£ 21.30	£ 3.00
OB GLENFIDDICH — Solera — 3	15	40%	£ 23.90	£ 5.00	OB MACALLAN — 3	10	40%	£ 21.90	£ 3.00
OB GLENFIDDICH	18	40%	£ 31.90	£ 8.00	G&M MORTLACH — 3	15	40%	£ 23.50	£ 4.00
OB GLEN GARIOCH	15	43%	£ 19.90	£ 5.00	OB OLD PULTENEY — 4	12	40%	£ 18.70	£ 4.00
OB GLENGOYNE — 1	10	40%	£ 19.90	£ 3.00	OB-d PITYVAICH	12	43%	£ 27.90	£ 2.00
OB GLENGOYNE — Δ	17	43%	£ 30.30	£ 6.00	OB-d ROSEBANK	12	43%	£ 29.90	£ 2.00
OB GLENLIVET (The) — 3	12	40%	£ 18.40	£ 2.50	OB SPEYBURN	10	40%	£ 17.00	£ 4.00
OB GLENLIVET (The) — Δ	18	43%	£ 26.90	£ 3.00	OB SPRINGBANK	10	46%	£ 22.50	£ 2.00
OB GLENMORANGIE — 2	10	40%	£ 21.90	£ 2.00	OB TOMATIN	10	40%	£ 16.50	£ 4.00
OB GLENMORANGIE Port — 2Δ	12+	43%	£ 22.50	£ 4.00	OB TAMNAVULIN— 35cl	12	40%	£ 7.50	£ 2.50
OB GLENMORANGIE Madeira	12+	43%	£ 22.50	£ 4.00	OB ANTIQUARY	12	40%	£ 18.90	£ 3.00
OB GLENMORANGIE Sherry	12+	43%	£ 22.50	£ 4.00	OB ANTIQUARY	21	40%	£ 35.90	£ 15.00
OB GLENMORANGIE — Δ	15	43%	£ 26.50	£ 4.50	OB J Walker — BLACK LABEL — Δ	12	40%	£ 16.90	£ 3.00
OB GLENMORANGIE Original 50cl/74/25	43%		£ 95.00	£74.00	AND SOME STICKIES				
OB GLEN MORAY — Chardonnay		40%	£ 15.00	£ 1.90	OB DUNKELD ATHOLL BROSE		35%	£ 17.00	£ 2.60
OB GLEN MORAY	12	40%	£ 17.70	£ 3.00	OB HEATHER CREAM		17%	£ 8.90	£ 2.00
OB GLEN MORAY	16	40%	£ 21.90	£ 3.70	OB OLD PULTENEY LIQUEUR		30%	£ 11.90	£ 3.00

YOUR FREE PEELER

As long as we have stock to give away every parcel of a bottle or more will also have in it a miniature of Edradour, a copy of The Scottish Field (UK only) and a Label Peeler—a what?

This marvellous gizmo, previously only sold to the wine trade, will solve many problems: will I drink it, will I keep it? Where will I keep all these bottles now the garage is full too? What to buy the man with everything?

The Label Peeler is a reliable method of removing paper labels from your treasured bottles for the safe keeping of your memories. Here's how to use them:

1. Drain the contents of the bottle, either on your own or with friends (perhaps have them sign the label). If space saving is your intent you could decant into one of our sample bottles (see our Stock List or the hardware section at lfw.co.uk). Don safety goggles and rubber gloves (if that is your thing) and ensure the bottle and label are clean, then:



Peel off the plastic film



Place film over label, pressing firmly from the middle outwards; chase out any trapped air. WAIT five minutes. Have a dram.



Then remove by lifting from one edge. The paper is paired apart—don't panic!



Return the film to the backing sheet, or your own scrap book, or the inside of your windscreen, or have it framed, or...

Take the bottle to the bottle bank for recycling. It is very impressive and it really works! Have fun with your freebie. More peelers are available for 75p each and we have a dedicated leather binder **label library** to store them in for £23.00.

THE PERFECT GIFT!

NEW(s) FROM ISLAY

Steve Webb of Bowmore pointed out that almost all the recent increase in sales of malt whisky is a result of the five—now six—marketed malts from Islay.

