



SCOTCH WHISKY REVIEW

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AULTIMATUM

So why don't we have any official bottlings from Aultmore—Eh?

It's five years since Bacardi took possession of Brackla, Craigellachie, Aberfeldy and Aultmore distilleries as part of their adoption of Dewar's—necessary to satisfy the monopolies people who are there to protect the consumers' interests.

The Miami Mafia have done well with Dewar's, increasing volume satisfactorily but their venture into single malt capitalisation—Dewar's World of Whisky at Aberfeldy—struggles, a shame as it's a top class display with no faults except, possibly, location.

By now there should be official or blender-authorized bottlings of all their distilleries—but nope! Our Stock List includes Aberfeldy only by virtue of the enterprise of the distillery management—but why not the other three?

Unfortunately there remains a middle tier of distillery owners (Bacardi, Allied, Pernod) who are under the illusion that they actually own their distilleries. Eejits! This is Scotland! You don't own things here—you are merely custodians! These distilleries are not just component manufacturers for your blends! They are proud, individual enterprises driven by intelligent and conscientious communities born of a heritage that produced the world's great doctors, soldiers, inventors—lawyers, [okay, 3 out of 4 ain't bad].

In the mid-70s, a blenders' league of singles was created recognising the desirability of distillery products. Nowadays Aultmore is the only blenders' top-class distillery not bottled by its custodian. We know it's good, Inverarity's Ancestral from Aultmore is testimony to that but the ignorant brand-driven alcohol-beverage-industry players that 'own' Aultmore apparently are not aware of this. I suspect they are too busy dispensing their short-cut to alcoholism—the *Bacardi Breezer*—and ergo, devoid of self esteem about their special assets. Either that, or they are simply too idle to do anything about it.



CAPTION COMPETITION

Here's a 70cl bottle of rare Port Ellen Islay Single Malt Scotch Whisky, distilled in 1978 and bottled after 24 years at cask strength—59% alcohol, a limited release from a distillery that sadly will never work again; a real treasure.

The people ogling it are thought to be politicians.

GLENGOYNE

Ian MacLeod and Co. have bought Glengoyne Distillery and the Lang's brand that has been associated with it. Glengoyne has been cherished by previous owner Edrington, who have sold it and Bunnahabhain in order to concentrate on their favoured brands of Macallan, Highland Park and Grouse. Family owned and highly respected, Ian MacLeod & Co. was founded in 1936 by Leonard Russell, the father and grandfather of the present Chairman and Managing Director. Their principal products are Isle of Skye and Chieftain's Choice whiskies, London Hill Gin and Watson's Rum. Based in Broxburn, west of Edinburgh, they employ 35 people and are a joint owner (with Grant's of Glenfarclas) of Broxburn bottlers employing a further 85.

Their acquisition of Glengoyne, which produces superb whisky, is very good news for whisky fans.

BUNNAHABHAIN

CL World Brands, the Trinidad based new owner of Burn Stewart PLC, has relocated its drinks headquarters to Scotland and announced the acquisition of Islay's Bunnahabhain Distillery from Edrington. The distillery's future has been uncertain for some time despite devoted fans and industry recognition—their *Auld Acquaintance* bottling won the overall trophy in the 2002 Scottish Field Merchant's Challenge.

CL Financial lists its interests as primarily insurance and finance but also energy production, real estate, natural resources and booze. Prior to taking control of Burn Stewart (Scottish Leader, Deanston & Tobermory) in December 2002, their main drinks brand was Angoustoura Bitters but they also produce substantial volumes of bulk rum and white spirits in America and Europe. The East Kilbride headquarters will administer sales of \$230m p.a.

THE SURVIVOR



We lost track of time when in conversation with Bill Bergius; here's a concise transcript.

LFW: What is your job?

I am Head of Brand Heritage for Allied Distillers—part of Allied Domeq. My main functions are Scotch Whisky training for our people; organising visits to Scotland for 'hearts and minds' brand experiences, and helping our distributors worldwide to add value to our brands, primarily Ballantine's but also Teacher's and Laphroaig.

'Brand Heritage' came about in the early 90s as companies became production-only operations rather than production-distribution-sales-and-marketing. When sales and marketing was moved we had to convey the imagery and knowledge of our product to those selling it. Scotch needs support from Scotland, personalities, gravitas—heritage. Most of my time is devoted to Ballantine's, the jewel in our crown—6.5 million cases every year, Teacher's—1.7 million cases, mainly in the UK and Brazil, and I have a little time for our malts.

LFW: Tell us about Allied Domeq. Allied Domeq has been formed by various consolidations; initially the businesses of George Ballantine, William Teacher and Long John.

In 1976 the Teacher family—of which I am a member—found it tough competing with the massive Distillers' Company Ltd, despite our selling nearly 2 million cases in the UK. For both family and financial reasons Teacher's was sold to Allied Brewers (Tetley's and Skol).

In 1982 Allied Brewers bought Lyons (creating Allied Lyons) and after the acquisition of Hiram Walker's drinks interests in 1988 Allied Distillers was created to look after Ballantine's, Stewart's Cream of the Barley and other Hiram brands such as Maker's Mark, Kahlúa, Courvoisier and seven distilleries.

In 1991 Allied acquired Long John, the spirits interests of Whitbread Brewers including Beefeater Gin and Laphroaig.

In the following year came the major acquisition of the Domeq Company, the world's largest producers of brandy.

With Long John came our principal malt—Laphroaig, already a well-recognised, individual and well-promoted single malt and since 1991 Whitbread have laid down enough stock to grow the brand. Without Laphroaig it's true that Allied has made no progress in the malt sector over the last ten years.

LFW: Ballantine's is very successful. Hiram's novel perspective on selling took Ballantine's to Europe's number 1. Hiram Walker of Canada did all the right things from 1970 onwards. Their American market was struggling but they realised that as they didn't have much business in Europe they could go out and make some; they were early to establish good distributors and create a solid ground-breaking whisky marketing programme that suggested 'the good life'. Even now, Ballantine's 'living the game' style is not far away from those ideas—it recognises a truth that men play in just about everything they do.

LFW: Happy accident or genius?

