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10 Peter St
Markham, Ontario, Canada
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Celtic Life International is an ethnic journal
published in Canada six times a year by
Dara Knot Inc.

Siobhán L. Covington, Publisher
Stephen Patrick Clare, Executive Editor
Rebecca Dingwell, Managing Editor
Chris Muise, Managing Editor
Caitlyn Elizabeth Mearns, Managing Editor
Lillian Holt, Senior Copy Editor
Carol Moreira, Senior Copy Editor

Celtic Life International Office:
Toll-Free: 888-215-6850
Email: info@celticlife.com
Website: www.celticlife.com

Subscriptions:
Phone: 902-835-CELT (2358)
Toll-Free: 888-215-6850
Email: subscribe@celticlife.ca

Advertising:
Toll-Free: 888-215-6850
Email: info@celticlife.com

Please send review books and CDs to
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Please return undeliverable copies of Celtic Life
International to: Dara Knot Inc.
10 Peter St, Markham, Ontario,
Canada, L3P 2A4

Publication Mail Registration:
No. 40050439 ISSN 1918-0497

Contributors
Andrew Ferguson
Thea Koper
Tom Langlands
Gary Maclean

Funded by the Government of Canada
Financé par le gouvernement du Canada

Canada

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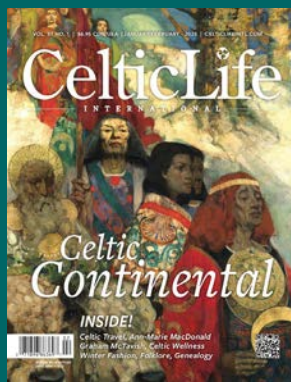
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Whisky Revival



Never before has there been such a widespread interest in whisky. The emphasis is mostly on Scotch, but American and Irish whiskey is seeing major growth as well.

In 2023, the global whisky market grew to a value of \$63 billion, and - by 2027 - is expected to reach \$73 billion.

"I think that counts as a renaissance," says Dr. Nick Morgan, Head of Whisky out-

reach for Diageo.

It is easy to forget that many famous Scotch whisky brands have been present in multiple markets for generations - Johnnie Walker, Buchanan's, White Horse, Old Parr, Haig and Dimple. "All these were available around the world throughout the 20th century and were efficiently distributed and skillfully marketed." They were all available, but the price tag made it so only the most pros-

perous and affluent whisky fans could afford them. Now that many countries are beginning to witness a blossoming of economic prosperity and a heightened standard of living, consumers around the globe who previously only dreamed of drinking celebrated, top shelf scotch brands can finally fulfill that ambition. They have been doing so quite enthusiastically in recent years.

Scotch Renaissance Statistics

There are over one hundred scotch distilleries in Scotland and there are currently over twenty new distilleries under construction, ranging from tiny (ten or twenty thousand liters of alcohol a year) to large (ten million liters of alcohol a year). Investment is at an all-time high, unimagined ten years ago. The same growth is visible in the United States and Ireland as enthusiasm for all forms of whisky is at an all-time high. This is a specifically twenty-first century phenomenon. The Scotch category was at best flat in the 1980s and 1990s, while Irish, American, and Canadian whiskies were in various degrees of decline, few people knew anything about Japanese whisky (outside of Japan), and the terms 'world whiskies' and 'craft distillers' had not been imagined.

Formerly closed off distilleries are opening to the public

It's only been in recent years that the popularity of whiskies has led to the opening of previously closed off distilleries like Royal Brackla. Opened in 1812, Royal Brackla, received the first ever royal warrant. The royal warrant means that Royal Brackla was the official supplier of scotch to the royal family. The distillery remained off limits to the public until recently, more than one hundred years after its opening. The reason the doors are slowly starting to open to the public is because the whisky renaissance has led to Royal Brackla finally releasing its single malt globally. The increased popularity has also led to many distilleries opening exciting, innovative visitor centers, tours, and whisky museums. One such tour is Dewar's World of Whisky at Aberfeldy, a top-to-bottom historical tour of one of the most iconic whisky brands in the world.



Whisky is a globally popular spirit

“In the world of Scotch Whisky the proliferation of bottlings and different variants of single malts, starting slowly in the 1990s, have captured the imagination and the spending power of enthusiasts first in Western Europe, North America and, unexpectedly perhaps, Taiwan, and now more globally,” says Morgan. Rare bottles of Single Malt that might have previously cost less than one one-hundred dollars ten years ago now sell for several thousand. “There is a strong secondary market for Scotch Whiskies fueled by numerous online auction houses, and a growing investment market too.” The overwhelming growth, however, has been in Blended Scotch Whiskies and that’s where it will continue. “Whilst a lot of the conversation about Scotch whisky focuses on the Single Malt category, the principal driver for both recruitment and growth around the world is Blended Scotch Whisky.” 95 per cent of whisky exported from Scotland is a blend, not in the form of single malts.

Why has the popularity of whisky increased in the last decade?

Scotch whisky brands have been expertly marketed and deeply rooted in consumer minds for well over a century, even among people who at that stage didn’t drink it. Its aspirational presence, linked to its reputation for consistent high quality, formed a solid launch pad for expansion. Brands need to stay relevant to consumer needs. Johnnie Walker, the world’s leading Scotch whisky was cleverly reinvented for a new age of consumers in the late 1990s. Since then, the brand has exceeded twenty million cases annually - from Johnnie Walker

Red Label to the very high-end Blue Label and John Walker. As the spending power of the middle class around the globe increased, the industry’s marketing didn’t need to start with an entirely blank sheet. “There are now whisky shows and festivals going on all over the world,” adds Morgan, “probably one somewhere every weekend, attracting a notably different demographic from the stereotyped middle-aged male consumer.” With this activity, discussion boards, blogs, twitter-tasting have popped up touting the fact that it is cool to drink scotch again. “Often attributed to the ‘Mad Men effect’, but perhaps also the result of generational change, it’s now not despised as ‘the drink my dad used to drink’,” says Morgan. “So, we should hardly be surprised that a global icon like David Beckham is prepared to partner in the creation and launch of a new Single Grain Scotch Whisky, Haig Club.”

Scotch whisky is an exceptional drink

The top brands, whether they are blends, single malts, or single grains, are so artfully crafted to the highest standards of quality, consistently reliable, and blessed with an unrivalled complexity and range of interesting and intriguing flavors and aromas, and hugely versatile when it comes to serving. Scotch can be sipped straight or on the rocks depending on your taste. “The once-traditional Whisky & Soda serve is seeing a renaissance,” notes Morgan. “The Japanese have pioneered the bewitchingly simple (yet not easy to execute) mizuwari serve with ice and water; and, as you would see in many of London’s leading-edge bars (or New York’s, Shanghai, Moscow, or Mexico City) whiskies of all types make outstanding cocktails.

A photograph of four students walking along a paved path on a university campus. From left to right: a man in a light green polo shirt and khaki pants, a woman in a teal dress, a woman in a black dress, and a woman in a black top and jeans carrying a laptop. They are walking past a large tree and a modern building with large windows.

Irish Studies Program

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Fairfield University, located in southwestern Connecticut only 75 minutes northeast of New York City, offers a dynamic program in Irish Studies. With a significant Irish-American representation among its students and alumni, interest in Ireland has characterized Fairfield for decades. This interest continues unabated today, as Irish people on both sides of the Atlantic have sought to resolve long-standing issues amidst an increasingly global economy. Fairfield's Irish Studies program enables students to investigate

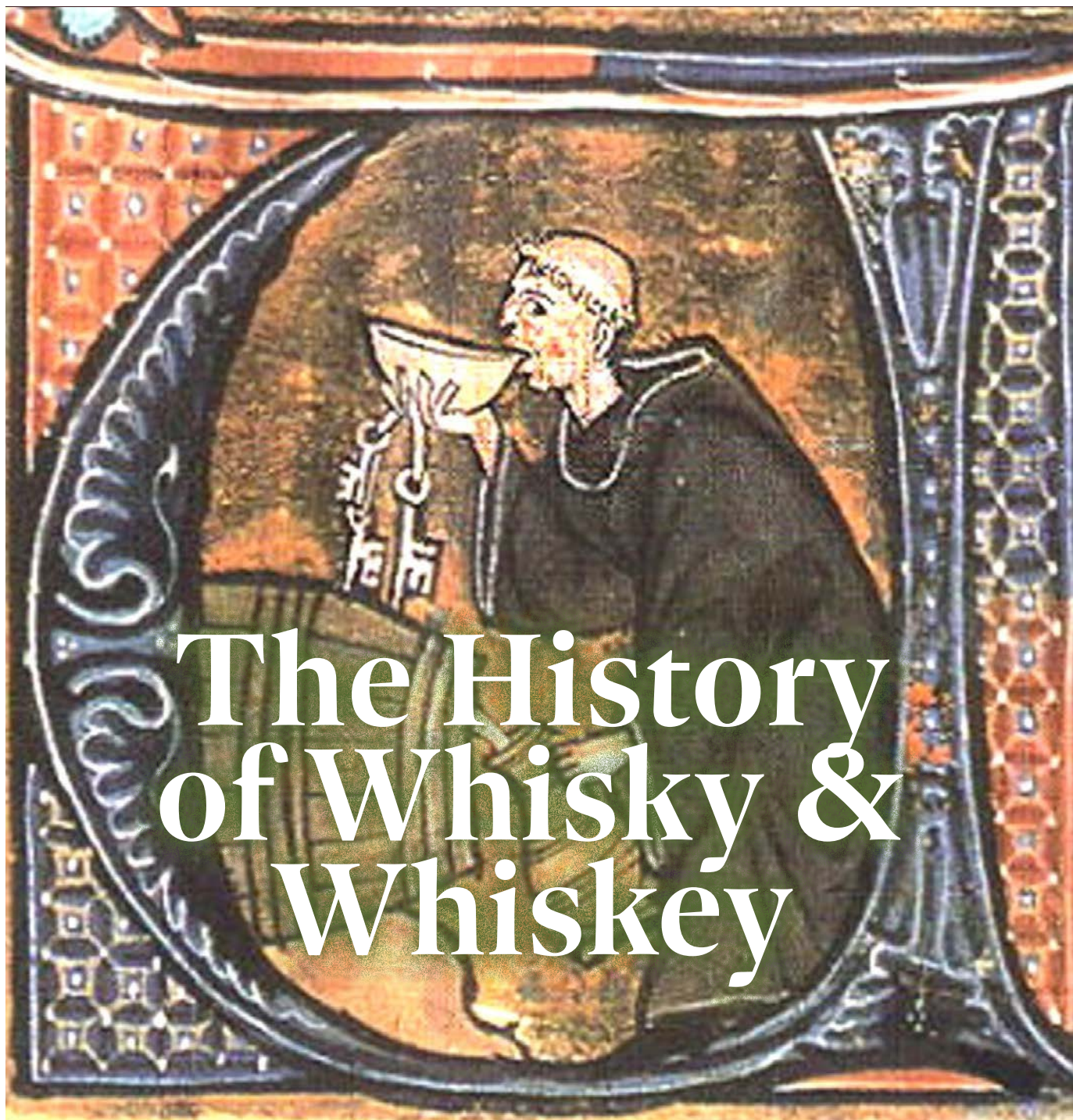
Irish contributions to a wide range of disciplines, including literature, history, film, and art. Courses focus on the troubled history of the nation, its colonial and post-colonial significance, the difficult politics of Northern Ireland, and the inspired art and

literature that emerged from the turbulent Irish past. To complete the Irish Studies minor, students must complete a capstone research project in an area of their choice. Affiliated with the National University of Ireland, Fairfield's Irish Studies program, through study abroad in Galway, also allows students to take Irish-focused courses in archeology, economics, sociology, linguistics, and the Irish language. The program also offers on-site lectures, concerts, plays, and readings that complement the academic courses.