During this year's Islay Festival, Diageo launched three new expressions of Caol Ila, the opening brand for a new series called 'the Hidden Malts', now complete with new expressions or packaging for Clynelish, Glen Ord and Glen Elgin. This, it is hoped, will take some of the pressure off their flagship range the 'Classic Malts'. Caol Ila in particular will relieve the great demand against supply of Lagavulin. The three Caol Ilas are worthy of support and are as good as Lagavulin. The **12yo** (£25.90) is indistinguishable from the old 'Fauna & Flora' expression. It is the most pungent with a taste including rubber, briny fishing nets and smoky bonfires.

The **cask strength** ("about 10 years") and 55%vol (£31.50) is a little smoother with a typical iodine plus kipperiness, and less of the rubbery notes of the 12yo. Long goes the debate as to which is better.

The fabulous **18yo** (£35.20) is much softer with more wood influence and less smoke. Apples & pears, floral, Parma violets, oak (lots), card, must, grass and a wee reek of old fish, complex, tight and round. A bit Talisker-like. ('Reek' as in the Scots definition of a waft or hint of something, not a stench. Think of the Bisto kids—aaaah!).

A limited edition **Lagavulin 12yo** at cask strength (£40.90) will be in the shop when you read this (quick or it may be sold out!) No picture because some useless twerp at Diageo couldn't be bothered to e-mail me one.

Also due is the second of three limited annual releases of **Port Ellen** (£102). Stocks of this super whisky (closed 1983) seem to be inexhaustible but one day soon we'll find the warehouse is bare.

Bowmore are confident they can retail 900 bottles at £1,000 each for their trio of 1964 distillations drawn from Fino, Oloroso and Bourbon casks, referred to as 'the sisters of Black Bowmore'. Investors may be wishing for a similar tenfold increase but this cynic suspects that Bowmore have accounted for that in the price. Our tiny allocation sold out immediately. The new owners of **Bruichladdich** have just finished their first year of marketing their new expressions and

tell me they sold more last month that they did in that first year!

Stocks of our Bottling of the Year 20yo are depleted and a 17yo—'XVII' has replaced it, however it is no taste substitute for the 20. We have a little stock of the 20yo left.

Our list also shows four new limited releases from 'The Laddie'.



'**Enlightenment**' is a distillery bottling organised and marketed by publisher Malcolm Greenwood. Five hundred bottles accompanied by a leather bound facsimile reprint of 'The Practical Distiller' from 1718; numbered book and bottle, beautifully boxed—very defirable. A few left at a worthwhile £185.

Then there are three vintage bottlings in Bruichladdich armour. The oldest, '**Legacy**' (£169), sports a fetching tin with an Islay seascape. Limited to 1,500 bottles, this 36yo is the first of such drinkable/collectables. Two special McEwan selected **Vintages** are definitely for drinking, **1984** and **1970**, (£61.90 & £115), in particular the 1970 which is chust sublime. All three exhibit an orange note with in the 1984 a smokey reek and the '70 more fruit. See lfw.co.uk for more about numbers and nosings.

The bottling hall at Bruichladdich is finished and from now all will be chateau bottled.

Saving the best till last.

Anyone willing to spend £100 for the festive season should buy **Bunnahabhain's** 1968 'Auld Acquaintance' a distillation so called because it was filled into cask on New Year's eve! Imagine the perfect whisky for your Christmas pud: a gloriously sweet, wood-influenced, warm, island dram. A hint of pipe tobacco and white chocolate orange—the whole tongue is engaged. It's spicy, salty and bitter. Fantastic! And only 2002 bottles. My tip for the overall winner of the Scottish Field Merchants' Challenge (see the back page).

Gossip from around the mashtun is that **Bunny** (or sister Glengoyne) is available for sale. She needs a determined new owner; why not you?



F. REDFERN—WHISKY HERO

Charles MacLean

I have reached the 1920s in the history of Scotch whisky I have been writing over the past two years. The era of Prohibition, which 'banned the manufacture, sale, transportation or exportation of intoxicating liquors within the United States, and the importation of same'.

As I am sure you know, the flow of liquor — especially Scotch — into the U.S. continued unabated, mainly via Canada and the Caribbean. I was surprised, however, to discover just how readily available alcohol was in many states — certainly if the following report is to be believed. It was written by Mr. F. Redfern, representative for Johnnie Walker, who spent three months in the States in late 1928 or early 1929.