It was part of the strategic plan. They moved the marketing team to Switzerland to be closer to the European market, unlike the rest of the industry that was still based in Scotland sending out 'missionaries'.

Ballantine's is a remarkable product range. They were only in the malt business until about the 1910s but by 1930 they had developed aged blends, long before any other—it was the 60s before the release of Chivas 12yo. Since then they have always planned to sell whisky of 17 to 30 years, as a result we still fill casks suited for developing aged whisky. If you are planning a 12yo whisky you don't put it in the same cask as a 30yo, the cask would spoil the whisky by the time it was 30.

LFW: How long have you been in the Whisky industry?

I joined the family business of Teacher's Scotch Whisky in 1970 after a stretch in the army. Bergius' have been involved in distilling for the past 120 years.

My great-grandfather married the daughter of William Teacher, who founded Teacher's in 1830. William was one of those remarkable Victorians who grew up with very little to become a man of strong principles and be known as a great reformer. Even the anti-alcohol lobby saw him as somebody who, while he may be selling drink, did it in such a way that got their admiration. His pubs had rules such as no smoking, or no treating—you couldn't buy anybody-else a drink as this led to 'drinking sessions'. He started in the shipbuilding areas of Glasgow and he knew that the wives would be more content if their husbands went to a Teacher's pub.

Teacher's Highland Cream was one of the first to be registered in the 1880s,

prior to that there was little bottling or branding of Scotch. Apart from Highland Cream there have been other whiskies including 'Australian Bonded Teacher's'—until the Matured Spirits Act of 1916 there was no requirement for distillers to age their product, but by shipping it round the world and back in cask the consumer new it wasn't made last week! (I think Australia was a place to store casks without having to pay rates). Teacher's had two distilleries, Ardmore and Glendronach, both always the heart of the Teacher's flavour since the 1890s. When I joined, Teacher's was totally self-contained. They originally had bottling facilities under the railway arches at King Street in Glasgow. Very Dickensian! In 1962 they opened a big purpose-built operation at Springburn with a capacity of 4 million cases when, for the first time, they had enough whisky to meet demand and they went from 100,000 to 1 million cases by 1972. That put us into the no 1 UK spot.

Teacher's had been No 1 in the US in the 1930s. All distillers faced a post-war shortage but Teacher's was so badly affected that other producers were able to take business away that was never recovered. During my four years we arrested our decline but it was difficult against Johnny Walker and Dewar's, whose method was to hold us out by keeping prices low. Even J & B and Cutty Sark had difficulties in the 1980s. My first 4 years was in charge of selling in the US where I was probably the first to hold a single malt tasting. I wasn't aware of anyone else doing it at the time anyway. People paid \$30 to come and listen to me in New York. From that we rolled out a series of tastings to promote Teacher's Scotch Whisky but we ended up being closed down by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco & Firearms because, since prohibition, tasting of spirits was not allowed—you could taste beer and wine but spirits were thought to get your customers drunk and force them to sign orders they were not able to make in the first place.

By the time I left the US in 1976 Glendronach was the no. 3 malt—a long way behind Glenlivet and Glenfiddich but on top of the rest.

LFW: Teacher's has a very distinctive, bold flavour.

What I think gives Teacher's its extraordinary flavour is the range of malts, but especially Ardmore. It is not so much that you can taste the Ardmore but it is one of those wonderful whiskies that as a single is quite exciting; buttery and oily, but it has a flavour that makes all other whisky characters change, a great aid to the blender—a bit like using vanilla in cooking. When we add Ardmore it creates the Teacher's flavour, very difficult to describe—predominantly bitter with an overlay of sweetness that comes from sherry casks. You get a formation of

'heavier' sugar crystals from the sherry combining with the sugars of the wood that are extracted during maturation.

LFW: Has the flavour changed?

I think all blends have gradually changed, probably with every second generation; we don't peat whiskies as heavily as they used to, there aren't the same range of whiskies available to the blender and the types of wood has changed. Whisky came in dark bottles because on a cold night the Scotch would cloud or haze. It didn't look great but it really didn't affect the taste.

With the invention of chillfiltering in the 1920s by Teacher's to reduce haze there was a loss of some flavours. The blender has to blend additional flavour to be able to match how the whisky had been with just barrier filtering.

LFW: What? Teacher's invented chillfiltering?

No, but they pioneered it for Scotch in about 1924. The rest of the industry caught up by the 1950s.

There is a strong inventive streak in the Bergius family. We've made Motorcars, marine engines, a method of making food from wood and there was one Bergius who won a Nobel prize for converting coal into oil. However these are all irrelevant when compared with my grandfather's development of the modern cork in 1913! Before that, a bottle had a driven cork that required a corkscrew. He shortened the cork to reduce friction and topped it with a cap secured by a wooden dowel.

LFW: Long John is pretty fierce.

It is. It is a blend that has heritage in heavily peated Laphroaig and that gives it distinctiveness but it is not the rich, deep style or complexity of Teacher's or the sweetness of Ballantine's. Long John is more in-her-face.

LFW: Do you miss Teacher's?

I very much regret that the family sold the business. I have such a strong affinity with the brand and its quality. I am annoyed that many think 'there's Bill Bergius—he doesn't have to work' or, 'Allied's being nice to him'—not true. Teacher's was sold for not very much, which was spread thinly between about 50 members so I have to work and I want to work here.

LFW: We don't see much malts activity from Allied.

Everyone knows that Allied has done nothing with its single malts. We are up a tree with our bottoms showing.

Our core malts are the pungent Laphroaig, Scapa from Orkney and Glendronach, 100% sherry cask matured. Those three are the strategy of malts as created by Jeremy Weatherhead before he moved on in 1994. Since then we have kept Laphroaig at the forefront of Islay malts. We have also had 'The Caledonian Malts', which included Tormore and Miltonduff, but that project faded through lack of attention and the

'Defenders of the Malt', was a programme brought together by the market (America) rather than us. Since Weatherhead was promoted we have had a rather appalling turnover of people in charge of marketing our malts.

