



SCOTCH WHISKY REVIEW

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FINISHED WITH DEMONS

Ronnie Martin died earlier this year. Who?.. well, many SWR readers will recognise the name of the creator our Loch Fyne blend. To the industry, Ronnie was the DCL—done well, a production director in a changing time; Professor of Distilling and an O. B. E.—awarded to the man who drove through the definitions of the Scotch Whisky Act. I digress—but Ronnie was important to me, one of my Dads.

This rant was to be aimed at the SWA and their lack of consultation regarding this *vatted* thing [see cover SWR 22 & Dave Broom, page 10]. As retailers it is we who have to sell, to explain this stuff and we're not happy with *blended malt* either. But today a well argued document, *Proposals for Further Legislation Governing the Sale, Description and Marketing of Scotch Whisky* arrived, inviting our comments.... Here we go.

We are uneasy about *Blended Malt*, we'll lose sales, even after a lengthy period of 'bedding in'. Please consider our Andy B's suggestion of *Mixed Malt Whisky*.

How's about that then?

Now, the SWA's deliberations claim to be consumer driven so if we are going to law, let's take the opportunity to sort out a couple of other consumer issues.

To the proposed legislation let's add:

"A ban of the use of spirit caramel in the production (and presentation) of *single malts* (as now defined)".

You're not fooling anyone: it's redundant, it spoils the flavour of the malt and we consumers don't want it. We are well enough informed to live without it, and it's deceptive. Get rid of it, and raise the esteem of single malts even higher.

"The abolition of the term 'finish' (or references to that practice) in the presentation of *single malt*".

This practice to back-end-load mediocre whisky is unsupported. If you must do it then it is a mixed malt, otherwise it's single maturation for single malts.

Oh, and a reprimand for Wm. Grant's hypocritical 'triple malt' nonsense. Prats. (Viz monkeyshoulder.com).



TWO NEW FARM-DISTILLERIES

A new era of distilling begins, reflecting the promise and hope of 150 years ago, with the establishment of two new mini farm-based distilleries.

Pictured at Islay's new Kilchoman Distillery are (l to r) the spirit still, founder and owner Anthony Wills and consultant Dr Jim Swan.

KILCHOMAN

On the west coast of Islay at Rockside near Machair Bay, farmer Mark French has teamed up with entrepreneur Anthony Wills to establish Kilchoman Farm Distillery which is expected to be commissioned in July.

Uniquely self-sufficient, Kilchoman (*pr. Kil-hoemun*) is a modern recreation of the farmhouse distilleries that are the basis of today's industry. Rockside Farm has grown barley for many years and this is to be used to supply the distillery. Floor maltings have been built and the whole production process through to maturation and bottling will be undertaken on site. Initial production will be in the region of 80,000 bottles.

Assisted by industry engineer Ron Gibson and production consultant Dr Jim Swan, Mr Wills intends to produce a peaty and fruity style of whisky.

DAFTMILL

A second new and hitherto little-known farmhouse distillery is ready for commissioning in Fife.

Farmers and whisky fans the Cuthbert family have built a small distillery in their farmyard in central Fife. Of a similar size to Kilchoman, Daftmill will be starting in August but will not be malting on site. It is expected to produce a lowland style and will become the third 'surviving' Lowland distillery.

The owners are keen to point out that the Daftmill project should not be confused with the other proposed Fife distillery, Ladybank, of which no progress is known.

Daftmill does not plan to open to the public, unlike Kilchoman which is breaking with the traditional farm aspect in that there is already a lavish retail outlet with catering in place.

Go visit Kilchoman.

THE ALCHEMIST



This edition's victim is Gordon Wright.

LFW: You are known as a salesman. What skills do you think you have?

I love to create things, start things from new, to be involved in the creation of new products and bring them to market; that's what I'm doing at present with The Alchemist.

LFW: Woah! Slow down, we'll come to that; the GW story first.

I started in Scotch whisky in the late 80s, when I became a director of Springbank Distillery; my uncle Hedley wanted a vacant directorship to go to somebody in the family to say 'aye' at the appropriate times.