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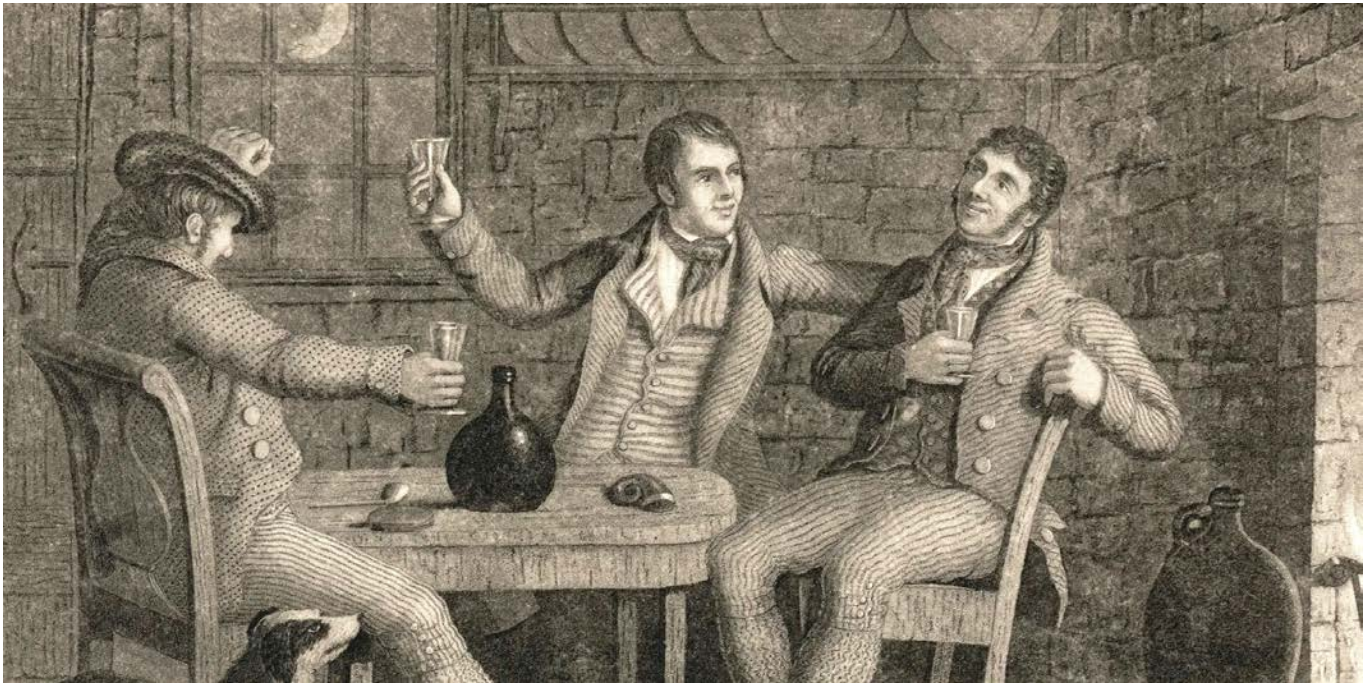
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The exact origins of whisky and whiskey - combining a cooked grain mash with yeast, distilling it to spirit form and ageing it to palatable perfection - may never be known. It is not certain whether the Irish, Scots, or

another people were the first to distill the "water of life," hence the following timeline will reveal some clashing dates at times. What is certain is that both Ireland and Scotland became masters of the craft and trade, and pioneers for future dis-

tillers in Canada, the United States and beyond. Their industries also triumphed over numerous adversities from severe taxation, prohibition and war, to struggling over the meaning of whisky.



2000 BC and earlier: Numerous accounts recount that ancient Egyptian, Chinese and Mesopotamian populations practised distillation to create perfumes, medicines and/or embalming agents.

100-200 A.D.

100: Greek alchemists in Alexandria developed the ambix, possibly the first invented alembic for distillation.

400-600 A.D.

Varied theories describe how the technology of distillation travelled from Egypt to Europe:

432: Saint Patrick went to Ireland where he not only introduced Christianity, but also distillation.

500: Some recount that the 5th century Huns were the first to make whisky.

600 – 700: Others describe how Irish monks returned home from travelling around the Middle East where they learned how to distil perfumes. Back home the technology was adapted to create whisky or “uisce beatha,” the Irish Gaelic for “water of life.” (The Scots also called whisky “water of life,” or “uisge beatha” in Scottish Gaelic.)

1100-1200 A.D.

Some historical records state that whisky-making did not occur in the British Isles until the 11th century or even later. During

this period monasteries were the main sites where the alcoholic spirit was produced.

1400-1500 A.D.

1405: The Annals of Clonmacnoise contains the first written record of whisky. It describes a Christmas in Ireland when the chieftain of Moyntyreolas died from drinking an excessive amount of “aqua vitae,” Latin for “water of vitality.”

1494: The first written account describing whisky production is credited to The Exchequer Rolls of Scotland, where a 1494 listing read, “Eight bolls of malt to Friar John Cor wherewith to make aquavita.” Kevin R. Rosar, author of *Whiskey: A Global History*, stated in a Library Congress presentation that Scotland “gets the prize” as being the first to distill whisky.

1500-1600 A.D.

1506: King James IV of Scotland, having a great fondness for whisky, purchased a large volume from the Guild of Surgeon Barbers in Dundee, which had been granted the whisky production monopoly the previous year.

1541: Queen Elizabeth I was a fan specifically of Irish whisky, and ordered large quantities to be delivered to her court.

1600-1700 A.D.

1608: Bushmills Distillery in Co. Antrim in Northern Ireland was granted a distilling

licence, although it is believed whisky had been produced there for several hundred years prior. Today, Bushmills is known as the world’s oldest licensed whiskey distillery.

1644 & 1661: Whisky production was so widespread, that a tax on the “water of life” was imposed in Scotland in 1644 and Ireland in 1661. Both scenarios gave rise to a flurry of illegal whisky production.

1700-1800 A.D.

1707: The Acts of Union merging England and Scotland resulted in a series of tax hikes on whisky distillation in Scotland. This increased the number of underground distillers, as well as their cunning methods to outsmart the excisemen. For example, some were distilled at night giving rise to the term “moonshine.”

1775: Glenturret, known as Scotland’s oldest whisky distillery and for its Famous Grouse, was formally established in 1775. Prior to its official founding, it is said the “Hosh” was run by illicit distillers.

1780: John Jameson & Son (Jameson Irish Whiskey) acquired the distillery on Bow Street in Dublin. By the end of the 18th century, Ireland, with approximately 1,100 licensed distilleries and 8,000 or so illegal operations, supplied the majority of the world’s whisky consumption.



1800-1900 A.D.

1823: The Excise Act was passed in the UK which made it financially reasonable to legally distil whisky. In 1824, the Glenlivet Distillery became Scotland's first distillery licensed under the Excise Act.

1826: Scots distiller Robert Stein invented the continuous still, also called the column still, inspired by Sir Anthony Perrier of Cork's invention. As its name suggests, it allowed for continuous distillation which revolutionised the whisky industry. Aeneas Coffey, a former exciseman from Ireland, ironically enhanced the design to create the Coffey still. It was actually embraced much faster in Scotland than Ireland.

1853: Andrew Usher II of Edinburgh created the first successfully commercial blended whisky, known as Old Vatted Glenlivet.

1879: Four Dublin distillers published a

book called Truths About Whisky because of their disdain for the Scottish practice of blending whiskies and embracing the new Coffey Still. To differentiate their products from Scotland's, Irish distillers began using the spelling "whiskey" with an "e."

1880s: When the French brandy industry was devastated by the phylloxera pest infestation, whisky became the primary liquor of choice for many consumers.

1900-2000 A.D.

1909: The Royal Commission on Whisky and other Potable Spirits declared that blended whiskies made from patent or Coffey stills were true whiskies provided they were aged appropriately.

1948: Ireland's whiskey industry was severely affected by the Commission's ruling, the US Prohibition and World War II. So

by 1948, there were only six distilleries in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland combined, compared to more than 160 distilleries representing 400 brands during the previous century.

1966: John Jameson & Son, The Cork Distilleries Company and John Power & Son combined to form the Irish Distillers Group. In 1988, the Group joined Pernod Ricard. 1996: Jameson was becoming the fastest-growing spirit brand worldwide, representing Irish whiskey's comeback.

2000s A.D.

Both Scottish and Irish whisky/whiskey brands are strong household names today. The Scottish government determined whisky exports rose to £5.6 billion in 2023, while Irish whiskey exports were valued at €875 million.

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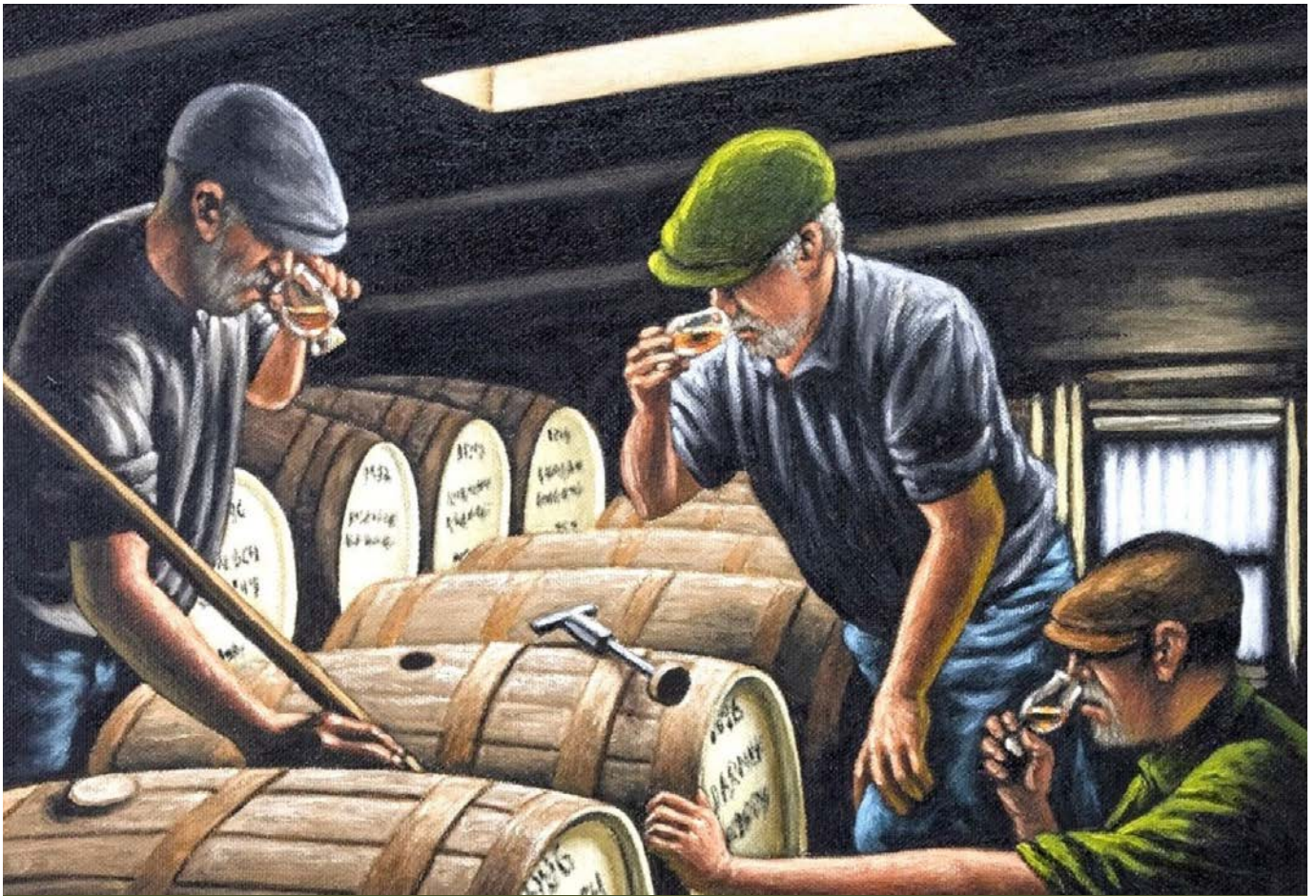
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Guide to Scotch Whisky

The malt whisky landscape of Scotland is both complex and welcoming to connoisseur and novice alike

The French have a word, a romantic and mystical term, for the synergy between soil, climate, and topography. It is this synergy that creates the finest of wine. They call it *terroir*, and it lacks any English translation. Although no such word exists in Scotland for the effect that locality, water, fuel, still and soil, have upon the spirit known in Gaelic as *uisque beath*: ‘the water of life’, the effect which locality has on malt whisky still finds its way into our land. Whether a big hit of brine and peat from an island on the north or west coast, a soft floral sweetness from the Lowlands or the rich spice and malt flavours from a Speyside powerhouse, each distillery in Scotland produces a flavour all its own within its own little nook or glen.