As soon as he arrived at his hotel in New York, he noticed "quite a number of quietly dressed and somewhat sad-looking individuals arriving and departing, all carrying suit cases. On inquiry I was told that they were bringing in supplies of liquor to the guests. Nobody appeared to take any notice of them...The chambermaid in attendance on my room informed me that practically all the guests in the hotel had liquor in their bedrooms. I found during my stay in the States that this was general."

While in New York he visited "a large number" of speakeasies, where "you could get all the liquor you wanted", in spite of the 1920 boast of the city's Chief

Revenue Agent, Colonel Daniel Porter, that "the penalties for violation are so drastic, that the people will not attempt to violate it [i.e. the Volstead Act]".

Redfern writes: "There are upwards of ten thousand of these in New York, all paying their 'rake off' to the police and the authorities charged with the enforcement of the law. These speakeasies vary in character from mere drinking dens to palatially appointed private houses... Now and again these places are raided by the authorities just to advertise in the newspapers their determination to vindicate the majesty of the law. When the fuss is over, the same place re-opens and everything goes on as before....It rejoices the heart of a bootlegger to be fined. His name and address are then broadcasted in the newspapers, and he is engulfed in a new wave of prosperity."

"Everywhere I went people sang the praises of the honest bootlegger. It was clear that none enjoyed more respect than he, or stood higher in the social hierarchy. I visited many restaurants in New York where whisky is openly served. In private houses where I dined with friends not even remotely connected with our Trade, it was the custom to consume cocktails innumerable before the meal...."

While he was in Washington his hotel was "invaded by hundreds of men attending a great trade conference. Most of these men had their private sitting rooms, where they dispensed 'Scotch' to friend and foe alike. These congresses are very popular. Some people call them 'souses'." Many hotel rooms displayed notices informing guests that: "The proprietors of this hotel have given an undertaking to co-operate with the Authorities charged with the enforcement of the National Prohibition Law". Yet you could still order bottles of Scotch or Rye from the 'Captain of the Bell Boys'. Notices reading "Gentlemen are requested to open their medicine in the bathroom" were also common. Here would be discovered a 'crown cork opener' and a corkscrew,

seated firmly in my imagination, I offered my services.

"The cold light of day' is a good expression as is 'size isn't everything'. Combine the two, add a disbelieving look from a passing ferry and our epic voyage in *The Spirit of Loch Fyne* had begun. Visibility was poor but the skipper assured me there was no more boat to see, it did stop 18 feet from the stern!

Conditions were not great, the light was deteriorating with a big Atlantic swell — at least the tide and a bottle of Tanqueray was in our favour.

Heading west, we soon lost sight of the mainland behind us and were alone for a couple of hours before we picked out the hills above Kildalton.

As the navigator on watch I appreciated the sophistication of *Spirit's* compass and photocopy of a chart of the West of

both chained to the wall. "Hotel keepers soon found themselves compelled to defend themselves in this way after the 'dry' law was enacted, as guests were known to wreck whole suites of bedroom furniture in desperate efforts to remove a closure."

Redfern travelled hundreds of miles by car around the country and "every chauffeur I engaged had bootlegged liquor, and undertook to procure me anything I wanted". Yet such traffic was not without danger: "An American friend with two quarts of Scotch in his motor car was held up by two Prohibition officers, who pushed automatics into his stomach whilst they secured his 'hooch'. These officers sat up carousing far into the night, whilst my friend languished in his cell. Next morning, in Court, the officers were challenged by my friend to produce the bottles. Alas! They could not, since, as my friend wittily remarked, 'they had drunk the evidence.'"

"On my last day in New York I walked into the principal book store and said I was prepared to buy all the books dealing with Prohibition they had to sell. They had none. 'Prohibition!', said the salesman to me, 'Prohibition! Why there ain't no sech thing.' Next day I got on board the largest ship in the world, owned by the USA Government. It was bone dry, not merely until the Statue of Liberty was passed but, after much fuss, scandal and debate in Congress, throughout the voyage...I had no need to worry. You could have filled the swimming bath of that ship with the champagne and other liquors which were supplied openly to the passengers by the 'wine steward'."

Ironically, it was Prohibition which gave Americans a taste for Scotch. After the Act was repealed by F.D. Roosevelt in 1933, the demand was insatiable, and it was quickly met by Scotch whisky companies which had quietly prepared their agency networks during the dry years, through the good work of unsung heroes like Mr. F. Redfern.