At that time I was landscape gardening in Ayrshire but immediately my interest became more involved; I got figures from the distillery and asked questions. My uncle was delighted about this. I suspect he had never wanted to be involved in whisky; his father had died early and he was charged with looking after the distillery until a manager could be secured. He never got away.

I moved to Campbeltown in January 1990. As both a shareholder and a director of the company I was the highest ranking person on site! I imagined that I would get some hands-on experience for a year but at the same time we lost the export manager and there were a lot of customers looking for whisky. So I slipped into that, the deep end but very simple—an inventory, whisky to sell and some customers.

The only time Springbank distilled in the 1980s was '85 and '87, (which was filling for one customer); in '89 we started distilling for ourselves and there was a huge increase in awareness of single malt and good sales around the world. Springbank was one of the top three distilleries in terms of quality, so it was an easy sale. I had a great product, an aptitude for conversation and the energy to go out and explain what it is all about.

LFW: Why is the quality so?

The quality dates back to the 20s and 30s when Campbeltown whisky almost died because of a lack of attention to quality. Times had been so good owners became absent and each worker was charged to produce as much alcohol per ton of malt. Springbank realised they had to make the finest whisky they could with the smallest middle cut, distilled in a unique two-and-a-half or three-times distillation that improves the finesse of the spirit.

In the sixties they produced truly exceptional whiskies and I think that was because of the sherry casks that had been in the solera system for sixty-odd years before we got them. The Spanish sent over what they thought was a tired cask but was in fact so chock-full of sherry than it gave us beautiful flavours and melody. Nowadays you're lucky if a sherry cask gets a couple of seasons with sherry in it.

LFW: As you say an easy sale.

The fact that it is a Campbeltown whisky helps. If you went to a shop with a good selection of single malts and asked 'where is your Campbeltown section?' With 100 Highlands on the shelf, getting one Campbeltown sold was very simple.

When I joined Springbank export sales were about £300,000; when I left six years later it was £1.5m, purely from going out, visiting and talking, building a relationship with customers.

LFW: I note Springbank ran out.

I sold the lot! More seriously, the first thing I did was to study the inventory. I realised that if it was evaporating at 2% per year, we were losing the best part of £1m in potential sales every year! The blessing (and also the problem) at Springbank was a large quantity of very old whisky. Old is difficult to sell in large quantities—particularly if you want to get a good price. It was a question of utilising that old stock by creating a range of vintage dates, also vatting old with young whisky to improve the quality beyond the stated (youngest) age.

The other problem was that there were large gaps in production. With a small distillery you can only finance the making of more whisky on money made from the sale of mature whisky and we weren't making enough whisky. I came up with the idea of selling casks of new Springbank to the public via my friends Mark Reynier and Simon Coughlin who had La Reserve, five prestigious wine shops in London. When they sold one cask of Springbank we made enough money to make two casks for ourselves so production was increased.

LFW: Why did you move?

It became apparent after 3 or 4 years that my Uncle wanted me to move out of the way, which (eventually) I did. Luckily I had a plan B—Murray McDavid—a company that I had set up

a year earlier with Mark and Simon as a secondary business and as an escape plan if things didn't go well.

We launched as an independent bottler with my full participation in the autumn of 1996 with six single malts from a considered range of distilleries. With Hedley owning Cadenhead, I had had some experience of selling independent bottlings. I don't like cask strength whisky, it is interesting but a limited quantity so frustrating for both the producer and the consumer who wants to repeat what he has enjoyed.

There was also a Cadenhead attitude of 'let the customer decide if it is good or not'. I would hold tastings with a local distributor who had picked some Cadenhead bottlings and I would think, well, some of them were awful! I think that the drinker should really have had the stuff vetted for him.

LFW: Why bottle at 46%?

Like Springbank, Murray McDavid bottle at 46%, do not chill-filter and do not colour with spirit caramel. We also vat a few casks together to retain consistency. It's the lowest strength you can safely bottle a single malt without it throwing a cloudy haze when cold. My uncle discovered it when he decided to start bottling in the late sixties; he was too cheap to buy a chill-filtering plant so he worked out the lowest strength—46%. The usual practice of chill filtering removes some oils and most importantly flavours. I realised this was a unique selling point; here's something different and something better!