To think that single malt Scotch whisky is made of only three ingredients; water, malted barley and yeast which then must be aged in Scotland in oak casks for at least three years to be called Scotch whisky, it is difficult perhaps to understand how the spirit varies so widely in character. Location plays a huge role as the water source can vary greatly, whether running through ancient rock for high purity or trickling through peat giving it a much different character. Air can be heavy with salt in coastal areas imparting a marine note during maturation; the barley could be dried over peat, which again imparts a flavour to the spirit. Also, the man-made elements vary; the distillation stills could be tall or squat, the barrels of sherry or bourbon cask, the ageing time short or longer. Each distillery very much works to its own formula; thus, the whisky landscape of Scotland is both complex and enchanting. To fully appreciate and breathe in the mystery and romanticism of this vast route, it is best to take a walk through the whisky map of Scotland.

If you were to embark on a journey to explore Scotland’s distilleries, Bladnoch on the



far south coast notwithstanding, it would be a fairly cyclical voyage anti-clockwise from the largest city of Glasgow. As you progressed you would see the character of the spirit generally increase in robustness of flavour until your final sojourn across the sea to Islay, an island with a population of only 3500, yet home to no fewer than eight distilleries with a ninth on the way.

The Gentle Lowlands and Southern Highlands

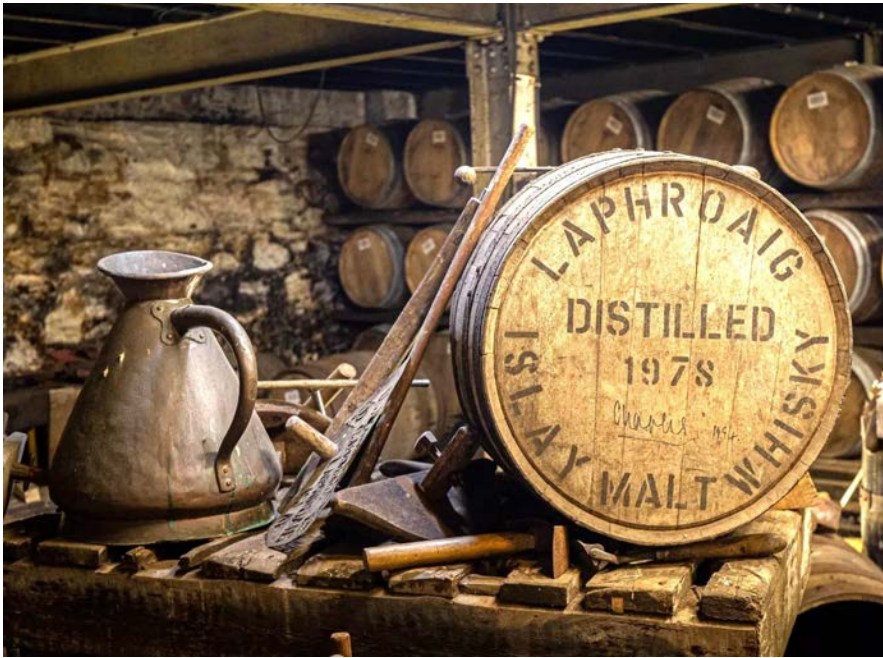
Lowland malt whiskies were traditionally triple distilled as opposed to the standard double distillation of Scotch whisky. Therefore, the lowland style of malt is typified by light, floral, aromatic flavours, very much reflective of the gentle countryside in the population-dense central belt of Scotland. Almost equidistant from the center of Glasgow, you come to both Glengoyne and Auchentoshan distilleries. Auchentoshan is now the only Lowland distillery to operate the triple distillation technique as standard, and the Auchentoshan whisky is characterised by citrus, lemongrass, and ginger type aromatic flavours and perfect as an aperitif, while Glengoyne is more medium bodied and a little sweeter. If you travel east from Glasgow by train to Edinburgh you will see the more poignant side of the whisky story as the train passes the old St. Magdalene distillery, the former distillery buildings well

preserved as residential flats and a reminder of the dark days that the industry endured in the 1980s.

However, heading north by car on the A9 you pass into the Highlands and the whisky character continues to change. Deansston, Aberfeldy, the smallest malt distillery at Edradour, and then Dalwhinnie deliver fruity, sometimes nutty malts, often with hints of aromatic spice such as vanilla. These are the oft-forgotten distilleries of the traveller heading to the whisky mecca of Speyside, a region which can loosely be defined as stretching from Inverness to the east coast.

Speyside

The might River Spey - the fastest flowing in Scotland - cuts like an artery through the centre of the home of Glenfiddich, The Macallan and many more distinct styles of whisky. Epitomised by its elegant complexity, Speyside is very much the heartland of whisky production on mainland Scotland. Macallan, Glenfarclas, Cardhu and Aberlour, which lie beside the River Spey itself, have an intense sherry character yielding rich malts with toffee and honeyed flavours, while Glenfiddich, that, in spite of the distillery’s fame, remains family owned, has a more fruity note in younger expressions which gives way to spice in older varieties. Add to this the likes of an Cnoc and Tomatin which have a more ‘traditional’ spirit flavour and the character



of Speyside whisky is revealed as being as diverse as it is typical. The Highland whisky map is completed further north in Ross & Cromarty, with Glenmorangie delivering more delicate floral flavours than the salty sweetness of Old Pulteney and Clynelish.

The Mystical Ancient Islands of North and West

Scotland is a land of many unique islands, surrounded by green-blue seas and punctuated by beaches of silver sand, ancient imposing mountains, standing stones and fairy glens; island malts have a distinctiveness all their own. Highland Park from Orkney in the north and Talisker from Skye to the west sit proudly guarding their coastline and bring to mind ancient days of fire and smoke on these mystical prehistoric lands, full of peat and brine and complexity of character. Travelling south you'll also find distilleries on the islands of Mull, Jura and Arran. However, the final leg of this journey will take you to the traditional heart of West Coast distilling on two more "islands." Campbeltown at the far tip of the Kintyre peninsula was regarded by the Vikings as an island as they could carry their longboats from one coast to the other, was formerly a town of over 30 distilleries and is classed as a region in its own right. These days there are three operating distilleries in the town, but one, Springbank, is the name that is au-

tomatically conjured when one thinks of this outpost.

The distillery is self-contained with everything from malting to bottling happening on site and is home to three individual malts of different character. Springbank whisky itself uniquely goes through two and a half distillations and is typified by an elegant briny sweetness. Just to the north of Campbeltown lies the ferry awaiting your sailing to Islay, an island known for full bodied whiskies heavy with peat, seaweed, and iodine. This only tells part of the story of this enigmatic island. The southern heavyweights of Ardbeg, Lagavulin, Laphroaig and the long silenced and wistfully remembered Port Ellen are all reflective in different ways of this character. However, Bunnahabhain to the north, known as the gentle spirit of Islay, is a lighter, nuttier whisky, while the island's oldest distillery of Bowmore, buffeted by the Atlantic Ocean, has a fresher maritime surf character alongside the peat. Islay is a microcosm of Scotch malt whisky production with a real reflection of the terroir of the most remote of the southwestern islands.

Food and Whisky Matching

The whiskies of Scotland are reflective in every way of this ancient and rugged, yet romantically fascinating land, and there is a growing understanding that Scottish whiskies are much more than a drink to be en-

joyed alone. They also marry perfectly with the wonderful natural larder of the country as an excellent accompaniment to a meal. Scottish cuisine is more about the quality of produce than just the recipe, and it is a whisky that complements it best. Traditionally confined only to accompanying haggis for a Burns Supper, or even wastefully as the 'gravy'; the world is now awakening to the prospect of whisky matching just as you would with wine. The malts of Speyside, which are rich with sherry character and complexity, are perfect accompaniments to both long slow cooked red meats or chargrilled and barbecued steaks of Scotch beef or venison. Lighter malts from the Lowlands and southern highlands - with a more floral and fruity palate - pair well with lighter soups, such as consommé, or with pates and charcuterie. The malts that are born by the sea are natural companions to seafood, and pairing oysters particularly delivers a perfect balance between brine, malt and sweetness. Desserts are matched well with cream-based desserts like cranachan complementing the natural sweet, spicy and fruity characters prevalent in many whiskies with dark chocolate being another especially good match. Cheeses are a bit of a conundrum, but before reaching for the port try a lowland malt with soft creamy crowdie or Brie, a sherry driven Speyside with a hard cheddar or Dunlop and pair a rich blue with a smoky peaty island malt.

The malt whisky landscape of Scotland is both complex and welcoming to the connoisseur and novice alike. There is a wealth of flavour possibilities that await those who step inside the distilleries, simply uncork a bottle, or share a dram. There is no doubt that this is the best way to experience the passion, mystery and romanticism that is Scotland.

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10 Whisky Drinkers

American scribe Mark Twain once wrote, “Too much of anything is bad, but too much good whiskey is barely enough.” He was not alone in his passion for the good spirit.

Whisky and water in a highball glass was **Winston Churchill’s** drink of choice. Considered one of the greatest British leaders of all time, Churchill’s habit started when he travelled to Africa and found the water unbearable. He said, “The water was not fit to drink. To make it palatable, we had to add whisky. By diligent effort, I learned to like it.”

Françoise Sagan, the French novelist, most famous for her 1952 teenage debut, *Hello Sadness*, was famed for her love of whisky and other methods of escape. One of her most famous quotes is, “Whisky, gambling and Ferraris are better than housework.”

Best known for his novel *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, **Hunter S. Thompson** drank everything. But whisky was his lifelong love. He once described himself as “a lazy drunken hillbilly with a heart full of hate who has found a way to live out where the real winds blow—to sleep late, have fun, get wild, drink whiskey, and drive fast on empty streets with nothing in mind except falling in love and not getting arrested.”

During a concert in Ireland, singer **Lady Gaga** dedicated a song to “my longtime boyfriend Jameson”, who was “always there for me when I need him”. She was referring to her favourite drink, Jameson Irish Whiskey. “I have made so much of my music with Jameson. I’m not being paid a cent to advertise the whiskey... I should be. The whiskey has made my new songs,” said Gaga swigging from a bottle of the whiskey on stage.



Another of his more famous lines is, “Whisky is for drinking; water is for fighting over.”

Clark Gable, one of the most noted American actors of all time, was well known for his love of whiskey. He was an early celebrity endorser of Jim Beam whiskey in the mid-1970s and also famous for on-set pranks where he would substitute non-alcoholic drinks with whiskey, much to the surprise of his fellow actors.

Senior Ministry of Defence officials revealed that royal playboy **Prince Harry** was banned from drinking whisky shots while flying his Apache helicopter. Top brass told the partying Royal to curb his in-flight Glenfiddich addiction on the Apache pilot course or risk being dropped.

Popular Japanese novelist **Haruki Murakami**, best known for *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* and *End of the World* said,

“Whiskey, like a beautiful woman, demands appreciation. You gaze first, then it’s time to drink.” An empty box of Cutty Sark serves as a plot device in his novel *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*.

Actress **Amanda Seyfried** told Dave Letterman, “I have to go on record saying I’ve never done a live television show - after noon - without some kind of liquid courage. I’m a big fan of whiskey. Russell Crowe gave me some Midleton for my birthday and I had some of that before I got here. And then your lovely colleagues had some Jameson waiting for me backstage.” In an interview with ABC News, Seyfried said she uses whisky, honey, and lemon to cure colds.

Rockstar **Kid Rock** likes whiskey so much that he has often partnered with Jim Beam Bourbon Whiskey on his concert tours.

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Boost Heart Health: Did you know that drinking whiskey can make your heart healthier? Aside from wine and dark beer, what other alcohols can claim that? Not only will whiskey reduce the risk of blood clots, but it will lower your stroke and heart attack risk as well. The antioxidants in whiskey stop cholesterol from clogging your arteries, and it can even boost your good cholesterol.

Fight Cancer: Whiskey is rich in antioxidants, particularly one known as ellagic acid. This antioxidant stops your body's DNA from encountering cancer-causing compounds, reducing the risk of carcinogens forming. It can also protect your body from chemotherapy and will reduce oxidation in your body.

Improve Brain Health: A recent study discovered that drinking whiskey reduces your risk of Alzheimer's and dementia. If you're worried that your brain is slowing down in your old age, it's time to start drinking whiskey to protect your very important organ from damage.

Reduce Stroke Risk: Whiskey not only helps to prevent cholesterol from building up in your arteries, but it can actually help to get rid of any cholesterol present in your blood vessels at the moment. It will also help to relax the walls of your arteries, ensuring that your blood can flow without obstruction. One of the greatest health benefits of whiskey is the reduced stroke risk, and we can all drink to that.

Fight Stress: Stress can cause a wide range of health problems in the human body, but thankfully we've got whiskey to kick stress' butt! Whiskey helps to reduce anxiety and stress, calming your nerves and helping to relax your body. It can increase circulation throughout your body, providing your organs with fresh, oxygenated blood. A serving or two of whiskey can help to calm stressed nerves effectively.