Scotland. I peered into the mist to find an identifiable mark from which to check our progress. At last! There to the northwest was the low, unmistakable white-washed outline of Ardbeg Distillery, perched on a dark shore.

Our course was corrected to 290° magnetic and we celebrated having found Islay rather than rediscovering North America. Keeping our heading for Ardbeg the skipper noticed a eerie change in the light and our heading to North; "That's the ferry — not Ardbeg — you silly navigator! It's Macbrayne's Distillery returning to the mainland."

We corrected our course and made the party in good time. Later, with a few Lagavulins behind us, we got to missing; maybe all the Kildalton distilleries are really beached Macbrayne's steamers, and one day will put to sea again...



A NEW DISTILLERY

Martin Will, Tactician — *Spirit of Loch Fyne*

What do you get if you cross The Sound of Jura with a whisky retailer?

Enormously entertained is the answer. A great friend of mine had planned to go on this adventure; sail across to Islay for the closing piss-up of the Classic Malts Cruise at Lagavulin. But he couldn't make it, so upon learning that crew was required and with the spectacle of those fine thoroughbred yachts of the big spending industrial tycoons

TALKING GERMAN RUBBER

Helen Arthur

“The leggy blond appears to have got up and walked.” “It’s silky and sensuous”. Anyone peeping round the door seeing 35 men seated in a room looking up at a top table of six men and one woman and hearing these expressions could have been forgiven for thinking they had interrupted some sort of sex therapy meeting. Not so.

This was Ulf Buxrud’s mammoth Macallan tasting for a group of his friends and also to celebrate the Queen’s Jubilee, at the Landmark Hotel in London. Ulf is a whisky collector and connoisseur from Malmo in Sweden.

Ulf was born in 1942—a year when very few whisky companies were able to distil. Macallan was one of the few. He bought a bottle of the Macallan 1942 for £300—today it is worth £3,000—but Ulf’s isn’t worth that anymore because it was one of the whiskies included in the tasting. It would be interesting to speculate the value of all the whiskies we tasted, but perhaps we would all feel terrible if we knew the truth as much was thrown away at the end!

The tasting started with the 1942 and other vintages. Then a series of 18yos from 1960 to 1984, then younger cask strength samples plus three of new spirit from 2000 onwards. In total 53 whiskies were sampled.

And the *leggy blonde*? Well the Chairwoman (and your correspondent) was describing a 1978 18yo which belied its age and appeared to have no legs.

Michael Jackson also chose to use more sensual imagery to depict the whiskies: An 18yo from 1963 as ‘having a very smooth body—silky—difficult when talking about body in this way but it slides like silk—you know what I mean.’ When talking about the younger whiskies he spoke about the thrill of getting younger—if only he could!

Charles MacLean seemed to get into a German rubber tack for a 1972 18yo; ‘the Germans adore rubber... in whisky you understand—and they would enjoy the hint of rubber in this from the European oak.’ By the time he got to the younger whiskies he was enthusing about engine oil and polished oak. Listeners at the keyhole were left to wonder.

John Hansell from Malt Advocate Magazine said that by the fourth set of 10 glasses he ‘felt like the guy in Groundhog Day—I keep seeing ten whiskies, have a taste, go to the bathroom, come back and there’s 10 more! This is fun!’

Ulf of course had to keep having his say—and the Chair struggled to control his enthusiasm—much to the amusement of all others.

One clear lesson learned. Don’t add water! At least not to all of your sample, many of the older whiskies simply fell apart and faded away.

BEYOND DISTILLING III

Gavin D. Smith

Having taken a look in previous issues at some of the processes involved in turning raw spirit from a distillery into whisky in a bottle, it seemed time to go a stage further and examine the cunning ways in which the distiller persuades the consumer to part with money for that bottle of whisky.

Morrison Bowmore Distillers Ltd offered interesting opportunities to study this activity, partly because the company is widely associated with innovative advertising relating to its Bowmore single malt brand, and partly because much of its design work is generated ‘in house’, rather than being handled by external agencies.

Morrison Bowmore is a subsidiary of the Japanese distilling giant Suntory, and owns three Scottish distilleries, namely Bowmore on Islay, Auchentoshan near Glasgow, and Glen Garioch in Aberdeenshire. Bowmore, in its various expressions, from unaged ‘Legend’ to 40 years old, makes up half the total of cased goods sold by the company.