Laphroaig has done well but we haven't done anything with Glendronach except sell all we have spare and Scapa just about sells everything we have. Not much of a strategy, just to sell out. It is going to change now but somebody should have planned it 12 years ago.

Allied has been preoccupied with the nineties ethos of profit, consolidation and focus. We took marketing closer to the consumer and made the business more profitable. In Dumbarton we have a world-class production plant running 24 hours a day with a multi-tasking workforce, the result of the drive for efficiency. Allied owns most of its distribution companies around the world giving focussed marketing of our brands. With all this we have forgotten about the single malts that are so important to whisky and Scotland.

In future we are going to focus Glendronach primarily in Germany, USA, UK and duty free. All other markets will be dried up. Glendronach Distillery is back in operation after nearly six years closure because it is needed for single malt—and for Teacher's. When a business is being hard driven the mindset is how to cut costs and it's easy to make silly decisions and lose sight of the whole. Glendronach is a good example of this; one of the smallest distilleries in Scotland, with coal-fired stills and one of the more expensive to run, a simple calculation means it has to close. Now it has reopened with a plan not just to keep it open but also to introduce some heat recovery systems in order to optimise flavour and reduce costs. It is the last distillery with coal fires still operating but that will change too. Two years ago we converted Ardmore from coal to steam and I initially said 'this is not Ardmore' but after playing with the steam and the cut of the spirit I am happy that it is now identical to the old coal-fired Ardmore. We plan to do the same for Glendronach.

LFW: You have other distilleries.

We have 1 grain and 10 malt distilleries of which Glencadam and Imperial are mothballed and Scapa is working occasionally. Our other malts; Glenburgie, Glentauchers, Miltonduff, and Tormore are busy. Not 7 days a week but as busy as we would like. Allied was early to start closing distilleries in the 1990s—we foresaw an overproduction in the industry and mothballed some and slowed down others. But as Ballantine's has been doing consistently well, compounding a 6 million case brand by 5% a year, an awful lot more whisky is required.

LFW: Laphroaig is an acquired taste. All the beauty of drinking Laphroaig is

contained in the 10yo. There are some fanatics who want more 'raw' Laphroaig. When you open it, it is not just smoky; it's like my granny's peat fire—blue peat smoke, an extraordinary whisky that smells like hospitals yet when you taste it, gives a burst of incredible sweetness, then spice, smoke and eventually salt. It is nice to have 15yo, it is easier to drink because the smoke is less. (I suspect that some 15yo drinkers can't stand the smell and taste of a peat fire—in fact they can't stand Laphroaig!) But there is nothing like the 10yo.

LFW: Is the 10yo deliberately less pungent than the 'Cask Strength'?

'Cask Strength' is only barrier filtered; the other is chillfiltered at 2°C. At below 50% alc. you will get a haze, particularly in Glendronach and Laphroaig. Some people jump to conclusions that because it is chillfiltered it is not good. I don't agree—it is different. In 'cask strength' the smoke smell is not more intense yet deeper, there are more things going on. The taste is simply explosive! If you drink it at 57%, when you put it in your mouth that little bit of reduction releases so many things. 10yo Laphroaig is a great representative product and 'Cask Strength' is for those who want it; I don't believe we are depriving anyone by chillfiltering Laphroaig.

LFW: Laphroaig has done well despite Allied's lack of malt effort.

Allied owes the success of Laphroaig to two men, Jeremy Weatherhead and Iain Henderson, the young turk and the distillery manager. They created the Friends of Laphroaig with Iain as the 'head of the family'—it worked exceptionally well and Iain is very adept at handling visitors. (He also has the benefit of Carol, an outstanding hostess). I am really sorry that we couldn't have Iain continue as a consultant. Allied's retirement rules (somewhat cruelly) would not allow him to continue as a distillery manager. I suspect he's happier now at Edradour, dirty hands and all that.

Robin Shields starts at Laphroaig about now and as I have worked with him for the last few months I am very comfortable that the future of Laphroaig and its public face are in excellent hands.

LFW: Your desert Island dram?

Teacher's Highland Cream. I can drink that on an everyday basis, enough to excite the palate but as with any good blend it fades away soon leaving my palate fresh and ready for the next sip.

For a single malt; Ardmore—when it was bottled for Teacher's Board of Directors from a sherry cask, a first fill Oloroso—a magic drink! And now Laphroaig—a reminder of granny's peat fire!

For variety, I would hope somebody had hidden a bottle of Ballantine's 17yo.

LFW: Thank you.

You can read the full version of this long and wide-ranging discussion at lfw.co.uk/swr.

DEVIL'S ADVOCATE



Turnbull Hutton

INVESTOR'S CHRONICLE

I'm not consulted often as to what people should do with their money. Mind you, this could have something to do with my track record. Let's leave aside for the moment my portfolio of shares, where some wide-boy has successfully managed to lose half the value of my investment. Nothing odd there you may say, hasn't everyone's portfolio suffered similarly? Probably, but that may be due as much to following the herd instinct as against picking bums in terms of companies or indeed sectors. I'm sure if I had left my investments in certain drinks companies I would not have had the losses I now sadly contemplate. So I am probably a supporter of drinks in their wisest sense... in more ways than one perhaps.

However I was really referring in the opening paragraph to my other major self managed investments, and these could give the first clue as to why I am not called upon often to dispense financial advice. You'll want to know what these blue chip investments are no doubt: well, with not a little embarrassment, I'll tell you—if you promise not to spread it around.

How's about a 25% stake in the holding company which has a controlling interest in a Second Division Scottish League football team. A "stormer" that one... a licence to print money. Or there's my classic car... never depreciates... a hedge against the vagaries of the stock market. If one forgets about the never ending garage bills, the rebuilds, the entry fees for the odd event or two and the other costs associated with keeping going a 38 year old example of British engineering at its best... I really can't lose with this one either. Then there is the racehorse—well two of them actually—although one is almost constantly injured and doesn't do a lot other than eat regularly and get new shoes... often! And there are another three joint owners to share the costs—and the glory—with, so I've cleverly minimised my exposure. I'm really something of a guru then when it comes to investing. So pay attention.