Boost Memory: The antioxidants in whiskey can help to improve the health of your brain, and the circulation-boosting effects of this alcohol will boost your memory at the same time. The same properties that help to reduce your risk of Alzheimer's and dementia will also keep your brain active and young.

Aid in Digestion: Did you know that whiskey has long been drunk as a digestive aid? It was usually consumed after a meal, helping to relax the body after eating heavy food. It can also help to shut down your appetite, preventing you from overeating. Best of all, it will aid in digestion, reducing your risk of stomach-ache or indigestion after a heavy meal.

Lengthen Lifespan: Whiskey is loaded with healthy antioxidants, and these nutrients can help to increase your lifespan by reducing your risk of disease. By protecting your body against disease, you prevent the slow breakdown of important cells in your body—thereby helping you to live longer.

Great for Diabetics: Whiskey is a zero-carb alcohol, so you can drink it without worrying about the effect it will have on your blood sugar levels. If you suffer from diabetes, a finger or two of whiskey will be the right choice for you.

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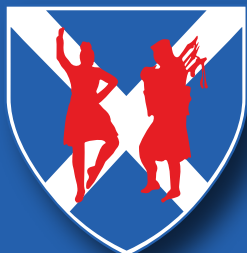
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DRAM

with Andrew Ferguson

Andrew Ferguson is a Scotch Whisky Expert and co-manager of the Kensington Wine Market in Calgary, Alberta. He was the first Canadian retail whisky expert to be made a Keeper of the Quaich, and one of only a few Canadians who have been so honoured by the Scotch Whisky Industry.

Over the last decade, Ferguson has shared his whisky experiences, perspectives, opinions, and recommendations with Celtic Life International readers via his popular Dram columns.

In the following pages, readers are invited to get reacquainted with both the man and his whisky wisdom.



There is a reason why we are the only Canadian retailer ever short listed for the World Whisky Retailer of the Year (and two time Runner Up)...
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Kensington Wine Market

Most readers recognize Andrew Ferguson as Celtic Life International's immensely knowledgeable and good-natured whisky connoisseur and columnist, whose musings on sprits engage, educate and entertain our community with each issue.

What they may not know is that writing is but a sideline for Ferguson; by day he is co-manager of the Kensington Wine Market in Calgary, Alberta. He also owns and operates Ferguson's Whisky Tours, taking thirsty travellers to explore Scotland for week-long distillery excursions.

Ferguson's taste for whisky began in university. His initial role at the Kensington Wine Market in 2003 was a considerably smaller one - a part-time gig as a delivery driver over the Christmas holidays. It was there, he shares, that his passion "took on a life of its own."

"I had never intended to make a career in the liquor industry, but I like the business, the people and our customers.

“I found a niche for myself in Scotch whisky, and the rest, as they say, is history.”

Canadian-born, Ferguson traces his heritage back to Scotland and Northern Ireland. His paternal grandfather emigrated from Ulster to Canada in the early 1920s to teach at the University of Saskatchewan. It is likely that their ancestors emigrated from

Scotland to Northern Ireland in the 1600s. His mother's family hails from the Scottish Highlands, later settling in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia.

Ferguson believes his heritage played a role in his interest in Scotch, but his passion for the trade developed organically. Since those early days as a delivery driver, he has become the first Canadian whisky expert to earn the title of Keeper of the Quaich - an honour given to those who have made outstanding achievements in working with, writing about, and/or promoting Scotch whisky.

"As cheesy as it may sound, the work is the reward," he says. "Getting to explore the world for new and interesting products, and calling it work, is awesome. I am very fortunate to have made a career out of what is merely a hobby for others. The hours can be long, and the work exhausting, but the motto 'do something you love and you will never work a day in your life' applies here. The other big benefit is all of the great relationships that I have made over time; friendships with customers and suppliers - many of them over a decade and counting."

Ferguson says the business remains true to its original mandate; "to discover, curate, and sell the best wine, beer and whisky selection in Canada."

"We can't be the biggest," he adds, noting that grocery chains and publicly traded firms fill that role. "But we can be the best."

It hasn't hurt that the production of craft spirits is on the rise as well, especially with regard to whisky and gin.

"This trend is happening all over the world. In Canada, you see it in each province; craft producers are popping up everywhere."

Ferguson wears many hats in his job at the market, but is best known for building its whisky section. The business has received recognition as runner-up for Whisky Retailer of the Year in the "Rest of the World" category from Whisky Advocate magazine. Most of his clientele, he explains, are destination shoppers.

"We have a solid local walk-in base of customers, but we are first and foremost a destination experience for customers in Calgary, Alberta, and across the country. Our website, snail mail, and electronic newsletters are all ways that we have been reaching our customers for years. Increasingly, social media is playing a more prominent role also.

"Alberta is the only fully open market for liquor in the world, and the internet has made it easier for us to connect with both suppliers and customers. We find the interesting things no one knows about, and then introduce them to a base of customers that extends far beyond Calgary's city limits. Being online has also put us on the global map, and we frequently get visitors from all over North America, Europe, and beyond."

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Wonderful Wolfburn

DRAM

with Andrew Ferguson



The 2010s were a heady time for the Scotch Whisky Industry. With global demand for single malt booming, more new distilleries opened in that decade than any other since the 1890s. On current trend, however, the 2020s might give them a run for their money.

One of the first of these new waves of distilleries to open was Wolfburn, whose stills ran with spirit for the first time on Robbie Burns Day, 2013.

Wolfburn was established in Thurso, the northernmost mainland town in Scotland, which looks across the tempestuous Pentland Firth towards the Orkney Islands. An earlier distillery, also known as Wolfburn, operated a few hundred meters from the site of the current distillery between 1820 and around 1837. Nothing remains of it today, save for a sad pile of stones. Both distilleries took their name from the Wolf Burn, their water source.

Wolves were once common in Scotland, especially in Caithness and the northern Highlands. Even though the last of the creatures were killed off centuries ago, their legacy continued in local culture and place names. Wolfburn's emblem is inspired by a sketch of a wolf from the 1600s, when they were more common. A sighting of the related, mythical sea-wolf was believed to bring good luck to those who saw it.

It is no easy thing to open a new distillery, and it is not for the faint of heart or those with shallow pockets. As I have noted more than a few times over the years in this column, starting a whisky distillery from scratch is a daunting and expensive undertaking. The startup costs to build or repurpose a building and kit it out can be substantial. But the big-

ger challenge is operating the distillery and laying down production for years without income, while waiting for the spirit to mature.

In Scotland, as in most of the world, the spirit must have matured at least 3 years in an oak cask before you can legally call it whisky.

And that is just the bare minimum - few established distilleries bottle anything under 10 years of age. And while there have been exceptions, there are few 3-year-old whiskies worth writing home about. Many new distilleries have released gins or spirit drinks to help pay the bills, while others, including Wolfburn, have sold cask futures to help with their operating costs.



Wolfburn Distillery was financed and built by the Caithness-based Aurora Brewing consortium. In 2011, after locating the old distillery site, they began negotiating the purchase of a flat piece of nearby land with access to the Wolf Burn. The land sale was

finalized in May of 2012, and construction on the site began in August of that year. The fact that they were already laying down spirit by January, 2013 is almost hard to fathom.

Wolfburn is one of Scotland's smallest distilleries, producing just 135,000 liters of spirit per annum. By way of comparison, Glenlivet and Glenfiddich each produce more than 50,000 liters every day. Most of the roughly 30-odd distilleries to open in the last two decades have also been relatively small, catering their production towards the growing demand for single malt whisky, as opposed to blends. Most of Wolfburn's production is unpeated, but they also distill a lightly peated spirit.

The distillery has an established core range of expressions, including peated and unpeated offerings, all of which are at least 46%, without added colouring or chill filtration. Wolfburn hit a significant milestone in 2023, with the release of their first 10-year-old single malt. Although the 10 Year will be a continuously available expression, the first release will be limited in distribution.

Wolfburn offers tours Monday-Friday, and visitors are encouraged to book ahead. The distillery is rather remote, even by Scottish standards, unless you are driving the North Coast 500 (a route circling the Northern Highlands), or trying to catch a ferry to the Orkneys. It's likely going to be a bit out of your way. This is a part of Scotland few people see, but it is worth the effort. The coastlines are stunning, and the winding roads are invigorating. And who knows, maybe you'll even catch sight of a sea-wolf!

www.wolfburn.com
www.kensingtonwinemarket.com



Rosebank Rising



To many an aficionado there has never been a finer Lowland single malt than Rosebank. The spirit - true to traditional Lowland style - was triple distilled, and made from unpeated malt, giving the whisky a delicate, floral, and fruity character. The reasons for its closure in 1993 never satisfied curious anoraks, even though its reputation and popularity grew in the decades that followed.

Nearly a third of all of Scotland's distilleries closed in the 1980s and 1990s, beginning in the annus horribilis of 1983. Some distilleries were shuttered forever, while a few others were more fortunate, re-opening in the late 90s and in the first decade of the new millennium as the industry recovered. Rosebank was one of the last distilleries to silence its stills (1993), but 30 years after going into mothballs it is set to rise like a proverbial phoenix from its ashes in the months ahead.

Rosebank Distillery first opened its doors in 1840, near Falkirk, along the Forth-Clyde Canal. But local legend insists that a distillery known as Rosebank was operating at the hands of the Stark brothers on-or-near the present site in 1798. That may be the same Rosebank Distillery which a James Robertson was apparently running in 1817. Though it may have a more ancient heritage, the current Rosebank Distillery didn't legally open until 1840.

Rosebank as we know it was built by James Rankine, who had previously purchased the maltings belonging to the Camelton Distillery on the other side of the canal. Curiously, there are records indicating that the Stark family connected with Rosebank was running Camelton in 1827. Rosebank was quickly a roaring success and expanded its operations in 1845. In 1961, it acquired the site of the old Camelton Distillery, demolishing it to make way for a new malting plant.

The facility operated almost continuously (save for the war years) right up until 1993, when its production was deemed redundant by its owner UDV, a forbearer of Diageo (the world's largest drinks company). UDV owned three Lowland Distilleries at the time, Bladnoch, Glenkinchie, and Rosebank, and it only needed one of them.

Rosebank was a highly regarded malt, so why did they close the only of the three distilleries that made a traditional, triple-distilled Lowland single malt?

A few years before the closure, in 1988, UDV selected six of its 30-odd distilleries to be marketed as The Classic Single Malts of Scotland, and to represent the Lowlands they selected Glenkinchie. The oldest and least likely explanation I recall hearing is that they gave preference to Glenkinchie because its name sounded more Scottish. A more plausible explanation surrounds the Forth & Clyde Canal, which was

in a desperate state by the early 1990s. Why build a brand and tourist attraction next to a stagnant canal?

The reasons given by the UDV at the time pertain to road access to the site, and the estimated £2m tab to repair the distillery's effluent plant.

Whatever the reason, the distillery sat silent for decades. Persistent rumours of its imminent reopening were just the product of wishful thinking on the part of whisky enthusiasts.

As time passed, and interest in single malt grew, more and more attention came to be paid to silent distilleries like Rosebank.

The whisky had many devoted admirers, but never quite gained the same cult status of other closed distillery malts like Brora and Port Ellen. As its fame slowly grew, its buildings were mostly sold off or repurposed, and hope seemed lost that it would ever reopen.

Then, in 2017, Ian MacLeod Distillers, owners of Glengoyne and Tamdhu, shocked the whisky world by announcing they had acquired the site of the old Rosebank Distillery, and that they would be bringing it back to life. It has taken six years, longer than they had originally hoped, but Rosebank will soon begin producing spirit again. It will be years before the spirit from the restored Rosebank distillery will legally be whisky, and years more until it has the maturity to satisfy fans of the Rosebank of old. However, there will be a visitor center and a place for fans of the whisky to pay homage.

It is still possible to purchase bottles of Rosebank produced before the stills fell silent. Ian Macleod has released a couple of official bottlings since taking over, but they don't come cheap. The most recent release of Rosebank 31 Year retails for nearly \$4,000.00.