The firm’s headquarters is in the Glasgow district of Springburn, and is based around a former Metal box factory, which has been its home since 1986. Here blending, bottling and packaging operations take place, along with all the company’s design, marketing, management and administrative functions.

Sales and Marketing Director for Morrison Bowmore is Kenneth MacKay, who agreed to explore some aspects of whisky marketing with us.

“Is Scotch malt whisky distilling a cottage industry or a global, luxury goods business”, he muses. “Certain single malts sell increasingly in markets around the globe not only on the basis of how they were made and consumers in these markets will not have a great deal of appreciation of what happens in the distilleries, in the communities where whisky is produced”.

MacKay notes that because whisky requires time to mature once distilled “there is a finite amount of stock at any one point. You can’t just suddenly have more of it, so from a marketing point of view, you need to be more strategic than in almost any other industry. Only the nuclear industry has similar timescales!”

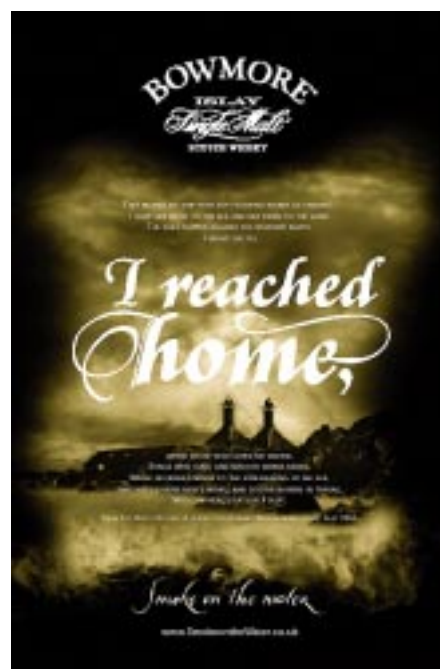
Regarding the marketing of Bowmore, he points out that “you should always remember that what we have here is a niche segment within a niche segment. In a marketing sense whisky can fulfil practical needs and ‘emotional’ needs. In terms of marketing theory a bottle of an Own label blend might fulfil the ‘functional’ need—to have a drink of alcohol, but a 1964 Bowmore, for example, might also fulfil a wide spectrum of ‘emotional’

needs – it’s not just a drink anymore”. “The typical single malt consumer doesn’t exist”, he claims. “You might divide the single malt consumer into a number of categories, for example the expert/enthusiast, the collector, the loyalist, the gift-giver, the bon viveur and the luxury goods consumer.

“The expert/enthusiast is probably the most ‘promiscuous’ of the consumers; to remain an expert he needs to try everything. The collector may be competitive; he may want more expressions of whiskies than fellow collectors, or be interested in whiskies as an investment. The loyalist will be loyal to a brand or distillery and he could be from any level of society. The luxury goods consumer will also be interested in other prestige brands: Bentley, Beluga and Bowmore! Of course, he may also be an expert/enthusiast! There are cross-overs between the different categories and certain categories are more important in certain markets than others.

“Getting consumer loyalty within each of the categories provides different challenges for us, and there is probably more intuition required in single malt marketing than with most other products. At the end of the day, consumers themselves are your best brand ambassadors. “We are currently in our fifth year of serious UK consumer advertising”, notes MacKay, “and we are no longer advertising specific Bowmore expressions. Our Bowmore consumers are mostly busy, stressed, urban-based people who may live in quite threatening environments. At an emotional level Bowmore offers a rural, timeless, hand-made, slower-paced alternative to their lives. We would like them to feel that they have escaped to a better place with Bowmore”.

When the first Bowmore promotional campaign was inaugurated, the initial images included an eye-catching, bare-



breasted sea maiden, far removed from the traditional iconography of Scottish soldiers and mist-shrouded lochs and bens used to sell whisky.

MacKay explains, “It was designed to grab attention. We needed something to get our heads above the parapet quickly, as the UK market for single malts was maturing rapidly and we needed to become a major player in a short space of time. It had to be memorable, so we decided to make it very different. The Bowmore name was largely unknown at the time, and the creative focus had to be on a simple, strong message which was upmarket and authentic”.