The difference is huge. The texture in the mouth is more pleasurable. After a big meal 40% just doesn't cut through.

LFW: McDavid became your career.

Yes, travelling, presentations, talking about it with a new distributor network; I built up sales very nicely. Reliable and consistent—quality, that's our intention.

LFW: Who wrote the witty label notes on McDavid bottles?

Mark and I. Some were deliberately cheeky and close to the bone, but meant to be informative and entertaining. Some people can be very prissy about Scotch but it's only a drink to make you happy and we wanted to lower the tone and make it more human. We felt we had a duty to poke fun where fun needed to be poked.

LFW: And other projects?

During that time, when he wasn't doing his wine business, Mark devoted himself to trying to buy a distillery, first Ardbeg for which we put in a bid—but £2m less than Glenmorangie—we're glad that we didn't get it because we didn't have the money required to make it work. So we turned our attention to Bruichladdich which seemed in a similar state of neglect, or inactivity and lack of attention anyway.

While I was selling McDavid bottlings I also raised equity for Bruichladdich but

it was Mark's stubbornness to get the distillery that won it. We have some great investors; about half are Islay related, 25% from my network of people in North America and we founders have 15% from adding McDavid to the business. We took control on the 19th December 2001—I remember we all stopped off in Inveraray on our first trip as owners of the distillery [see cover SWR15].

LFW: And your job?

My remit was to create the new product, the new package and to build up sales. I felt that we had to give people a variety of styles. Macallan only filled sherry casks; they had a 10, 12, 15, 18, 25, 30yo and a Gran Reserva. It seems a lot but the same style from the same wood—the same thing. The question is; how deep do you want to dig into your pocket? Very boring because you can create so much more to offer, to create different styles by using different casks and produce what we call cuvées.

Visually we had to have something that would make a dramatic impact. The eye-catching aquamarine label colour was my proposal and Mark liked it a lot—no one else liked it, they thought it pouffy and effeminate but we felt it was the colour of Bruichladdich in terms of flavour, location and style. It is a gaudy colour for Scotch and LFW's inspiration for a silver tin showed our attitude—stripped down, bare bones, no 'smoke and mirrors'.

LFW: Eye-catching like the fluorescent-orange McDavid box!

The McDavid box is mine too; it's a direct copy of the Hermes colour. I like the strength of the colour and the impact it makes—but lots of people don't. Having got away with using that obnoxious orange, Bruichladdich-blue was a lot easier. I must be on a mission to brighten up whisky shop shelves!

LFW: How much attention do you give to the whisky 'anoraks'?

We take them very seriously. They are aware of what is happening with other companies, in chat-rooms discussing what matters to them and their input is very valuable—but! We have to remember that we don't have to take everything literally; they have their informed opinions but they are not running our company. We have to realise that most of the people who buy Bruichladdich don't care about how it is bottled; most drink it, enjoy it and buy another.

You and I have witnessed, or I could say, created the eruption in whisky interest but also encouraged its present partial demise. A lot of companies have created an awful lot of contrived products, finishes in particular, and now realise that while there are some true winners, many are duds and so have returned to core expressions.

LFW: Aren't you a main culprit?

At Bruichladdich we have a large debt

to service and we have tried to get as many versions of Bruichladdich out to appeal to as many people as possible, but not to the same people. We have to utilise every age we have and create a reason why someone wants to buy it. That's a commercial necessity. Had we more money we may not have diversified as much as we have.

LFW: And odd wood finishes?

I like the idea—if they work. Some do not work, some just raise the question—why? A highland whisky in an Islay cask? Why not just buy an Islay? This all comes down to each producer trying to win as much shelf space in a shop or bar as possible. The wood thing is overplayed and it's just tiring people out.

LFW: You've contradicted yourself!

I know, yes, no, yes! Isn't that inevitable when discussing whisky? Maybe that's why we are all so fascinated about it.

With the make up of the company we have a lot of experience and a lot of ideas and are very experimental. The recent 'pink' 20yo, finished in a Mourvedre cask, is a good example, a great story and a great whisky. It was a great whisky before without the finish and now it's different. What we are saying is; this is a rarity—so try it.