Independent bottlings are increasingly rare, but are still trickling out, and a bit more affordable than the official bottlings. Elixir Distillers have nearly depleted their stocks of their "Rosebank the Roses" releases. The most recent release, Rosebank 21 Year (it was put in to glass a decade ago) Unity is retailing for about \$2,000.00 in Canada, and is sold out in the U.K., where it is selling at auction for double that!

www.rosebank.com

www.kensingtonwinemarket.com



Bountiful Benromach



DRAM
with *Andrew Ferguson*

When Gordon & MacPhail purchased the Benromach Distillery in 1993, it was considered a curious acquisition, coming in the wake of one of the biggest busts to hit the Scotch Whisky industry. Global demand for Scotch had surged in the 1960s and 1970s and, unsurprisingly, the industry grew accordingly. However, by the early 1980s things were looking dark - the industry had massively overshot the mark and was now sitting on a proverbial Loch of Whisky. Most distilleries - the lucky ones - dramatically slashed their production. Nearly a quarter of all active distilleries in Scotland closed between 1983 and 2000, most of them forever.

Deemed to be a “surplus” distillery, Benromach was mothballed in 1983. Established in 1898 in the town of Forres, about 20 minutes outside of Elgin, Benromach’s history was rather unremarkable, though its whisky was always well regarded. In 1950, John Urquhart, who was then at the helm of Gordon & MacPhail (G&M), made a significant bid to purchase Benromach, but it would end up in the hands of another major whisky firm, Seagrams.

Gordon & MacPhail is a 128-year-old family business that has been owned by the Urquharts for four generations. They are, without question, the world’s preeminent independent bottler, uniquely laying down their own casks of new make spirit rather than purchasing mature whiskies from the open market. Of the 25 oldest whiskies ever bottled, almost all of them have been either bottled by G&M or, if bottled by others, the liquid was often bought back from G&M. The company doesn’t think or plan in terms of years, but rather in generations. When G&M finally completed its acquisition of Benromach in 1993, 43 years later, the rest of the industry was on its knees.

To many industry observers this must have seemed like folly. However, smart investors - like many of the best run family firms - know that the best time to pull out the cheque book is when things are tough. Never ones to rush, they patiently rebuilt and refitted Benromach, ensuring that it was done properly so that customers could enjoy their premium product for generations to come.

King Charles, then Prince of Wales, was on hand for the distillery’s grand reopening in 1998. And while the overall production would be smaller than before, none would be assigned for blending.

Benromach is now exclusively produced for consumption as a single malt.

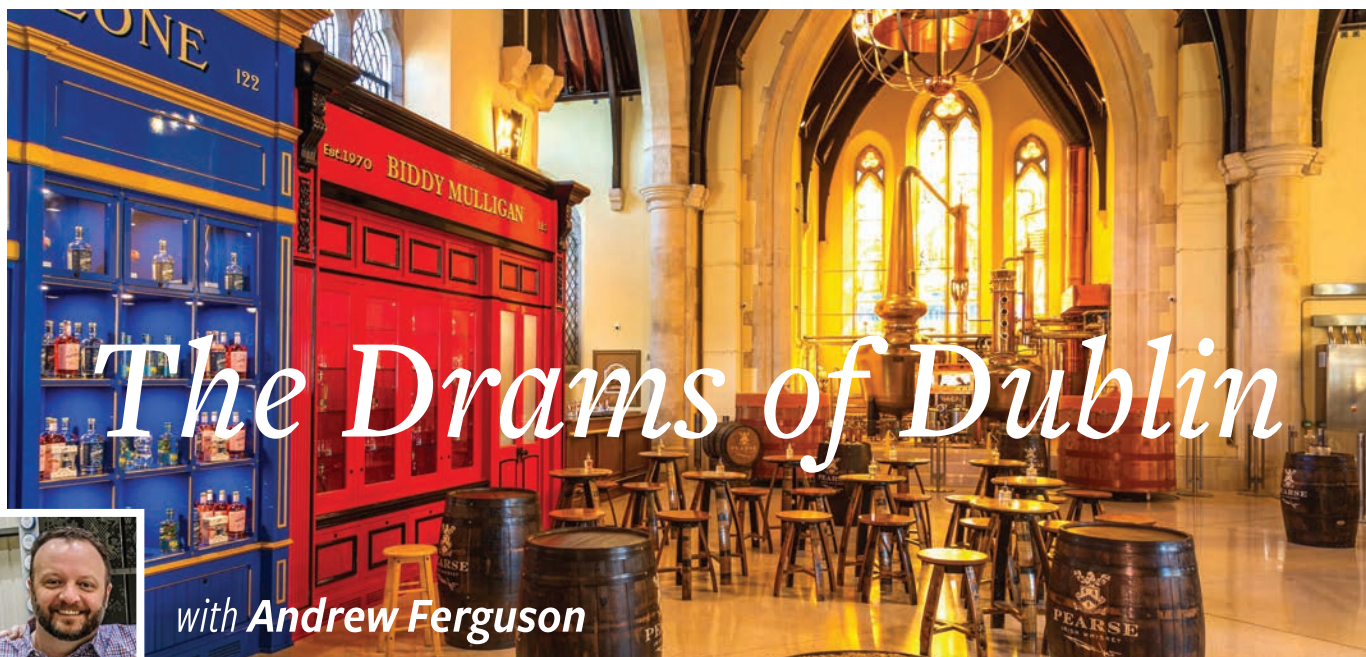
The distillery has a relatively long fermentation process and employs a slow distillation - both of which create a more complex and fruity spirit. And, like its parent company Gordon & MacPhail, only fills spirit into the best quality oak; when it comes to wood policy, G&M and Benromach set the gold standard.

While the company has tried to honour the past by replicating its pre-closure taste - in the 19th century most Speyside whiskies would have been at least somewhat peated - its current offering is considered lightly peated.

Today, Benromach is one of the most compelling and exciting Scotch whisky brands. Its core range whiskies, such as the 10, 15, and now 21-year-old, are all excellent quality and very good value. The roots of that success go back far more than the 25 years since reopening; it can be traced back more than a century to the original founding of Gordon & MacPhail whose initial mandate in 1895 was to sell “a superior article at a popular price.”

Benromach whiskies, especially the 10- and 15-year-olds, can be found at most good whisky retailers, while the 21-year-old is available in smaller quantities from selected retailers. The Benromach Distillery offers a range of tours and experiences 12 months of the year, and it is only a short drive from either Inverness or Elgin. Certainly, if you are going to make the trip to Benromach, you would be wise to visit Elgin and see the original Gordon & MacPhail shop.

www.kensingtonwinemarket.com



with **Andrew Ferguson**

In the early 1800s the Irish whiskey industry was riding high - its domestic market, despite its small size, was stronger than that of much more populous England. While there were distilleries scattered all over the Emerald Isle, Dublin was home to the five largest players. At their peak, these distilleries would produce more than 40 million liters a year. At the end of the century, Ireland's whiskey was considered the finest in the world - commanding a 25 per cent premium on Scotch whiskies - and that produced in Dublin was especially prized.

The fortunes of Ireland's whiskey industry would turn, however, with the dawning of the new century. The Irish had failed to see the potential of new distilling technologies and blending, and rapidly began losing market share to Blended Scotch whiskies. The War of Independence with Great Britain, Civil War, and then prohibition in the U.S., left the industry hanging on by a thread.

Of the 28 large active distilleries in the late 1800s, only a handful managed to limp into the 2nd half of the 20th century. The last of Dublin's distilleries closed in the mid-1970s, by which point there were just two distilleries on the whole island, Bushmills in Northern Ireland, and the New Midleton Distillery in the Republic. The latter accounted for the vast majority of production and almost all the brands of Irish whiskey on the market. That was until things finally started to look up in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

The rebirth of Irish Whiskey started slowly with the opening of the Cooley Distillery in 1987, but it rapidly gathered pace in the 2010s as the global whiskey market began to boom.

In 2011 the Teeling family sold Cooley to global drinks giant Beam Suntory, giving them the capital to open not one, but two new distilleries. John Teeling opened the massive Great Northern Distillery in Dundalk, while his sons Jack and Stephen decided to build a distillery in the heart of Dublin's Liberties.

When the Teeling family sold Cooley, the purchase agreement let them keep 16,000 casks of whiskey. Jack Teeling used this whiskey to found and supply the Teeling Whiskey brand, until he could build a

distillery. Stephen joined his brother in the business a few years later, and in 2015 they opened the Teeling Distillery in Newmarket Square, only a few blocks from the Marleybone Lane Distillery founded by their ancestor Walter Teeling in 1782. The Distillery produces both single malt and traditional pot still Irish whiskies.

Around the corner from the Teeling Distillery is the Dublin Liberties Distillery. The DLD produces both double and triple distilled single malts. Production began in 2019, but the distillery has been selling whiskies sourced from Cooley and Bushmills while they wait for their own to mature.

The Pearse Lyons Distillery is without question Dublin's most beautiful. Named for its founder, a Dublin born and Irish raised scientist and entrepreneur who founded a large agrifood business in the U.S. After opening the Lexington Brewing Company and Town Branch Distillery in Lexington, Kentucky, Pearse set his sights on opening a distillery in his native land. Distilling began initially in Carlow in 2012 but was moved to the deconsecrated St. James Church in 2017. Pearse and his wife Deirdre took four years to carefully restore the old church before it was converted into a distillery. The distillery bottles both Blended and Single Malt whiskies and has in recent years begun producing single pot Irish whiskey too.

One of the newest distilleries in Dublin is Roe & Coe, founded in 2019 by the world's largest drinks company Diageo. Its name is a nod to the Roe family, one of the "big four" distilling families in Dublin, whose Thomas Street Distillery operated from 1757-1926. Located in the Liberties, the distillery was installed in the old Guinness power station, on the old brewery's massive estate. Guinness - like Roe & Co. - is owned by Diageo.

Dublin may never recover the mantle of being the Whiskey Capital of the World, but Irish Whiskey's fortunes in the city are looking up. In addition to the four distilleries mentioned above, there are a couple of other small new distilleries and attractions to see in Dublin, the most notable of which is the visitor center at Jameson's old Bow Street Distillery. Whiskey hasn't been produced there in more than 50 years, but it is well worth a visit.

www.kensingtonwinemarket.com

Bountiful Bowmore

DRAM

with **Andrew Ferguson**



The Bowmore Distillery lies at the heart of the town with which it shares its name, situated roughly in the center of the Isle of Islay. The distillery was opened in 1779, making it one of Scotland's oldest distilleries, established only 9 years after the town itself. Bowmore was purpose-built in an unusual gridiron pattern with an unusually wide main street which travels 4 blocks uphill to the town's famous round church, Kilarrow Parish.

The church was built in the round, in Celtic Christian fashion, so that there were no corners in which the devil could hide.

The reason the town was built in 1770 is a story worth pausing on for a moment, as it offers a better sense of what life was like for common people in Scotland at that time. The town that preceded Bowmore, known as Kilarrow, was located just across Loch Indaal from where Bowmore is situated now, near the present town of Bridgend. If we are going to be very precise, the town was located between the shore of Loch Indaal and Islay House, the seat of the Laird (Lord) of Islay. It seems the Laird didn't love the view from his windows, so he did as you could at that time - he had the town moved.

Bowmore's No.1 Vaults warehouse is believed to be the oldest continuously used building in the Scotch whisky industry. This legendary warehouse with its thick stone walls is something like holy ground to whisky connoisseurs. It has matured many of Bowmore's most famous whiskies, like the various releases of Black Bowmore, filled in 1964, as well as the White and Gold releases which formed part of a trilogy. The warehouse is

at high tide, slightly below sea level. During winter storms, it is not unusual for the water to seep in.

Bowmore has had a half dozen owners in its near quarter of a millennia of operations. Today it is a part of the private Japanese drinks giant Beam Suntory, which owns whisky distilleries in Scotland, the United States, Ireland, Japan, and Canada. Bowmore is one of Beam Suntory's four Scottish distilleries, two of which, including Laphroaig, happen to be on Islay.

Bowmore is one of barely more than a handful of distilleries to continue to malt some of its barley on traditional malting floors. And true to the Islay style, the distillery produces a peated single malt, though by the island's standards it is only moderately peated. At mature ages the peat fades almost completely, making way for tropical notes in refill casks and rich dark fruits in sherry. The modern profile of Bowmore marries soft smoke with sea salt, and a distinct prominent floral lavender top note. Not everyone is a fan of the lavender, especially when it is dominant, but I happen to love it!

The distillery was way ahead of the curve when it came to sustainability, being one of the pioneering distilleries for energy efficiency and conservation.

The air used to dry the malt in its kilns after the peat run is heated with waste heat from



the stills, recovered through heat exchangers. The distillery even converted one of its warehouses to a pool for the town, which it heats with still more recovered energy.

Any trip to Islay is incomplete without a visit to Bowmore Distillery. In fact, it is almost impossible to visit the island without driving right past it at least once. The distillery offers a number of tours, but given the effort required to get to the island, you will want to make sure you are doing one of the experiences which includes a cask tasting in the No.1 Vaults Warehouse.