The adverts played on the mystical aspects of Islay, and used the strapline ‘smoke on the water’—a clever phrase designed to appeal to the age group who would readily associate it with the Deep Purple rock anthem of 1972, composed after the group watched the casino in Montreux burn down while recording in Switzerland.

“While focusing on attracting a younger age group, we also had to be careful not to alienate other groups, of course”, says MacKay. “In attracting the bon viveur, for example, we had to make sure we didn’t alienate the loyalists”.

Morrison Bowmore went on to produce a series of ‘legends’ advertisements. Each one focused on a piece of lore local to Islay, and despite cynical suggestions that they were surely made up over a dram or two of the product, MacKay insists that they were all authentic Hebridean legends.

The initial advertising campaign was the work of Edinburgh agency Citigate-SMARTS, with whom Morrison Bowmore Distillers Ltd still continue to be associated. Unusually for the whisky industry, much of the material is now generated ‘in house’, however, by Iain Gardiner. He produces images for advertising, packaging and promotional purposes, adapting and augmenting the basic elements originally established with Citigate-SMARTS. “Continuity of execution can be very efficiently and cost-effectively done ‘in house’”, says Kenneth MacKay.

Once the striking visual imagery of the early campaign had done its work, Morrison Bowmore decided to shift its strategy slightly. According to MacKay, “We felt we needed to communicate on a slightly different level. We wanted to emphasise Bowmore’s role in fulfilling the emotional need, suggest a spiritual homecoming. We kept the overall mystery of it all, but became less bold, a little more homely in a sense. We felt the strapline “I reached home” encapsulated the essence of Bowmore in three words”. The company is clearly doing something right, as Bowmore has now moved up to occupy the number four position in terms of overall volume sales for single malt in Scotland, having previously held



a market position outside the top dozen. 120,000 cases of Bowmore are sold globally per annum, 26,000 cases of which are consumed in the UK. Thirty per cent of all Bowmore sold is ‘Legend’, which carries no age statement, 30 per cent is 12 year old, and the remaining 40 per cent is made up of all the other expressions. In terms of UK advertising spend, Morrison Bowmore ranks third among Scotch whisky companies after Glenmorangie and Glenfiddich. The smart advertising only works, of course, if the product is on the shelves and bar gantries when the potential customer wants to buy it. Supermarkets are one important sales outlet, as are specialist retailers like Loch Fyne Whiskies, while the ‘on-trade’—or licensed premises—makes up the third segment of the domestic market. Steve Webb is Managing Director of Fiore Brands, a joint venture between Morrison Bowmore and Campari, which since June of this year has been ensuring that the firm’s products are in place ready to be sampled by drinkers who have bought into the advertising.

The on-trade accounts for some 18 per cent by volume for the Scotch whisky industry overall, a figure which has not altered much during the last decade. Fiore is keen to develop the on-trade, with Webb noting that a bottle of Bowmore in a bar could convert more than twenty potential customers! The place where most people try a new malt whisky for the first time is in a pub or hotel, rather than spending in excess of £20 on a bottle of something they are not sure to like.

Inevitably, much of the sales and marketing effort is directed at the various expressions of Bowmore, but what of the company’s other products?

Morrison Bowmore owns a number of blended whisky brands, including Rob Roy, which is about to undergo a packaging makeover and global re-launch. The blend competes in international markets with the likes of 100 Pipers and Vat 69, selling particularly well in South America, where between 300,000 and 400,000 cases of Morrison Bowmore’s

blended whisky are sold per annum. The re-launched Rob Roy will continue to be marketed in South America, while Spain, Thailand and Taiwan will also be targeted.

Of the company’s three single malt brands, Glen Garioch is the lowest-ranking in terms of sales, and as Kenneth MacKay notes, “We couldn’t do Bowmore-style advertising with it—it would be far too expensive. We sell it as an excellent value-for-money Highland malt at 10 year old and upwards, and its presentation uses archetypal Scottish images—tartan and a stag. Although its sales are modest they are growing quickly and it is useful to us because we need a good Highland malt for blending purposes as well as for exchanges with other distillers”.

Auchentoshan is that rare creature, a triple-distilled single malt, from one of a handful of surviving Lowland distilleries. It currently sells around 25,000 cases globally per annum, and is a particular favourite in Scandinavian markets. As with Glen Garioch, a ten year old is the principal expression.