LFW: But the first edition 20yo was perfect, why fix it?

The whisky was different from the first batch. Someone looking for a repetition of the first edition would have been disappointed as it was quite distinctly different—but of equal quality. If we didn't make it obviously different then they could expect it to be the same, and it was not.

faith

LFW: And now you are away again.

I am still a major shareholder but no longer employed or on the board of Bruichladdich. Since the end of 2004 I have moved on to start a new project for myself.

After touring around selling whisky for weeks and weeks, talking and tasting it all day, the last thing you want to drink in the evening is yet more whisky. I've been incredibly lucky to find myself in places with fine selections of wines and spirits and I've always looked to try different things outside whisky. I reckon the malt whisky drinking population are the most informed consumers of spirits but tend to be loyal to their category mainly because other spirits have not been presented to them in the same fashion.

So I'm creating a small range of spirits where the malt drinker will be able to see similar things, starting with two single malts, one Calvados and one Armagnac.

LFW: So more education to do.

Yes. I'm underpinning the range with two substantial malts so I can sit down with people and talk them on to introducing the finest Calvados I can find.

I'm not expecting the occasional malt drinker to jump ship but there are a lot of experienced drinkers who will give other spirits some time if presented in the right way. My idea is to present them in natural form with information about the producer, so that they get the malt whisky experience.

As a one-man enterprise I don't need to sell a huge amount. I'll set out to build a reputation of delivering spirits of the highest quality—possibly you won't like the style but you can't deny that the quality is good. That's what I'm trying to do with The Alchemist Beverage Co.

LFW: Which malts?

The whiskies are in the final stage of choosing. I think one will be a Macallan, of about 15 years. In fact all the spirits will be at about the 15 year mark. Any younger and Calvados can be very different from a malt whisky—at the right age it starts to get very harmonious. All have a similar smoothness and mellowness but retain the character of where they came from. I'm going for something like Macallan or Highland Park; it is not the job of Alchemist to find esoteric whiskies but to show classic examples of single malts and spirits.

LFW: Tell us more about these other spirits, oh great wise one.

Calvados is produced in a specific area of northern France. It is made from apples and/or pears, which are fermented into cider, distilled, then aged in oak barrels. The Calvados I have chosen comes from the Pays d'Auge region and is made entirely from apples. Armagnac is distilled wine from specific grapes, like Cognac, but a single distillation. My Armagnac is from a small independent producer in the Bas Armagnac region where everything is done on site from growing the grapes, distillation and maturation—similar to Bruichladdich! Both are the finest examples of their category.

LFW: Share with us the GW principle of selling.

Get out there and get people to taste it; get people to understand what you are trying to do, build in them the faith in you to come up with the goods, at a fair price and exemplary quality.

LFW: Your desert island dram?

Springbanks and Bruichladdichs—so many that to pick one requires too much thought. So a 1981 Lochside bottled by Murray McDavid. Totally unique, we called it the Springbank of the east; huge amounts of fruit—stewed plums and a briny finish. Like drinking two different things at once.

LFW: Thank you, and good luck!

This is a considerably shortened version of our conversation; the full text can be read at lfw.co.uk/swr.

ON SECOND THOUGHTS



MARCIN MILLER

PAY UP or PUT UP...

Stepping into our resident columnist's page is Marcin Miller who needs no introduction. [Okay, he's most noted as the founding publisher and Editor of *Whisky Magazine*, prior to which he was involved in wine publishing. He has now established 'Quercus Communications'—a drinks gospel company.]

What gargantuan and venerable shoes I have been asked to fill! I recall Richard Joynton's pleasure at first having Turnbull sign as lead columnist for SWR. Clearly the man Hutton is a legend and you don't need me to tell you why. I am truly humbled...

Today's question is: Why are the British a nation of bargain-hunting cheapskates? Don't tell me that it's prudence, or a question of not being able to afford it, or a lack of consumer confidence, or canniness, or a hangover from the days of rationing. None of those things wash. It is a genetic lack of understanding of the difference between price and value for money. Which other country would find room for a programme called Bargain Hunt in the TV schedules? Or for wine critics who direct you to the cheapest barely drinkable bottles on the shelves?