I note with interest the spectacular investment opportunities that are currently being touted in other whisky pub-

lications. You know the kind of thing... a bond payment... anything from £500 to £2000. Unique club membership, bottles now or at some time in the future. Some cleverly worded blurb that the as-yet unbuilt distillery will make the product in the original way... whatever the hell that means. Some implied criticism (a Grouse perhaps?) of the way existing distillery owners go about their business... and a promise of great future opportunities specific to the bondholder. Bells are ringing here – and I don't mean the UK's no 1 blend either.

*A choice of
selected malts,
cask strength,
filtered only
through
unwashed
ladies tights*

It's not that many years ago we were urged to buy casks of whisky for investment purposes. Remember that one? That was where the major companies allegedly never carried sufficient stocks for their future sales and therefore bought from the market in future years. The returns were mindblowing. Sadly, however, the arithmetic—whilst correct—was based on seriously unrelated numbers. It was easy to get a 2- or 300% "return" on investment if one started with a filling price from the distillery (no duty, no warehouse rent) and then work up the numbers of bottles one could expect from the cask in 5, 8 or 12 years time multiplied by the selling price of a 5, 8 or 12 year bottle of an equivalent product... this time inclusive of duty!

"Investors" also had "opportunities" to buy young previously distilled spirit. This was based on someone's perception of "market price"—and other examples of market prices were often quoted demonstrating what the "investment" would be worth if you simply sat tight. Maybe they forgot to explain warehouse rental charges, or that market prices—like my shares—can fluctuate wildly.

Many "investors" wanted out after a year or two. It was then that they discovered that the major whisky companies had no need or desire to purchase casks of whisky. Even if they did, "market prices" were far lower than the "in-

vestors" had been led to believe. A con-trick they cried... groupings came together to seek justice. Too late, The Scotch Whisky Association made a statement warning the gullible. The damage was done however. The Serious Fraud Squad became involved... arrests in London, and Gibraltar... companies wound up... eventually jail sentences for some and others on the periphery of all the shenanigans desperately buying back stocks from disillusioned investors.

Now, far be it from me to suggest that "investing" in new distilleries—as yet unbuilt—is in any way risky. Far be it from me to link the investment scams of the 90s to the new thinking around boutique distilleries in hitherto virgin areas of Scotland. But go in with your eyes wide open. Do remember these other "investment opportunities" of past years. There are still people out there hurting... and I am something of an expert on hurting given the investments I have!

Why bother "owning" a distillery... it's only a factory after all. A means to an end. Save your money on the factory investment... buy a bottle or two of the output from many years ago instead. The mighty Loch Fyne Whiskies will be delighted to advise... hell the editor will parcel and post your order to you personally! You'll also be able to partake of your purchase there and then... no waiting till it matures!

*— or should
that be ladies
unwashed
tights?*

If you crave club membership... join the Scotch Malt Whisky Society. A choice of selected single malts, cask strength, filtered only through unwashed ladies tights—or should that have been ladies unwashed tights—whatever! They have Club Rooms, newsletter, special offers... even accommodation. They don't need to own the factory... if they don't, why should you?

If, however, you are determined to go ahead, if you have money burning a hole in your pocket, if you crave club membership, if you need a conversation stopper at parties... maybe I can help. Shares can be made available in Raith Rovers Football Club. You may want to sponsor a wheel or a wing on a 1965 Mini Cooper S. Or hows about a fetlock or two on a couple of racehorses? I know the editor will pass on to me all of your enquiries. I look forward to hearing from you.

[Likewise—Ed.]



THE INVERARITY RANGE

adopted as our house malts

The Inverarity range is bottled by Inverarity Vaults and all three have been adopted as our 'house malts' because of their quality and great value. The three malts, two single and one vatted, complement each other and demonstrate the range of styles in malt Scotch Whiskies.

INVERARITY 10yo

The 10yo has been our house malt since 1995. It is an all-day everyday dram which both novice and experienced whisky fans enjoy because of its easy drinking Dalwhinnie/Glenmorangie style; a real example of quality and value. The 10yo is a bourbon cask matured Aultmore, try serving it alongside a fruit desert—trifle or fruit salad—instead of wine!

Inverarity 10yo, price £ 19.90.

INVERARITY ANCESTRAL 14yo

For Ancestral—the digestif in the range—Inverarity's Hamish Martin has selected a 14yo sherry cask matured Balmenach. The whisky is ruby-red, extremely smooth with a great strength and complexity and very slightly sherry-cloying in the mouth; a wonderful after dinner dram. Add a little while preparing a bramble crumble—honest!

The 14yo Ancestral is £ 27.90.

INVERARITY ISLAY 10yo

The Inverarity range is completed by Inverarity Islay, a ten year old all-Isly vatted malt made up of four components. A very emphatic phenolic and medicinal character—peat and iodine—classic Isly; a good oiliness, powerful flavours yet also a breeze of fresh air. This is an excellent variation on Isly malts which provokes much debate among Isly fans as to where the four components come from—and we're not telling!

Inverarity Isly 10 years old, £23.90.

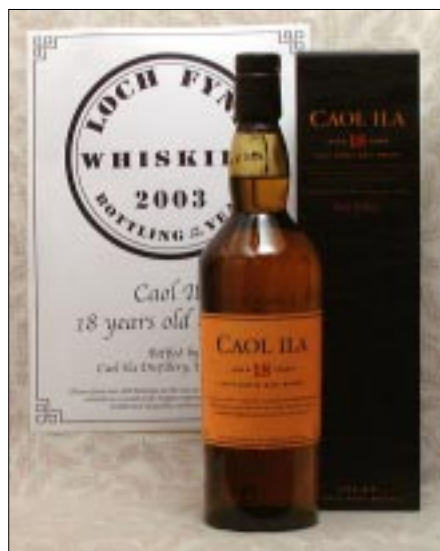


Of all the bottles we stock—and there are plenty of them—we elect one our 'Bottling of the Year' based on customer reaction in the shop, value and unusualness; a democratic selection with (arguably) the world's largest tasting panel! Always a tough decision, the runners up were the OB Clynelish 14yo, a peaty variant from Jura called 'Superstition', an un-chillfiltered Signatory Brora (again) and Ledaig 20yo.