Bowmore's whiskies are widely available, especially in Canada, which has been one of its biggest markets for more than a decade. The 12- and 15-year-olds are both fine drams, but it is with the 18-year that Bowmore really starts to shine for me. And if you ever get to sample something from 1964, and you can afford it, do it....it will be an experience you will never forget!

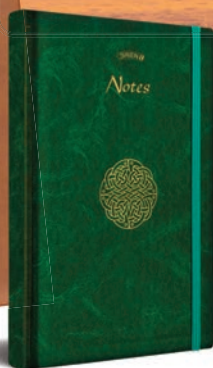
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Glorious Glen Grant with Andrew Ferguson

In a way, it is surprising that I haven't previously written an article about the Glen Grant Distillery. Not because Glen Grant isn't an exciting brand - it isn't (although it is a unique and beautiful distillery that does produce some very fine spirit) - but because, until only recently, official bottlings of Glen Grant were all young and primarily only available in Italy. This has now changed, with the distillery having rolled out a proper age-stated range. What truly makes Glen Grant noteworthy, however, is its connection with another brand, Gordon & MacPhail, the preeminent independent bottler of Scotch whisky.

Gordon & MacPhail started as a grocer in 1892, but very early on began buying and selling whiskies from the Speyside region under their own label. For most of the 19th and 20th centuries, blended Scotch was king; distilleries did not produce malt whisky for sale as single malt, but rather as a component for blended whiskies. Over time, the company's bottlings, from dozens of distilleries, came to be seen as semi-official bottlings. Long before the distilleries saw fit to bottle their own whiskies, they were bottling single malt from the likes of Glenlivet, Longmorn, Macallan, Strathisla, and many others.

Gordon & MacPhail continues to bottle more than a dozen single malts under their 'Distillery Labels' range today, and none more prolifically than Glen Grant. At the start of my career, 40-50 something Glen Grants distilled in the 1940s and 1950s could be had for just a couple hundred dollars a bottle. They raised the bar in 2012 when they bottled a 60-year-old Glen Grant to mark the Queen's Diamond

Jubilee. In the decade since, they have bottled at least a dozen more Glen Grants at 60 years of age or more, all of which are among the oldest whiskies ever bottled.

*Glen Grant was founded
in Rothes in 1839 by a
pair of brothers from Elgin
- John and James Grant.*

It is rumored that John may have been involved in illicit distilling before going legit. The distillery was massive for its day, and the brothers were very well connected. James was Lord Provost of the City of Elgin, a position which certainly did not hinder the construction of a rail line connecting Elgin to the port at Lossiemouth.

They also personally funded the construction of the extension south from Elgin to Rothes. They named the distillery, and, by association, the small Glen it sits in, after themselves. This is surprisingly uncommon among the more than 120 active distilleries in Scotland. To this day, there is just one other distillery named after an actual person.

The distillery rose to greater prominence under John's nephew, James "The Major" Grant, who took over in 1872. He had spent some time in Africa, much of it hunting big game, and brought back a young orphan by the name of Biawa Makalaga - as one did at the time - whose own story has become a local legend. Like his uncle James, 'The Major' was an engineer, and he made some design changes which set the distillery apart; notably,

tweaking the shape of the stills and installing a spirit purifier, both of which helped shape the light fruity spirit Glen Grant is famous for today. He also had electric lighting installed, powered by turbines at the distillery.

One of the distillery's features that can still be enjoyed today is the African-themed botanical garden installed by 'The Major.' It is full of exotic plants and stylized African huts. One of these huts sits next to the burn in a small gorge at the back of the garden. A small safe is carved into the rock, in which a special bottle is kept for the Major and his guests. I visited the distillery back in the mid 2000s, and as a special treat, the safe was opened for me. I was mildly disappointed to find a young distillery-bottled Glen Grant, rather than a Gordon & MacPhail bottling with some age on it.

The Glen Grant Distillery is located in the town of Rothes, a picturesque 20-minute drive south of Elgin. It is open for distillery tours most of the year, which include access to its beautiful garden. The distillery's core range bottlings such as the 12 and 18-year-old are good and increasingly widely available, but if you want something truly exceptional, look for one of Gordon & MacPhail's older sherry matured Glen Grants. The firm recently released the Glen Grant 1952 Platinum Jubilee, a 70-year-old whisky celebrating Queen Elizabeth's seven decades on the throne. It is available from specialist shops around the world for \$35,000.00.

www.glengrant.com
www.kensingtonwinemarket.com



Terrific Tobermory with Andrew Ferguson



Though Scotland is not a very large country, it is impressive how many Scottish place names there are scattered about Canada. One of the most curious is Calgary, Canada's 4th largest city, which takes its moniker from a white sand beach and small hamlet on the Isle of Mull. A native Calgarian, I made the pilgrimage to the original Calgary about 15 years ago, and even had a dip in the chilly waters of Calgary Bay. When I asked a couple of other tourists on the beach if they could take a photo of me in the water, they asked me where I was from. "The other Calgary" I proudly declared!

Mull is the second largest island of the Inner Hebrides on Scotland's rugged west coast. A thousand years ago it was in the domain of the Lords of the Isles, a semi-independent kingdom of maritime raiders. Prior to the Highland Clearances of the 1700 and 1800s, the island was home to more than 10,000 people. The clearances, the potato famine of the 1840s, and emigration, reduced it to less than 3,000 by the beginning of the 20th century - about the same as it is today.

The island is a popular tourist destination with throngs of visitors taking the ferry from nearby Oban to see its many castles, beaches, the holy island of Iona, and its picturesque capital, Tobermory. Tobermory was founded in 1788 as a fishing town, during the Clearances, as part of a program to provide both work and a place to live to displaced crofters. There is, not surprisingly, a Tobermory in Canada too. The name was given to a harbour at the tip of the Bruce Peninsula in Ontario.

The original Tobermory was built around a deep natural harbour with a curious history, just off the north coast of Mull. A gold-laden

Spanish galleon (possibly the *Florencia*), part of the failed Spanish Armada, was anchored in the port seeking provisions in 1588 when its powder magazine exploded, sending her to the muddy depths. What caused the explosion is still disputed, but there is some evidence to suggest it may have been the result of a raid to steal the gold or a dispute about compensation.

The Tobermory Distillery was built in 1798, 10 years after the town was founded and, as with many of the homes, clings to the edge of the bay.

Originally named Ledaig, pronounced [led*chig], the distillery would only operate for 40 years before closing in 1837. It was opened again between 1890 and 1930, after which it sat silent for another 42 years. Like many others, the distillery was at the mercy of cyclical global demand for whisky production. It was refurbished and reopened again in 1972, only to close three years later when its owners went bankrupt.

Under fresh ownership, it opened again in 1979 under a new name: Tobermory Distillers Ltd., but temporarily paused production between 1982 and 1989, the worst years of the most recent market correction. In 1993, the distillery's fortunes turned, seemingly forever, when it was acquired by Burn Stewart Distillers, the owners of the Black Bottle Blended Scotch whisky. Today the distillery produces both peated (Ledaig) and unpeated (Tobermory) single malts, which are widely

available. The peated version, Ledaig, is very rubbery and medicinal in style, and likely the only whisky more divisive amongst single malt enthusiasts than Laphroaig.

The distillery's production is small - less than 1,000,000 litres a year - and unlikely to grow much, owing to its cramped conditions sandwiched between steep cliffs and the bay. The distillery's stills are short but have both boil balls and very unusual lyne arms with an upward s-shaped kink. The result is a lighter spirit, though you would never suspect that after tasting Ledaig. Only a tiny fraction of the whisky is matured on site, with most of the distillery's production matured on the mainland.

A short ferry ride from Oban, the Isle of Mull has plenty to offer visitors, not least a tour of Tobermory Distillery. The colourful buildings which ring the bay form a beautiful backdrop and make it one of Scotland's most picturesque towns. Historic castles, black and white sand beaches, rolling hills, and craggy mountains, all add to its charm. Just off the coast, there are two more reasons to visit. First, there is the tiny holy island of Iona in the southwest, where - around its reconstructed Abbey - there are more monarchs buried than anywhere else in Europe. Second, the even smaller island of Staffa, home to Fingal's Cave, a geologic formation connected to the Giant's Causeway in Northern Ireland. The haunting sound of waves crashing into the cave even inspired Felix Mendelssohn to compose an overture.

www.tobermorydistillery.com
www.kensingtonwinemarket.com



Trending Tomatin

with Andrew Ferguson



I suspect that - if asked - even relative novices in the world of single malt Scotch, let alone the aficionados, could likely guess the names of the largest distilleries in Scotland today. With a production capacity of 21 million liters of spirit each per year, Glenfiddich and Glenlivet are by far the industry's largest producers. They are enormous, roughly 10 times the industry average. The next closest, at a still impressive 15 million liters is Macallan. The list drops off sharply from there. But ask the same question about the industry in the 1970s, and I suspect even the most knowledgeable aficionados would struggle to identify Tomatin as the era's largest distillery.

In 1974, the Tomatin distillery installed a dozen new stills, which would have been impressive in and of itself, but is even more so considering that they were adding them to the 11 they already had. This gave the distillery an annual production capacity of more than 10 million liters a year, the largest of any single malt distillery in Scotland at the time. The distillery, as with the rest of the industry, was chasing the post war distilling boom in demand for Scotch whisky - in particular Blended Scotch. All booms eventually turn to bust though, and by 1986 the distillery was in liquidation...no pun intended.

Tomatin was founded in the town of the same name in 1897, high up in the Highlands between Inverness and Aviemore. The town was a stopover point on a centuries-old cattle droving road, and it is likely that some form of illicit distillation took place there as far back as the 16th century. By the 1700s, illicit distilling in the area was rife, as it was in much of the rest of Scotland. The choice of location was partly personal as the founder, James MacDougall, was a local boy. But it was likely the announcement of the route for the

Highland Rail line in 1892, which would pass right by the town, which made the decision to open a distillery there all the more attractive.

As with many of the distilleries built during the Victorian whisky boom of the late 1900s, Tomatin's fortunes turned with the start of the new century.

Throughout the 1880s and 1890s, new distilleries opened, and existing ones expanded production to meet the new global demand for Scotch whisky. This all came to an abrupt end in 1898 with the Pattison Whisky Crash. As with close to a third of the industry, Tomatin would fall victim to the crash in the decade that followed and was forced to close in 1906. However, it was spared the fate of many of the others and reopened under new management in 1909. It would continue to grow steadily over the decades that followed, until the decision was made to abruptly double its size in 1974. As with its opening, the timing was poor, with another industry correction less than a decade away!

At its peak, the distillery covered an enormous site, with a couple of dozen warehouses, sizeable grain storage, homes for staff, its own sizeable cooperage, and many other facilities. There was even an eel farm on site, which took advantage of the waste heat from the stills. Much of this legacy can still be seen today. And while Tomatin is not one of the most beautiful and manicured distilleries, it is one of the most interesting and authentic. In 1986, the distillery was saved once more from oblivion by new management, when it was acquired by Takara Shuzo and Okura & Co. It in turn became one of the first Scottish

distilleries (but not the last) to be acquired by a Japanese firm.

In the 1990s, the new owners also acquired the well-known Blended Scotch Whisky brand Antiquary, giving the distillery new purpose, as well as ready demand for production. In 2000, 11 of the stills were removed, and a new direction was taken, with a focal shift toward single malts. Since then, production has rarely surpassed 2 million liters a year, with most of that increasingly destined to be bottled as single malt. The distillery's range has evolved over the last 20 years, and now includes both peated and unpeated single malts, with the peated whiskies bottled under the brand name Cu Bocan or "Ghost Dog."

Tomatin's whiskies offer very good value compared to many better-known single malt brands. Most of the spirit today is matured in first fill casks, primarily Bourbon and Sherry, but also a variety of ex-wine casks. The brand's reputation has grown over the years, and with that its distribution, with the whiskies widely available in most markets.

The distillery also offers a range of tours, 7 days a week, and is well worth a visit. A classic example of 'it's what's on the inside that counts,' Tomatin offers an excellent counterpoint to the more famous, polished, and picturesque distilleries in the nearby Speyside region. The distillery is conveniently located just off the A9, the main highway, and is a short drive from both Inverness and Aviemore, and just 20 minutes from other iconic attractions such as Loch Ness, Culloden, Fort George, and Cawdor Castle.

www.tomatin.com

www.kensingtonwinemarket.com



The Beast of Dufftown

with Andrew Ferguson



Rome was famously built on seven hills, whereas the Scottish town of Dufftown was built on seven stills, a reference to the whisky boom in the closing years of the 19th century when the town had seven active distilleries. Today, there are but six surviving distilleries in the area, though a total of nine have existed at various times. Even so, Dufftown still produces more single malt whisky than any other town or city in Scotland, and it can rightly claim the title of the Malt Whisky Capital of Scotland. It doesn't hurt that the lion's share of this comes from two of Scotland's largest and most famous distilleries, Glenfiddich and Balvenie.