Foreigners are happy to spend a lot of money on the finer things in life, why aren't we? Nowhere is this more apparent than in drinks. Maybe it's because we know we are being ripped off compared to the whole world when it comes to white goods, property, public transport and petrol (to name but a few). It may be that, in order to make ends meet, we have to cut corners on the booze front. But, hold on, we are ripped off on the

booze front too because of the wretched duty levels we are forced to pay.

The average price of a bottle of wine in the UK is £3.94. When you take away duty and tax (£1.90) and the supermarket's huge margin (£1.36), there is not a lot left over for the wine itself. And that's an average. So if you are celebrating with a £25 bottle of champagne, someone somewhere is buying a case of something filthy at less than £3 a bottle...

At one level, a £3 bottle of wine will fulfil the same function as a £300 bottle of wine. Its consumption will inebriate the consumer. But, if that dictates your purchasing decision, stick to hair lacquer. For the discerning consumer it's not about where you are going but how you get there.

What has particularly piqued my ire is finding a bottle of Scotch whisky for sale at £6.86. Great, you may think, Bargain. How can this be a bargain? The cost of duty and value added tax on a bottle of whisky is £6.49. That leaves 37p to cover production, bottling, marketing, distribution and so on. I think we can safely leave profit out of the equation. So what's the cost of the actual whisky in that bottle? I'd estimate about 10p.

what's the cost of the actual whisky? ..about 10p.

Mmm, delicious.

This is probably close to undrinkable—as a budding cheapskate myself, my research budget didn't stretch to buying a sample—but it's also unsustainable. Who is going to make money from this deal? Not the whisky producer, that's for sure. It's like those wine offers in every supermarket "buy one get one free". Promotions account for nearly 50% of UK supermarket wine sales. The winemaker isn't going to make any money out of them. He won't be able to re-invest or to take any measures that will increase quality. But the fat cats get fatter...

Supermarket promotions don't make sense for whisky companies; they have to sacrifice their margin to fund the promotions so they sell more but don't make more profit, they don't engender brand loyalty (shoppers will return to buy whatever is on offer not what was on offer when they last bought) and it devalues the category in the eyes of the consumer. Yet such is the power of the supermarkets that whisky producers are forced to promote sales in this way.

The big wine companies are getting bigger with the direct result that supermar-

ket wines have become homogenised. Huge stainless steel vats disgorge wines that will have a plethora of different brand names and labels but the contents will be undistinguished and indistinguishable.

Something frightful has happened; wine is dumbing down faster than commercial television. There is only one thing for it; trade up before whisky goes the same way.

Whisky's continuing commercial clout is due to its long-held international cachet. If the Americans weren't so status obsessed, if the Japanese hadn't been falling over themselves to buy ceramic flask after ceramic flask, then the face of the whisky world would have looked very different. Whisky is still in a position to take advantage of the world's nouveaux riches (or 'emerging markets' as I believe they are known).

Ever noticed how seldom the big whisky collectors are British? They are Swedes, Italians and Japanese. If the Scotch whisky industry had relied solely on the domestic market we would have been stuffed generations ago. Keep them Taiwanese coming, then bring on the Chinese and Russians. Marvellous.

Mind you, as an aside, I was trawling ebay the other day and noticed that some mug, sorry collector, paid £227 for a 1972 Ledaig. Nothing wrong with that, you might think. Except that this was for a MINIATURE.

Anyway, I'm not advocating the opposite extreme to parsimony that is overt consumption and showing off. I hate that kind of vulgarity too but I appreciate that quality costs and, to be frank, I'd rather go without than make do with low quality. Does that make me a snob? Maybe; it depends on your definition of the word.

Ultimately, as a whisky consumer you hold all the cards. You have two options; buy cheap whisky from which no-one makes a profit or indulge yourself by spending more on it. The benefits of this are manifold. You will be drinking better quality whisky and the producer will make a little profit allowing him to re-invest in his business.

Of course, you know this; you buy your whisky from a specialist. You are the discerning exception that proves the bargain-hunting rule. I apologise if I tarred you with the same brush...