But this year's choice is the new Caol Ila 18 year old. It may not appeal universally, but to those who enjoy a powerful Isly Malt, this is something rather special and worthy of your attention.

Typically Caol Ila ('Cull-eela'—from Kyle of Isly) is an oily heavyweight of a peaty potency just below Laphroaig, Ardbeg or Lagavulin but no malt has as persistent a finish as Caol Ila—it lasts weeks! Smoky, fishy, rubbery notes make it so appealing (believe it or not).

Eighteen years in a plain oak cask has introduced a new wood character that for other drams often doesn't work but it does here. It is more complex and better as a whisky—but not as a typical Caol Ila; it's softer. Tight and round. Apples & pears, floral, Parma violets, oak (lots), card, must, grass and a wee reek of old fish. If you don't object to a medicinal dram and haven't tried it, Caol Ila is an essential. **Price is £35.20.** Check the shop or lfw.co.uk for occasional deals throughout the year.



"A friend of mine held some mixed Clynelish and Glenlivet of mine to be the best whisky he had ever drunk".

George Saintsbury

Notes on a Cellar - book - 1921

To celebrate our ten years survival we are organising a couple of interesting and unique bottlings that will be released over the next few months.

SAINTSBURY'S BEST

Signatory's warehouse is home to a hogshead of an equal mix of old Brora and sherry cask matured Glenlivet, marrying in accordance with George Saintsbury's instructions for a special Living Cask (see also page 10). [Clynelish was the name for the now closed and renamed Brora distillery.] The cask has been marrying for six months now and is very promising [well, great!—actually]; neither the peat nor the sherry is diminished by the amalgamation.

DECADENCE!

At the 1999 International Wine & Spirit Competition, a bottling of Inverarity Ancestral from Aultmore Distillery won the Gold award. That's now exhausted but Inverarity have confessed to hoarding a cask of the same whisky which has been maturing at reduced strength of 40% for a further four years. This whisky is truly spectacular and we are honoured to have it bottled for our tenth anniversary.

Check the shop or lfw.co.uk/news over the summer for details of availability.



“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

The busy summer season in our shop gives us 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 in Scotland**, otherwise it cannot be

called *Scotch*. It must also be bottled at 40% alcohol or more in order to retain flavour—see the note about how to drink.

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 poisonous, you will go blind, your hair will fall out—and it's illegal.

Scotch whisky must contain barley and *Malt* Whisky must be made exclusively from water, malted barley, yeast and nothing else. Maturation (which is the biggest contributor to flavour) must be in oak, traditionally former sherry or bourbon casks.

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; it is produced by a complex and cumbersome batch process that makes accountants really squirm. There is no such thing as a double malt unless you are with your rich father-in-law at the bar (technically termed 'a large one'). Single malts attract great acclaim; 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.

Single Malt whisky is one of four types of Scotch. The most common is **blended whisky**, a mix of many different malt 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 satis-

fying subtlety and complexity.

Grain whisky is an accountant's kind of product; industrially produced in an efficient, continuous process from a variety of cereals sourced from around the world—but always including a measure of malted barley (for bio-chemical reasons). This spirit is not fully distilled; a degree of impurity is required to add character—by law.

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 'Pure Malt' or '100% malt'. Some are very good, for example Famous Grouse Vintage Malt, our Bottling of the Year for 2001.

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?

2,234. Actually nobody knows! It could be five times that and there is no way of counting them. Consider the number of small brands (like our own Loch Fyne), supermarket brands, specific market (duty-free) brands which come and go and the task is impossible and pointless. Loch Fyne Whiskies has a most comprehensive range of UK available malts with examples from about 120 distilleries. There are currently about 80 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. The main compounds responsible for flavour (congeners) in whisky are very soluble in alcohol but less so in water. At bottling strength 40% or above, these congeners remain locked in the solution (hence the minimum 40%alc. bottling law, agreed by wise men to preserve



OFFICIAL, OWNERS OR ORIGINAL BOTTLINGS (OB)

When bottled by the owner of the distillery, we call such bottlings official, owners or original bottlings (OB). These are examples of the best in quality, packaging and design. Here is a range of OB Bruichladdichs from the last twenty years including limited editions, ceramic bottles, wooden boxes and, at the front the most recent with shiny metal tins (inspired by LFW as it happens...)



INDEPENDENT BOTTLERS

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

Loch Fyne Whiskies favours a few 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.

CADENHEAD (C)

Campbeltown in Argyll is home to Cadenhead, who buy and also mature casks of whisky and bottle each cask individually at natural cask strength,

occasionally as high as 67% alcohol. At over 150 years, Cadenhead is the oldest independent bottler in Scotland.

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% and not chill-filtered. In our view this is the perfect bottling strength, just strong enough to tingle the tongue!

DOUGLAS LAING & Co. (MP, OMC)

A long established firm of blenders which has moved recently into single malts with two jazziily presented expressions: *McGibbon's Provenance* is bottled at 43%, *Old Malt Cask* at 50% (or less if the cask is not up to that strength). As blenders they have access to some rare and unusual stocks.

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

The leading and most respected independent bottler with a huge range of

malts and blends, 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 43% and at cask strength and now also at 46% without chill-filtration. They have produced some outstanding and very rare whiskies and are consistently good value. Signatory has twice been voted 'Bottler of the Year' in Whisky Magazine's Whisky Academy awards.

quality). When water is added, the congeners become less soluble and are released as vapours into the atmosphere. 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.

Part of the fun of malt whisky is the testing and breaking of these rules! Try ice! or mixing two different malts together. **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 **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 **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 ex-sherry or bourbon cask. A recent development in malt whiskies is the production of 'finishes' where the whisky has had some of its maturation in a cask that has previously held a wine or port for example. This creates a huge potential for further variety.

What are 'Cask Strength' Whiskies?

Whisky matures in the barrel at about 65%. Typically, prior to bottling it is diluted to 40-43% 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 concentration of

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.

What's this about 'chill-filtering'?