Dufftown's first licensed distillery was Mortlach, which opened in 1823. It took its name from the ancient town and historic parish of Mortlach, which was absorbed by the town of Dufftown when it was established in 1817 as a planned settlement. Though the town was new and modern, the village of Mortlach was ancient, tracing its origins to the 7th century and the founding of an Abbey by Saint Moluag.

By the 1820s, illicit distilling was rife in Scotland, with an estimated 14,000 stills confiscated annually. Most rural properties, especially in the Highlands, would have one so that they could use it to convert their agricultural produce into a more easily traded commodity. In an effort to tax the burgeoning whisky trade and make it easier to produce whisky legally, the Excise Act was passed in 1823, which sanctioned whisky production in return for "a licence fee of £10, and a set payment per gallon of proof spirit." It is not surprising, therefore, that many distilleries like Mortlach opened or decided to go legit at this time.

The distillery had many owners in its first couple of decades, including, for a time, the Grant brothers of Glen Grant Distillery fame (not to be confused with the Grant family who would go on to found Glenfiddich and Balvenie). It was under the ownership of George Cowie, a railway surveyor and later mayor of Dufftown, in the 1950s that the distillery's well-regarded whisky became a sought-after component for blenders.

Cowie's son Alexander joined his father in the business in 1895 and is credited for Mortlach's famous but unusual production technique, which results in a spirit 2.81 times distilled. This involves a small still (famously known as "The Wee Witchie") triple distilling the heaviest portion of the first run, known as "weak feints." Distillation at Mortlach runs unusually quickly, with condensation taking place in cold worm tubs. All of this is done with an eye to reducing copper contact and encouraging a heavy, meaty, and sulphuric profile.

In 1897, during a whisky boom, the distillery expanded from three to six pot stills, an unusually large number for the era. That same year a railway siding was added, linking it to the Dufftown railway station, and a year later electric lighting and a hydraulic lift system for raising casks were added, making it a very modern distillery.

Mortlach's robust style has led to its nickname, "The Beast of Dufftown."

This profile has made it the darling of blenders for over 150 years, who use it to add weight to their blended Scotch whiskies. Un-

derstandable, then, when Alexander Cowie sold the distillery in 1923, it was to John Walker & Sons. A few years later John Walker & Sons became part of Distilleries Company Ltd., which was itself an eventual forebearer of Diageo, the world's largest drinks business.

Even though the vast majority of its production has long been dedicated to Blends, Mortlach has enjoyed a devoted following among single malt enthusiasts. Independent bottlers - in particular Gordon & MacPhail - did much to build its reputation. In the early 2000s, a 16-year-old Mortlach from Diageo's Flora & Fauna range was released, though not widely distributed. Interest in the brand encouraged Diageo to launch a core range of official bottlings in 2014, but they didn't quite hit the mark (mainly due to pricing). A new official range consisting of 12, 16, and 20-year-old Mortlachs was launched in 2018 and has been much better received. The 16-year-old, especially, is a very decent dram, in my humble opinion.

Gordon & MacPhail's relationship with the distillery is worthy of special note, as it goes back at least 85 years, if not longer. Mortlach is one of the whiskies in G&M's Distillery Labels range which originated at a time when few distilleries bottled whisky under their own label. Two Gordon & MacPhail bottlings of Mortlach, a 70-year-old in 2008 and a 75-year-old in 2015, were respectively for a time the oldest whiskies ever bottled. That is, until 2021 when they bottled another whisky from their Distillery Label range, an 80-year-old Glenlivet!

www.mortlach.com
kensingtonwinemarket.com



The Case for Clynelish

with **Andrew Ferguson**



I have a personal connection to the Clynelish Distillery - one that goes well beyond my love of their whisky. This connection is a little bit at odds with my love for the whisky if I am being honest. The distillery was founded by the Marquis of Stafford, aka the 1st Duke of Sutherland, one of the worst actors in the dark period of Scottish history known as the Highland Clearances.

The Highland Clearances took place between 1750 and 1860 in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. Tens of thousands of tenant farmers were cruelly and systematically evicted from their homes so that their farmland could be used for the more profitable grazing of sheep. Many were forced out of their homes at gunpoint and shepherded away to live in towns and villages while their meagre possessions went up in smoke. The displaced peoples were compelled to become fishermen, kelp harvesters, or hard labourers.

In later stages of the clearances, after it became apparent that the displaced peoples were struggling to support themselves and were suffering from famine, landlords turned to "assisted passages." Tenants who were selected for "emigration" had little choice but to board ship and depart for places unknown. This is almost certainly how my mother's ancestors found their way to Canada.

I am a member of the ancient Clan Gunn on my mother's side. The Gunns claim Gunni as their founder, who was himself the descendant of Viking raiders. Gunni's wife, Ragnhild, was the sister of the Earl of Orkney, who granted her estates in Caithness. The Gunns would play a prominent role in the far north-east of Scotland - the lands of Caithness and Sutherland - for the next 500 years. There is still a strong Gunn connection to these lands,

but the Clearances did much to break the Clan system and Gaelic culture.

In just six years between 1814 and 1820, the 1st Duke of Sutherland alone evicted more than 3000 families - no fewer than 15,000 people from Caithness and Sutherland. One old woman was burned alive after refusing to leave her home.

The Clynelish Distillery was founded by the Duke of Sutherland in 1819, ostensibly to give some of his newly unemployed tenants something to do. But I recall another version of this story, which implies that the distillery was opened, not out of commercial intent, but rather to drive the illicit distillers operating on his lands - the last holdouts to his Clearance - out of business. It seems this man's cruelty knew no bounds, at least by modern standards. Whatever the truth is, the distillery has survived to this day, and has somewhat of a dedicated following for its whisky.

The original Clynelish Distillery was closed in 1968, after a new modern Clynelish distillery opened adjacent to it in 1967. The old distillery, renamed Brora after the town, was temporarily revived between 1969 and 1983 to supply demand for the booming Blended Scotch industry. In the years since, Brora has become a highly sought after and collectible whisky. This might have had something to do with its owner Diageo's decision to reopen it after nearly 40 years.

The Brora (the original Clynelish) and Clynelish Distilleries are located side by side on the outskirts of the picturesque seaside town of Brora. The latter recently opened a state-of-the-art visitor center and, like its older sister distillery, has developed a bit of a cult following - in this case for a specific

trait. Clynelish has a distinctly mouth coating waxy profile which sets it apart from all other Scottish single malts. There was a bit of a panic many years back when the spirit temporarily lost some of this character after an overly thorough cleaning of the distillery's equipment during the silent season. The collection of "gunky" oils in the feints receiver is behind this signature trait and is now carefully replaced after its cleaning.

The Clynelish 14 Year distillery bottling is a classic but has been harder to find in recent years.

The whisky is also of signature importance to, and one of the biggest components in Johnnie Walker Gold Label blend. Keep your eye open for independent bottlings of Clynelish, especially from Gordon & Macphail and Signatory, they are always excellent.

The town of Brora is located a little over an hour north of Inverness and boasts a few nice hotels and a lovely oceanfront links course. There is also plenty of great hiking and mountain biking in the nearby mountains. One peak in particular, Ben Bhraggie, looms over the scenic nearby town of Golspie and boasts spectacular views of the Dornoch Firth, the Black Isle (a peninsula) and the Moray coast beyond. While you are there, you can pay your respects to the notorious 1st Duke of Sutherland, who built an imposing monument to himself atop the Ben. How you choose to do that is up to you, but I have a few ideas!

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Gordon & MacPhail

with Andrew Ferguson



In 1895, James Gordon and John Alexander MacPhail opened a grocery business in the City of Elgin, the heart of Scotland's Speyside whisky region. The business sold groceries, tea, coffee, and wines from all over the world. Over a hundred and twenty years later, Gordon & MacPhail still operates the grocery business in Elgin, but its real enterprise is as an independent bottler and distiller of Scotch whisky.

In the early years of the business Gordon and MacPhail brought in a young John Urquhart as apprentice. Urquhart had a knack for selecting and blending whiskies from local distilleries. He also began brokering casks and independently bottling single malt from famous distilleries like Glenlivet, Mortlach, and Glen Grant. The practice of filling casks of new-make whisky, rather than simply purchasing mature casks, began at this time. This is something which sets Gordon & MacPhail apart from almost all other independent bottlers to this day, and it gave them a leg up through leaner years. In 1915, John Urquhart was made senior partner, and although the firm would keep its name, from this point on it would remain privately owned by the Urquhart family.

In 1933, George Urquhart - aka "Mr. George" - joined his father in the business. He was heavily involved in the firm's whisky business, travelling widely to showcase Gordon & MacPhail whiskies. G&M's business thrived during and after World War II. Having had the foresight to lay down large numbers of casks in the 1930s and early 1940s, they were in a strong position to meet demand, especially in America. This was a difficult time for most of the industry with barley rationing dramatically reducing distilling.

In 1968, under George Urquhart's leader-

ship, Gordon & MacPhail launched the Connoisseurs Choice range. At a time when few distilleries were bottling their own whisky as single malt (rather than producing it for use in Blended Scotch whiskies), Gordon & MacPhail began marketing single malts from distilleries across Scotland. The range is still being bottled today.

The third generation began entering the business with George's son Ian Urquhart in 1967. He was joined by David Urquhart in 1972, as well as Michael Urquhart and Rosemary Rankin in 1981. The family firm continued to thrive even during the industry downturn of the 1980s and early 1990s, emerging as the undisputed preeminent independent bottler of Scotch whisky. In the 2010s the torch was passed to the fourth generation, with at least five of John Urquhart's descendants now involved in the business.

It had always been John Urquhart's vision for the family to own a distillery of its own.

The dream was finally realized in 1993 with the acquisition of the closed Benromach Distillery in the nearby town of Forres. The distillery was in rough shape, and it took nearly five years to get it up and running. HRH Prince Charles was on hand in 1998 for its official reopening. Never content to rest on its laurels, the firm announced plans in 2019 to open a brand-new distillery in the Cairngorms National Park. The Cairn Distillery is scheduled to open in 2022.

One of the most remarkable things about Gordon & MacPhail is the vision it had to mature whiskies to great ages. Few other whisky firms, whether distilleries or independent

bottlers, have ever had the foresight to mature casks for more than 30 or 40 years. In 2010, G&M bottled the Generations Mortlach 70 Years Old, which was the oldest whisky ever bottled at the time. They followed up on that milestone by bottling 70-year-old Glenlivet in both 2011 and 2012. And then, in 2015, they once again raised the bar by bottling the Generations Mortlach 75 Year. Of the 10 oldest whiskies ever bottled, all but two have been bottled by G&M.

It is almost certain that Gordon MacPhail will one day bottle the first ever one hundred-year-old whisky, but that may still be a couple of decades away. Their oldest maturing stocks are from the late 1930s and early 1940s. A number of these casks, 15 First Fill Sherry Butts to be precise, were filled for Gordon & MacPhail at the Glenlivet Distillery on February 3rd, 1940. Most of these casks have been bottled over the decades, but G&M dipped into another of these casks this year to bottle another whisky. The Generations Glenlivet 80 Year is once more the oldest bottle of Scotch Whisky ever bottled. It isn't inexpensive, but I can vouch for it in one regard - it doesn't disappoint!

Gordon & MacPhail whiskies can be found all over the world with whiskies ranging from under \$100 to \$100,000 or more. Their grocery shop in Elgin is the brand's spiritual home, with a section dedicated to Scotch Whisky that showcases more than 1000 bottles. Prior to Covid-19, the shop offered both tastings and in-store sampling, as does their nearby Benromach Distillery in Forres, one of the smallest and most traditional distilleries in the Speyside.

www.kensingtonwinemarket.com



Crafting Whiskies with Andrew Ferguson

The global whisky industry has been on a tear for the last two decades. This is one of the longest sustained periods of growth the sector has ever seen. A number of distilleries that had closed and mothballed in the 1980s and 1990s have reopened. Other established players have seen considerable investment and expansion. While it isn't the first major boom experienced by the industry, it is unprecedented in one key respect - it has seen thousands of new distilleries open all over the world.