Ultimately there's nothing for it but to encourage everyone you know to trade up. And if you are desperate for a bargain, spend £15 and buy a bottle of Loch Fyne Blend. You know it makes sense.



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 (£15.90) 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.

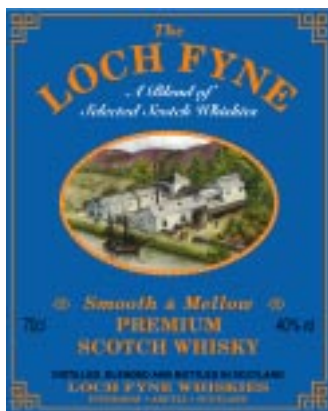
Flavours: light heather-honey, grassy, fragrant, smokiness develops, especially in the finish.

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 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)

Recently changed hands, Adelphi has a tough job to continue the enviable reputation created by the former ownership.

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.

DOUGLAS LAING & Co. (DL)

A long established firm of blenders which has moved recently into single malts. As blenders they have access to some rare and unusual stocks.

DUNCAN TAYLOR (DT)

A newcomer to the sector having invested heavily in a large quantity of very old casks of whisky, many of great quality representing great value for money.

MURRAY McDAVID (MM)

Murray McDavid has gained 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! Murray McDavid have led the acquisition of Bruichladdich Distillery.

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 bewil-

dering 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.

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 and now owns Edradour Distillery. The new decanter style presentation for cask strength malts is very popular.

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 won-

der 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 Bruichladdich 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, Laura Simpson and Andrew Smeaton plus our 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 rare and collectors’ 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*, members of the whisky industry voted us ‘Retailer of the Year’, a title bestowed again in the first vote by the magazine’s readership in 2004.

We are proud of our business and the respect we have earned, this newsletter, our blend ‘The Loch Fyne’, our new liqueur and our unique ‘Living Cask’.

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

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 the new ‘blender’s glass’ or our *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.

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



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 have 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.

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! High quality drinking whiskies are premium to those less appreciated (but often overpriced) drams as many of these will get consumed and taken out of the resale equation.

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!



A COLLECTOR'S TIP: PEATED LOWLAND WHISKIES

Loch Lomond distillery has released the first bottlings of Inchmoan and Craiglodge, peated variants from this unique distillery. Distilled four years ago as part of a program of becoming less dependent on trading whiskies to achieve variety for its blended Scotch, these two are part of a variety of styles created by either adjusting the peating level or the rectifying heads in their unique stills (foreground above).

As a first release, costing £20.90 and limited to 400 bottles of each, these two bottles fit perfectly the LFW criteria of a good put-aside punt. They both make good drinking, especially for fans of the likes of Very Young Ardbeg, further enhancing their desirability as many will be drunk so taking them out of the collector's market.

Inchmoan is a peated (20ppm) version of the excellent Lowland style Inchmurrin. Craiglodge is also medium peated but spirit is collected from both the wash and spirit stills in a unique one-and-a-half distillation. Both whiskies have high peat flavours, are clean with no off notes and have little influence from the wood.



DUNGLASS/ LITTLEMILL

Signatory have released the last known (?) cask of Dungallass, a scarce, heavy variant from the now destroyed Littlemill Distillery. Presented as a twin pack, distilled 1967, this represents the last opportunity to secure this elusive distillation. A more hefty £540.00



BOTTLING OF THE YEAR 2005

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! If proof were needed that this is a democratic and an apolitical decision, this year's winner is produced by your correspondent's *betê-noir*—Allied Domecq (who are about to implode—another of my curses takes effect!).

This year's winner is a suggestion by Andrew S. who spotted its quality and saleability immediately. Once recognised, sales have been better than is usual for a bottling of the year.

SCAPA 14yo Official bottling

An engaging aroma of tropical fruits, toffee, bananas and marmalade with a round and oily nose 'feel', some mince pies and nail-varnish remover.

The taste is initially quiet, sour but bounces on the swallow. Sweet and salty and a stimulating, charred throat feel. The finish settles soon but re-emerges—no erupts—several minutes later to remind you that you have recently had a remarkable dram.