Untreated, whisky at 40% alcohol will cloud at low temperatures. In the mid-1960s, the Scotch Whisky industry introduced a policy of chill-filtering their whiskies to improve clarity and brightness. This prevented quality rejection in (cold) warehouses and clouding when ice is added in the glass. The process is done by reducing the temperature to as low as minus 8-10°C (typically in malts at plus 2-5°C) then filtering to remove the oils that emulsify at such low temperatures and so eliminating clouding.

The process also removes many of the elements of flavour (congeners) from the whisky and now, after the lead set by Pip Hills and the Scotch Malt Whisky Society, many independent bottlings and some official bottlings (e.g. the new Bruichladdichs or Ardbeg 10yo) are increasingly not chill-filtered, a trend that we applaud. Such bottlings should be at over 46%alc as this helps keep the congeners in solution and clear.

For reasons of 'purity' there is currently

a move away from the use of **spirit-caramel** colouring in single malts. This is employed to standardise colour in the bottle, (some whiskies can be quite pale,) but in most cases caramel has little effect on flavour.

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! Finally there is a collector’s market for whisky—that explains the more extreme prices!

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 may change, not always for the worse, but eventually a whisky may 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:

Most informed—Charles MacLean’s *Malt Whisky* £ 25.00 or *Scotch Whisky Pocket Guide* £ 8.99.

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

Whisky Magazine is published seven times a year. Other book recommendations are shown in bold in our Stock List. To keep you up to date visit our website: lfw.co.uk.

“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 (we hear mutterings of ‘one centre of excellence’).

Working with us are Andy Burns, Pete Currie and Laura Simpson plus our new greeter Hamish-of-the-Isles (but it’s okay he doesn’t drink) pictured above. Hamish 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 whisky book shelf possible.

There is also a gallery of collectors’ and rare bottles on display plus a selection of whiskies from around the world donated by customers featuring such unlikely products as Maltese, Polish and South African whiskies!

Visitors to our shop enjoy the atmosphere and our service and most get to do some sampling from our extensive tasting stock before they buy. Our (much imitated) web-site lfw.co.uk is acclaimed and thought to be ground-breaking by virtue of its simplicity!

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 which now makes up half of our business.

In 2000 Richard was inducted (induced?) as a *Keeper of the Quaich*, a unique organisation which recognises those who have contributed to the good standing of the Scotch Whisky Industry.

In 2002, at the inaugural Whisky Academy awards organised by *Whisky Magazine*, a panel of members of the whisky industry voted us ‘Retailer of the Year’.

We are proud of our business and the respect we have earned, this newsletter, our blend ‘The Loch Fyne’ and unique ‘Living Cask’. Be assured that when you deal with Loch Fyne Whiskies you are dealing with the best!

Our customers are worldwide, very loyal and very much appreciated.

COLLECTING WHISKIES

Some points to consider

The satisfaction of collecting whiskies holds considerably more pleasure than all of today’s ‘manufactured’ collectables—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 want to buy whisky as an investment—walk away now, buy lottery tickets. Every collector has gems worth several times their cost but it is possible the whole collection will not be appreciated at all. Assemble your collection for your pleasure and not for your future. So what do you want to collect? It’s a question worth considering early on, otherwise you will create a diverse, confused collection which 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 and try to stick to it. Generally the thoughts are: malt or blend? (usually malt); only official bottlings or any? (usually OB first choice, then independent if necessary); what top price? (are you prepared to be victim to a lavishly presented rarity, fifty times more expensive than the norm?) Simple specialisations may be a specific region, fancy shaped bottles or ranges such as the *Rare Malts* series.

One 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; Ardbeg, Bowmore & Springbank are favoured for a steady trickle of interesting releases. Macallan have recently released too many, excessively expensive bottlings. Greed has destroyed their market for new bottlings (old Macallan bottles are doing well).

Astute buying of ‘ordinary’ bottlings can do well; as they get repackaged or discontinued they become desirable with time. For premium priced ‘collectables’ the ratio of number of bottles released to price is an important factor. Consider the total number produced. A release of up to 600 uniquely presented bottles is scarce; 2,000 bottles and a sensible price is worthwhile. Bowmore’s 40yo release of 300 bottles at £4,000 is wrong (there aren’t that many mugs in the world), however their ‘Black Bowmore’ series of three would have set you back £ 300 and now realises £ 4,000!

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



The LOCH FYNE™

Blend of

SCOTCH WHISKIES

THE MALT DRINKERS BLEND™



THE DISTILLERY

Our label depicts the Glendarroch Distillery sited on the Crinan Canal which 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.

We're delighted with 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 (£ 15.30) 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.

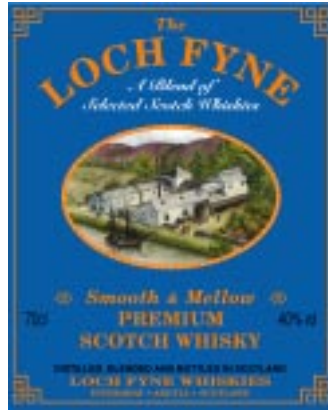
Flavours: light heather-honey, grassy, fragrant, smokiness develops, especially in the finish.

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."

Jim Murray lists it in his unique book 'Classic Blended Scotch' concluding "Highly drinkable". Whisky Magazine rated it as "a wee cracker" and in a blind tasting of 'deluxe' blends in Wine Magazine The Loch Fyne ("growly, rich and balanced") embarrassed several more expensive and older well-known brands by coming 9th in a field of 21—the highest scoring unaged blend, beating Chivas Regal 12yo, Ballantine's 12yo and W&M 30yo among others!

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



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.

Malt whisky is best enjoyed with a glass that will hold aromas, such as our *port glass*, the new *blender's glass* or a *classic nosing glass* with its 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 aid contemplative enjoyment.

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



Blender's Glass (second left)	£ 4.50
Classic Nosing Glass (middle)	£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

We have other hardware accessories for enjoying your dram, consult lfw.co.uk for more information.



The LIVING CASK™

A unique recreation of the storing and serving of malt whisky

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 57% alc.

Living Cask subscriber Jack Mangus 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!"*



The LIVING CASK

VOLUME XV

At the time of writing volume XV is almost depleted but was created by the addition of 24 year old Ardmore.