According to MacKay, “we’re currently trying to position it as The Glasgow Malt—trying to make it the people of Glasgow’s whisky. The distillery is, after all, on their doorstep [at Dalmuir, close to the River Clyde]. It would be wonderful if we could convert five per cent of Glasgow’s blend drinkers to it!”

Morrison Bowmore are now sponsoring the Glasgow “Restaurant of the year” award and have established positive links with the city’s Lord Provost’s office. Civic visitors are now offered not a glass of blended whisky but a dram of specially bottled Auchentoshan when they are entertained in the City Chambers. “We’re still at the early stages of marketing the brand”, says MacKay, “but hopefully there are lots of opportunities ahead”.

The art—or science—of marketing has certainly come a long way since the days when a distiller felt that all he needed to do in order to sell his whisky was to print Ben, Glen, Loch or Royal on the label...



FREE!

This year we are giving away a **FREE**:

- **MINIATURE OF EDRADOUR**
- **COPY OF THE SCOTTISH FIELD**
- **LABEL PEELER** (see page 8)

See page 6 for more information.

UNCENSORED!

The full unexpurgated version of our fascinating interview with Andrew Symington can be found at lfw.co.uk/swr. It's twice as long as that published here on page 2.

FULL COLOUR!

Those of you presently enjoying our traditional black and white print of the *Scotch Whisky Review* may like to appreciate a glorious full colour version. This can be seen at lfw.co.uk/swr. Under the heading SWR18 you will find a link to down-load a printable 'PDF' version; the file is 500kb in size.

ROYALTY!

Also on our website there are more sensational pictures of Prince Charles receiving his bottle of The Loch Fyne.

NAKED!

(Bit tenuous this). On-line at lfw.co.uk you will also find lots of pictures of naked bottles—many standing next to their packaging but you can see everything!

[We have a vacancy for a headline writer.]



MICKEY GROUSE REACHES THE PRIZE THAT MALT DISNAE!

The Famous Grouse Experience at Glenturret Distillery has won a BAFTA. The new multimillion pound Perthshire attraction won the British Academy Film and Television Award in the Interactive Entertainment Category.

Pictured here are Derek Brown, Director of The Famous Grouse Experience and 'The Big Grouse' (right) discussing relative credit sizes.

DISTILLERY NEWS

Diageo have confirmed that **Rosebank** has been sold to the British Waterways Board. It is understood they plan to make the building part of the Forth-Clyde Canal Attraction.

Pittyvaich the Dufftown distillery (also closed 1993) has been demolished.

Rome stands on seven hills, Dufftown now stands on six stills.

Macbrayne's Distillery (page 9) is now on its winter timetable.

THE SCOTTISH FIELD

MERCHANTS' CHALLENGE

This is the second year for this interesting whisky award organised by Scottish Field Magazine.

Last year three retailers from LFW, Royal Mile Whiskies and Gordon & MacPhail conducted a blind tasting to make awards for the best malt whiskies in three price categories as well as an overall winner (Bruichladdich 20yo).

This year the judges are joined by The Whisky Shop and the December issue we are giving away lists all our nominations, seven whiskies for each price group.

In November we are meeting at the new Edinburgh whisky bar "M's" for the tasting accompanied by four members of the Scottish on-trade. The results will be published in January with an award ceremony in April. You will be able to follow developments at lfw.co.uk/swr where last year's results are available.

ALL CUSTOMERS—

VIRTUAL AND REAL

PLEASE NOTE

All deals offered at lfw.co.uk and on pages 6 & 7 are valid for mail order customers placing orders before **noon** on

Monday 17th December

This date is also the deadline for orders being delivered in time for Christmas, however we can try after this date.



Ordering from lfw.co.uk

On-line orders may not appear to include certain deals but be assured they will be included when serviced, if available.

Merry Christmas and a Good New Year to all our friends and customers.

Once again, thank you for your business.

SCOTCH WHISKY REVIEW is free to all bona fide mail order customers. **If you have not bought by mail order from the last (Spring) catalogue and do not buy from the accompanying (Autumn) list then we will not be troubling you again.** We are no longer sending out Stock Lists and SWRs to prospective customers more than once. If you or a friend would like a current stock list please ask and you will be sent one with a back-issue SWR. Your name will not be placed on our mailing list for further mailings until you have bought by mail order from us. Your name will not be passed to any other organisation.

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