Price is £28.50



THE CRITICAL FUDGE

DEFINITION TEST

performed by Dave Broom

Write something for my comic, Mr Joynson said [I said *please*—Ed.]. Anything you want. It should be about whisky though, he added, which was a shame as I had something really interesting lined up. Like what people keep in sheds [?!]. But there's always plenty to write about in whisky. Surely? Let's see... the machinations behind the Allied sell-off? Nah.. that's too hard to call at the moment. We can have more sport with it after the decision is made. The swathe of high-profile redundancies at Diageo? Nah, I'll leave that to someone better placed who may have an axe to grind. Ho-hum.

I'll have a piece of the excellent Loch Fyne Whisky Fudge. A sugar and whisky rush should stimulate the inspiration, surely? The only other option is to consult Eno's Oblique Strategies for a possible approach and the best that it can come up with is "Courage!" and it's far too early for a beer. Fudge it is. I'd never paid much attention to the back of a Loch Fyne Whisky Fudge packet before. It says:

fudge, what does it mean?

fudge n.

1. a slightly grainy soft confection traditionally made from sugar, butter, milk, cream and flavourings (such as the world's finest Scotch whisky).

2. foolishness, nonsense.

3. an unsatisfactory compromise reached to avoid controversy or difficulties.

This packet contains one of the above. Buy it to find out which.

[It goes on to suggest: for more fudge of all kinds, visit www.lfw.co.uk—this article is now part of *that* confection—Ed.]

Now ... what if we took the recent SWA labelling guidelines and applied the Critical Fudge Definition Test to them? Which one would best apply?

The whole procedure was an attempt to paper over the cracks exposed by *l'affaire Cardhu*. The one good thing to come out of that fiasco was how it demonstrated that whisky's labelling and definitions were hopelessly vague. Have you ever noticed how few blends actually say they're blends? They'd rather call themselves "Ancient", "Superior Old", "Finest" etc.

Malts are equally confusing. "Pure malt" was assumed to mean "vatted malt". That's what the vatted Cardhu called itself, but single malts such as Glen Grant, Glenfiddich and Glenlivet also used variations on the pure theme on their labels.

To give the SWA committee credit their

proposals have tightened things up. No extra maturation outside Scotland, no bottling outside Scotland (of malt initially. Expect the same proposal for blends to be quietly dropped). If a regional name is used then it must apply to 100% of the whisky, so the end of the Islay finish. Hurrah!

The proposals also state that a distillery name should not be used on any Scotch whisky which has not been distilled at that named distillery. Exceptions will be made for whiskies which carry the names of long defunct stills as there will be no stock on the market (apart from in Italy of course). So, Springbank can continue with Hazelburn and Longrow; Edradour with Ballechin; and Bruichladdich with Port Charlotte. There might be problems however for brands whose names suggest they are distilleries: Finlaggan, for example, or Ardnave.

So far, so good. On the fudge definition test, this is option 1, a fairly soft and pleasant confection. Then we run into problems.

Under the proposals there will be two categories of whisky: single or blended. 'Single' will comprise Single Malt or Single Grain. 'Blended' will cover Blended Grain, Blended Scotch (malt and grain) and Blended Malt. Pure, Vatted, Vintage etc., are banned.

vatted

Let's rewind. This was meant to stop confusion between categories? As far as I can work out the SWA admitted there was a problem over definitions and therefore a need to differentiate clearly between categories, but then it contrived to blur the difference between blended Scotch and vatted malt! That's some achievement.

"Everyone agrees with us," they said when I put this to them. So I asked as near to everyone as I could. No-one thought it a good idea. In fact, everyone



PROPHETIC

Our advertisement from Whisky Magazine, January 2004

thought that the term blended malt would potentially cause more confusion. It is an issue of provenance. Since the 1850s, 'blend' has meant a mix of grain and malt whiskies. Now, apparently, it can mean a mix of malts as well. Try explaining that...

The scene. A shop in Inveraray.

Punter, holding bottle of *The Loch Fyne*®: "So this is a blend?"

Shopkeeper: "Yep, 's a blend."

Punter, picking up a bottle of *The Living Cask*™: "And this is a blend as well?"