Bill Bergius is right on page 2; Ardmore has a remarkable contribution to a mix of whiskies. Although not peaty in itself it creates an intriguing peat element to the dram which in this case has also an orange sweetness and a mouth-feel like a floppy duvet!

LIVING CASK— 20cl 56% £14.90



SUBSCRIPTIONS

For the Living Cask enthusiast there is a subscription service where we will automatically send you each new volume, once it has settled in. New subscribers willing to buy the next five volumes are offered a FREE copy of *The Malt Whisky Cellar Book* (£15) that provides space for you to record your impressions of each volume—and more! Ask or check lfw.co.uk for details.

We have other items featuring Topsy, our Living Cask Boy: pewter key-rings & bottle stoppers (£4.90 each).

Be hip! Show them you're a whisky lover!



A DYNAMIC DECADE

GAVIN D SMITH

Considering that the recorded history of Scotch goes back to 1494, surely very little can have happened in the decade since Loch Fyne Whiskies opened its doors, and the first four-page Scotch Whisky Review appeared the following spring. Not so.

112 distilleries were represented on the Autumn 1993 Stock List, while today's list features malts from 119. Additions include the likes of newcomers Arran and Speyside, along with independent bottlings of Allt a Bhainne and Braes of Glenlivet, plus 'collectables' such as Ladyburn. The only permanent casualty has been Kinclaith—but there have been greater losses among some of the more bizarre whiskies on offer.

In the mid-1990s United Distillers was at the forefront of experimentation as the industry faced up to the growing taste for 'novelty' drinks. However, the lives of the new products were short, and in 1998 Bell's Red Devil, along with 'premixes' with Coke or Irn Bru, were abandoned. Red Devil—made with chilli peppers—was championed by the radical proprietors of LFW, but even such heavy-weight support failed to prevent its deletion. According to UD's Dr Nick Morgan, "That was the one that the guys at the distilleries absolutely loved".

Loch Dhu lingered for a while before being put out of its misery. Mystery surrounds the process that turned an unspectacular but drinkable Speyside whisky—Mannochmore—into a near black, caramel and liquorice-flavoured confection. Dr. Morgan is quick to point out that while he was not involved in developing it, he did kill it off. "A misguided novelty".

There has been a trend for rationalisation and consolidation among the major players. They have closed a number of distilleries or sold them on. Many buyers have been independent bottlers, which says something about the increasing vigour of the market for more exclusive single malts.

Benromach was the first to be revived by an independent—Gordon & MacPhail acquired in it 1993 and five years later the distillery was officially re-opened by HRH Prince Charles.

Morrison Bowmore became wholly-owned by the Japanese giant Suntory in 1995, and not long afterwards the permanent closure of Glen Garioch distillery was announced—and then reprieved in 1997. MBD has prospered with the financial clout to market Bowmore extensively.

Pulteney in Wick was sold by Allied to the dynamic Inver House in 1995, and sales have since soared. Inver House then acquired Balblair from Allied, and in 1997 Balmenach from United Distillers. Having revitalised these distilleries, Inver House lost its own independence

in 2002 when the company was bought for £56 million by the Thai-owned Great Oriole Group. In July 1996 Macallan was taken over by Highland Distillers and in 1997, Glenmorangie acquired Islay's neglected Ardbeg from Allied.

The £27 billion merger of Guinness (UD) and Grand Metropolitan in 1997 brought about the creation of Diageo, the largest drinks company in the world. Bacardi then bought Dewar's and four distilleries from Diageo in 1998, and in 1999 the Edrington Group privatised Highland Distillers with Macallan, Highland Park and Famous Grouse. A 30% shareholder in the venture was Glenfiddich's William Grant & Sons.

Bladnoch was reopened to distil on a modest scale in 1999, having been sold by UD to businessman Raymond Armstrong. Following Glenmorangie's lead in reviving a highly-regarded Islay distillery, independent bottlers Murray McDavid acquired Bruichladdich in 2001.

At the end of 2000, Seagram sold its drinks interests and Pernod Ricard took control of its Chivas Group, instantly becoming a leading Scotch whisky player with 12 distilleries.

Subsequently, their tiny Edradour was sold to the bottler Signatory, and to nobody's great surprise, in October 2002 Allt a Bhainne, Braeval, Benriach, and Caperdonich were closed, allegedly only on a temporary basis.

In 2001, Scotland's biggest ever management buy-out took place, when Fortune Brands sold its JBB European subsidiary. The new company followed the perplexing trend of organisations which ditched perfectly sensible names and acquired meaningless new ones; 'Kyndal'. The assets included Whyte & MacKay and Invergordon Distillers' Dalmore, Jura and Fettercairn distilleries, mothballed Tamnavulin and Tullibardine, and also the Invergordon grain distillery.

In 2002 Glendronach distillery was reopened by Allied after six years in mothballs, though during the same year, Allied closed its Dumbarton distillery, investing instead in its Strathclyde grain facility.

Allied has been taking a close look at its 'malt strategy' of late, and despite LFW having noted on a number of occasions that they have simply given up in despair regarding Allied, who knows what the future may hold?

Already in 2003 SWR reports more activity on the distillery-dealing front.

A recent development has been the industry's equivalent of 'hot desking'. A team from Highland Park in Orkney has been along the road to Scapa to distil for Allied. Similarly, a Springbank team has distilled at Glen Scotia.

In 1995 Arran came on stream, the third new distillery of the decade after Kininvie and Speyside, and there are

more proposed new distilleries in the pipeline than at any time since the 1960s, though which of them will come to fruition is anyone's guess.

So much for companies and distilleries, but what of the whiskies they produce? A significant trend has been the growth of wood-finishing and Glenmorangie has been among the pioneers of this art, 'finishing' in casks that previously contained sherry, port, Madeira, claret et al. Indeed, cask finishing became something of an obsession in the industry but some now consider that we consumers are becoming weary of the more exotic finishes. The role of whisky as a 'collectable' and/or as an investment has been a significant feature of the past decade. The publication of Christie's and McTear's catalogues, and publicity associated with these whisky auctions, has given collectors a valuable source of information and inspiration; in December of last year, a 62 year old bottle of Dalmore sold for a record of £25,877.50.