Shopkeeper: "We-e-ell, yes... It's a blend of *Malts*."

Punter: "And the Loch Fyne?"

Shopkeeper: "That's a *Blend*, (of malt and grain)."

Punter: "So they're both blends?"

Shopkeeper: "Yes, but very different kinds of blends."

Punter: "Why is one Blend £15 and the other blend £139?"

Shopkeeper: "Can I interest you in some fudge?"

If a new term was needed to differentiate vatted malts from single malts then why not.. hmm, let me see.. vatted? It too has provenance. "Oh no," said the SWA. "Vatted malt isn't understood. We'd have to tell people what it meant." Aye, but they don't understand what blended malt means either as you've just made it up, so the same process of education will have to take place, will it not? Apparently not. "Vatted didn't research well," was the riposte. Quite what this research was I know not. Friends in the golf club? The waiter at the end of a long lunch?

The fact remains that taking terminology which has always meant one thing and then applying it to another is not normally regarded as the best way to stop confusion and, as far as I can remember, the whole point of setting up this group was to stop the confusion. Perhaps I'm too close to the industry. I'm sure the research was done in a professional manner. Maybe vatted isn't the right word. Neither is blended malt though. If a third way is needed, why not call vatted malts, "malt" and single malts "single malts"? Then, blends can be called "blends". That's pretty clear differentiation is it not? In wine, a blend is often labelled as "product of more than one region", so why can't a vatted malt state that it is "a product of more than one distillery" in small type?

So .. the final test. I'd say that this latest packet of SWA fudge contains each of the critical fudge definitions. It has *nonsensical* elements, it is certainly an *unsatisfactory compromise* and manages also to have elements of a *slightly grainy soft confection*.

Yet as we all know, fudge is bad for you. Eat too much of it and it leaves you toothless.



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

Inverarity Islay 10 years old, £23.90.



THE LOCH FYNE LIQUEUR

AND THE LOCH FYNE COOLER

Launched in July last year, The Loch Fyne Liqueur is exceeding all expectations. A second bottling has been required (now with a new, removable label so the decanter can be reused). The combination of 12 years old Scotch with flavours of tangerine, chocolate and orange continues to surprise and delight both 'I-don't-do-liqueur' whisky fans and 'I-don't-do-whisky' folk.

At the beginning of this year we held a cocktail party at the Scotch Whisky Heritage Centre in Edinburgh to select the favourite mix created by cocktail maker Neil Berrie, pictured in action above. On offer to a large delegation of whisky people were three special recipes and a variety of long mixer options including Loch Fyne Liqueur mixed as a long summer drink with tonic, ginger ale or a variety of fruit juices. Pink grapefruit juice came out the favourite with dry ginger ale or cranberry juice close behind.

Of the cocktails Neil created, the run-

ner up was thought to make a great winter toddy-style drink, so we will be letting you know about that in the next SWR. The clear winner has been christened a Loch Fyne Cooler (although not technically a *cooler*—but who cares?) A simple mix of liqueur and Kahlúa coffee liqueur, the important part is to get the preparation right:

Polish your favourite rocks glass.

Ice! (Not yet—but check there's enough).

With a veg peeler, produce two thin wide zests of orange peel (no pith).

Take a Manhattan mixer and add 35ml of Kahlúa to 50ml Loch Fyne Liqueur.

Shake vigorously.

Fill your rocks glass with fresh ice and add your shaken mix.

Rub the edge of the glass with the oil from the skin of one of your prepared zests and twist the other zest to garnish your creation.

Enjoy your summer cocktail.

Try with an equal quantity of cream for an exceptional cream cocktail.





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



TRAVELLING MINSTRELS REEL WITH HAMISH

Gentlemen from the Beauchamp Morris Men entertained Inveraray recently, stopping for a dram and a fund raiser with our greeter Hamish-of-the-Isles who declined to black up on this occasion.

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 (to ship@lfw.co.uk) 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 (& Liqueur)

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 (usually piss-ups) and topical informative items.

Contact Us

Here you can join our mailing list but list members are not pestered; checking our **News** section each week will keep you adequately informed.

I value comments and notification of problems so please keep me informed; either through the comments box or direct, 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.

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