In 1996 Macallan released a successful replica of a 1874 bottling, just one of many exclusive releases to show significant appreciation. 'Black Bowmore' is another good example; in 1993 LFW retailed bottles for £95, but four years later they were fetching £1,000. Be warned, however, the value of investments can go down as well as up. SWR18 pointed out a 1958 Highland Park initially offered at £990 was retailing for £300 less. The increased interest in single malts has been reflected in an increased interest in all aspects of whisky production, and nowhere is this more apparent than at distillery visitor centres, now patronised by more than one million people each year. Whisky related events have multiplied, with tutored tastings, regional 'WhiskyFests', 'Expos' or 'Whisky Lives' abounding world-wide.

LFW's bookshelves sag under a blend of glossiness and erudition that has tumbled, while the launch of *Malt Advocate* in the USA and of *Whisky Magazine* has given a platform for exploration of the subject, even if both publications have followed where SWR fearlessly led!

Whisky information has also burgeoned with the growth of the internet phenomenon; *lfw.co.uk* was one of the earliest whisky web-sites. Now entering 'Scotch whisky' into the Google search engine brings no fewer than 118,000 results! And there is a lot of material out there, ranging from the fascinating to the tedious and frankly weird. There are even live web-cams showing whisky being made, or more usually showing nothing much at all happening.

Here's hoping that the next ten years will see as much dynamism in the Scotch whisky industry as the last ten have, even if nothing much can possibly happen in one paltry decade...

Gavin's full detailed appraisal of the last ten years can be read at lfw.co.uk/swr



LFW.CO.UK
A USER'S MANUAL



Lfw.co.uk is designed to be simple and quick but here is a guide to give users tips and short cuts.

Headings here reflect the left hand navigation frame. Tip: if you lose the frame click on the logo in the top right hand corner.

News

News is the busiest part of the site; although only one page long (broken up for speed) it reflects changes in stock as they happen, updated within hours of arrival. Many customers check this on a daily basis; it takes seconds to learn of any changes. From here you can check prevailing Deals and now (at last) any new miniatures as well.

The rest of lfw.co.uk can be considered to be in two parts: **Browse & Buy** and the rest.

Browse & Buy

This is the major part of lfw.co.uk, where the biggest investment in time has taken place. **Browse & Buy** is an illustrated catalogue of all our whiskies, books and hardware. It is here that you should check the current availability of an item. The lobby to **Browse & Buy** has information regarding delivery prices and terms of sale for all destinations so be sure to check these.

To continue to the catalogue check the secure option. Ordering on lfw.co.uk is secure and certificated by a respected authority; click the locked padlock on your browser for assurance. Tip: If you have trouble after entry because your computer has security fire-walls in place (*should you be doing this from work?*) then the unsecure option will give hassle-free access, but you should be cautious about revealing your card details if your padlock is 'open'. You can still order without revealing payment instructions. At check-out there is the option to print out a completed order form and fax or post it to us with card details added manually. Some of our repeat customers request that we use card details we have on file Tip: enter "Use card details on



After nearly five years' service welcoming visitors with a dram, Donald R. Greeter has handed his tray over to his younger, taller cousin, Hamish-of-the-Isles (it's okay, he doesn't drink). His many falls and much rain have taken their toll, including a failing liver (Donald has stood guard alone in the shop each night). By posing with visitors he has raised in excess of £4,000 which has benefited local children's groups. *Donald seeks a new home — check lfw.co.uk to see if you can help.*

file" in **Special Requests** (below your address details) as you start to check out, then choose 'Send Separately' for card details. You can of course 'phone or fax us as normal.

Browse & Buy lists prevailing prices and availability with our unique comments that many find enjoyable to browse without buying. Go take a look—no obligation to buy or even show yourself!



Tip: Options along the top include **Review Order**; here you can adjust quantity or cancel items before checking out.

Check-out tip: Once you have entered your card details, clicking Next> concludes the transaction; there will be no going back. You will then get an e-mail automatically (unless you have given the wrong e-address!).

Our practice is to retrieve orders at 10am and 3pm and to despatch that day, (but no guarantees); changes should be 'phoned, faxed or e-mailed immediately.

Search

If you know what you want then the **Search** function is very useful and very highly recommended, the descriptions for each whisky have been created with this facility in mind. A product or descriptor can be entered with an option of price range.

Keywords employed throughout **Browse & Buy** include, for example:

- 'peaty' or 'sherry' / 'sherried' etc.
- 'ace'—regarding individual bottlings (Δ).
- 'high regard'—regarding distilleries.
- 'limited' or 'collectable'.
- 'closed' or 'mothballed'.
- Dates, such as '1966' or '34yo'.
- Specifics, such as '46%' or 'single cask'.

All our distillery profiles include our

unique taste scores as explained on the back of our Stock List. Tip: These can be searched by entering colon+the score you seek —e.g. to view a list of our taste score 2 suggestions then enter :2 (no space).

Our Shop

The Loch Fyne
The Living Cask

House Malts from Inverarity

These four sections give information about us and our specialist items.

Scotch Whisky Review

As well as items from the current and back issues of SWR this section includes some entertaining photo diaries of whisky happenings (piss-ups) and topical informative items.

Contact Us

Please check in and join our mailing list. List members are not pestered; checking our **News** section each week will keep you adequately informed. We only circulate the list when there is a new item in short supply that we think subscribers deserve to know about first.

I value comments and notification of problems so please keep me informed; my e-mail address is shop@lfw.co.uk

Site Overview

If you get lost or bamboozled **Site Overview** will help you out. Scroll down for quick jumps to various pages within lfw.co.uk—listings, order forms, charges, terms of sale etc.

LUDDITE? DISCONNECTED?

If you don't wish to get on-line but want to be informed, send us a stamped addressed envelope and we will return a printout of lfw.co.uk's **News** page.

SCOTCH WHISKY REVIEW is free to all *bona fide* mail order customers. **If you have not bought by mail order from the last (Autumn) selection and do not buy from the accompanying (Spring) 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.