Some of these new distilleries are large and ambitious, built with the goal of serving a growing global market. The majority, however, are small craft distilleries, built with more modest and often local aspirations. Canadian whisky expert Davin de Kergommeaux's 2020 book *The Definitive Guide to Canadian Distilleries* lists no fewer than 200 Canadian distilleries, up from barely a dozen a decade ago. It would be impossible to do all of them - let alone all craft distilleries in the Celtic world - justice in just one page. So, instead, I am going to highlight a few of my favourites, all of which have bottled whisky of at least three years of age.

Scotland has at least 130 active distilleries, up from around 100 about a decade ago. This number may not seem that impressive by comparison to the more than 200 distilleries in Canada and 1800 in the US. But keep in mind Scotland is a small nation, with less than 5.5 million people, and its landmass is roughly 1/8 the size of the province of Alberta. The Scotch whisky industry is also the most established and global of all, and consumers expect maturity and value.

One of the most unique distilleries to open in Scotland over the last two decades is the Dornoch Distillery in Sutherland. It was founded in 2016 by Phil & Simon Thompson, who run the Dornoch Whisky Castle Hotel along with their parents. The hotel was already a destination for its excellent whisky bar before the brothers decided to build a distillery in a 47-square meter, 135-year-old former fire station. The facility only produces 30,000 liters a year (for comparison: Glenlivet can produce 21 million L annually), roughly half of which is laid down as whisky. Gin production has helped to get the company's name out there and help finance the laying down of whisky. Their first single malts, both three year olds, were released by the distillery late in 2020.

Ireland, including the Republic and Northern Ireland, has close to 40 active distilleries, which is an enormous improvement considering there were only three in operation prior to 2007.

It may come as a surprise to many that, until recently, most Irish whiskey brands were produced by one distillery.

Thankfully that is changing in the country with the best historical claim to have invented whiskey.

One of my favourites from the new crop in Ireland is Dingle Distillery, founded in 2012. The distillery was a natural offshoot from one of Eire's first and most successful

craft brewers, Porterhouse Brewing Company. If they could take on Irish brewing industry heavyweights like Guinness, surely, they could muscle their way into the Irish whiskey industry, which had just three distilleries at the time. Like a lot of craft distilleries, their whiskey making was financed at least in part through the production of other spirits. And it didn't hurt that they own their own network of pubs to drive sales. Dingle Gin became the best-selling Gin in Ireland in just five short years. Their first single malt whiskey was released in December of 2015, and since then their whiskies have found their way to a number of markets around the world.

One of my favourite Canadian craft distilleries is Dubh Glass (pronounced Douglas) in Oliver, BC. The distillery was built by the passion, blood, sweat and tears of owner and master distiller Grant Stevely. Stevely, as he is affectionately known, is a former ski patrolter who dabbled in distilling while working for the Sunshine Village ski resort in Alberta. Founded in 2015, in the heart of BC's Wine Country, the distillery has been releasing small amounts of whisky - mostly single casks - since 2019. The production is small, so the whiskies are primarily sold directly by the distillery and tend to sell out quickly. I have been very impressed with their early releases, and I also count myself a fan of their Noteworthy Gin. It is in my opinion one of the best craft gins made in Canada - and there is no shortage to choose from!

www.kensingtonwinemarket.com



For the love of Lagavulin with Andrew Ferguson

Lagavulin Distillery is nestled between Laphroaig and Ardbeg, on the southern coast of the Scottish Isle of Islay. The Queen of the Hebrides, as Islay is known, played a seminal role in the history of Scotland and the United Kingdom. The Lords of the Isles ruled the west coast of Scotland and parts of Northern Ireland from Islay, independent of England, Scotland, and Denmark, until 1493 - nearly four centuries. After their defeat, the title 'Lord of the Isles' was incorporated into the Scottish, and eventually British, Royal Families. Today, in addition to being the Prince of Wales, Charles is also Lord of the Isles.

The base of power for the Lords of the Isles was set on two tiny islands in Loch Finlaggan, not far from Port Askaig, in the north of the island. But Islay's southern shore was also a power center. Remnants of this history can be seen at the haunting Kildalton Chapel, where a well-preserved 8th century Celtic Cross was found. The coast is rugged and dotted with small, sheltered bays, including the one which protects Lagavulin. At the entrance to that bay, the ruins of the once impregnable Dunyvaig Castle can still be seen.

Lagavulin translates from Scots Gaelic to "Mill Hollow" and is believed to be one of the oldest settlements on the island.

Lagavulin Distillery was officially established in 1816, but there is some evidence of no fewer than 10 small, illicit distilleries oper-



ating on or near the site as early as the 1740s. The Victorian whisky writer Alfred Barnard references a smuggling fraternity operating in the area as early as 1742. By 1816 the various operations had merged into a pair of side-by-side distilleries, Lagavulin and Ardmore, both of which had gone legit.

The Johnson family, founders of Lagavulin, acquired Ardmore in 1825, and by 1837 had absorbed it into the Lagavulin complex. The distillery began to attract wider acclaim in 1862 after it was purchased by the blender Logan Mackie. Logan's nephew Peter Mackie would become one of the pivotal figures in the Scotch whisky industry of the late 19th century. Peter Mackie took charge of Lagavulin in 1878 and would also go on to establish the Craigellachie Distillery and found the White Horse blend.

In addition to Lagavulin, Mackie also represented the nearby Laphroaig Distillery, situated just two miles down the coast in another small bay. When this relationship ended in 1906 Mackie was incensed. He set about building a nearly perfect replica of Laphroaig at Lagavulin, and even poached a few of its employees. The new distillery was called

Malt Mill, and while the heavily phenolic whisky was of good quality, the gamble never quite paid off - at least not in the way Mackie had hoped. Try as he might, he just could not quite replicate Laphroaig. Malt Mill ceased production in 1962 and has never been seen as a single malt.

In 1927, White Horse Distillers, including Lagavulin, became part of DCL, a forerunner of Diageo, the world's largest drinks company. The whisky was selected by the firm as one of its six Classic Malts in 1988, giving birth to Lagavulin 16 Year. A famous whisky writer, Michael Jackson, referred to it as the Aristocrat of Islay, for its elegant smoky profile. Incidentally, this was the whisky that got me interested in Scotch, and it remains a benchmark by which other mature Islay whiskies are still measured today.

In addition to the 16 Year there are annual releases of Lagavulin Distillers Edition (finished in PX Sherry) and a 12 Year Cask Strength. The most recent addition to the core range is an 8 Year, first released as a limited edition in 2016 to celebrate the distillery's 200th anniversary. It is a feistier expression, inspired by Alfred Barnard's visit to the distillery in 1880s.

Lagavulin is open to the public for tours and tastings. If you decide to visit, I recommend taking the warehouse tour. And while there, do not pass up the opportunity to wander out to the Dunyvaig castle. The view looking back at the distillery is worth the walk!

www.kensingtonwinemarket.com



All About Ardnamurchan

with *Andrew Ferguson*

When Kilchoman Distillery opened on Islay in 2005, it became the first new distillery built in Scotland in more than a decade. Over the last dozen years, no fewer than 29 new distilleries have opened. The new distilleries are mostly small and independent, setting them apart from the industry's established players. One of the most hotly anticipated new distilleries is Ardnamurchan, which launched its first-ever single malt Scotch whisky in late 2020.

I have made the trek to Ardnamurchan at least three times since ground was broken on the site in 2013. One of the most remote distilleries in Scotland, it is a 90-minute drive from Ft. William down a long and winding road on the unspoiled and untamed Ardnamurchan peninsula. The drive is not for the faint of heart, especially if it is raining. The single-track road, barely wider than a bike path, twists, drops, and rolls with the landscape, and in a deluge, the burns wash across the road.

The Ardnamurchan Peninsula juts out of Scotland's mainland above the island of Mull. Wild and rugged, it was a training area for Special Forces in WWII as it could easily be cut off from the rest of Scotland. The distillery was built in the hamlet of Glenbeg, perched above Glenmore Bay, with views of the Morvern Peninsula and the Isle of Mull. On a sunny day you can see the picturesque burgh of Tobermory, the capital of the Isle of Mull.

Ardnamurchan was established by Adel-

phi Distillery LTD, an independent bottler named for a distillery which closed in 1902. Realizing the supply of whiskies for independent bottlers was tightening up, they made the decision to open their own distillery. They selected a site on land belonging to one of their directors, which allowed them to build a green distillery, heated by locally sourced wood chips and hydro powered by the same river which supplies the distillery's cooling water. The malted barley is sourced from the farms which surround the firm's bottling warehouse near Dunfermline, across the Firth of Forth from Edinburgh.

*The distillery is modern,
but takes an old school approach
to making whisky, with long
fermentations and a
slow distillation.*

In June of 2014, the first spirit trickled off the stills at Ardnamurchan. It took them a little while to get used to using the biomass boiler for heating and dialling in their new made spirit. But it has, for the most part, been smooth sailing since. The distillery produces a mix of unpeated and peated (35ppm) spirit, which it matures in a dunnage floor warehouse carved into the hillside above the distillery.

With more than 10,000 casks now in bond, the company recently added three new warehouses on site, which it has already

started to fill. The distillery is also equipped with floor maltings, which it has yet to use. Only a handful of distilleries in Scotland still have floor maltings in use today, as they are more labour-intensive and expensive to operate than sourcing malt from commercial maltings.

Ardnamurchan has released a few teasers over the years, mainly to showcase the potential of their future whiskies while waiting for them to reach maturity. Scotch whisky must be at least three years of age before it can legally be called whisky, and most single malts are rarely released at anything less than 10 years of age. The first release of Ardnamurchan single malt, AD 09.20:01, was bottled in September of 2020, and is a marriage of peated and unpeated malts, matured in a mix of bourbon and sherry casks. Though it is just five years of age, the whisky is very balanced with a complexity and maturity found normally in older expressions - a sure sign that Ardnamurchan is on the right path.

Though more than a little off the beaten track, Ardnamurchan Distillery is well worth a visit. The distillery offers tours and has a visitor center. There is local accommodation and other things to see and do in the area. The distillery can easily be visited on a day trip from Fort William, or even by ferry from Tobermory. It has been a few years since my last visit, and I am looking forward to the next!

www.adelphidistillery.com

www.kensingtonwinemarket.com



Land of Milk & Honey

with Andrew Ferguson

Tel Aviv might seem like a curious place for a whisky distillery, but it is home to Israel's first: Milk & Honey.

The urban distillery was built on the site of an old bakery in Jaffa. Before settling on the site, more than 30 locations around the country were considered. The capital of Tel Aviv was ultimately selected, owing to the city's strong food scene, nightlife, and its appeal as a tourist destination.

The idea was first hatched by a group of young tech entrepreneurs with a shared love of whisky. The initial vision was for a small hobby distillery, focusing on Scottish-style single malts. However, as the potential of their idea dawned on them, the scope of the project continued to grow. By the time formal planning began in 2012, the vision was global.

In 2013, the late Dr. Jim Swan was brought in as an advisor. Dr. Swan famously consulted on many other start-up distilleries over the last two decades, including Kilchoman, Kavalan, and Cotswolds to name just a few. An expert in hot climate whisky maturation, he immediately saw the potential of making whisky in Israel. Tel Aviv's humid climate would supercharge the spirit's aging process.

Although the name Tel Aviv translates to "Hill of the Spring" in Hebrew, the city and Israel as a whole are not known for their abundance of fresh flowing water. Nor is the nation's climate suitable for the growing of barley. But these obstacles were easily overcome; Milk & Honey's malted barley is imported from England, and the water – though

drawn from the city's mains – is treated by reverse osmosis, before being optimized for fermentation with the addition of specific minerals and salts.

Milk & Honey employs a long fermentation and a slow distillation with a small and very precise middle cut. This ensures a spirit that is full of character, but also clean, without any rough edges. It is optimized for rapid maturation in a hot climate. Add to this a careful selection of casks (the final Jim Swan ingredient), and you have the potential for world-class whisky, even at a young age.

As with much of the global whisky industry, most of Milk & Honey's production is filled into ex-bourbon barrels.

About 20 per cent is filled into STR casks, Jim Swan's bespoke shaved, toasted, and re-charred ex-Portuguese wine barriques. Nearly 1500 casks are matured on site, with many more casks maturing in warehouses all over Israel. There are even casks maturing near the Dead Sea, the lowest and driest point on Earth where temperatures frequently hit and surpass 50C.

The distillery also produces gin, as well as an herbal liqueur. The Levantine Gin is produced from their own base spirit made from malted barley, and its botanicals are sourced from the famous Levinski Market – a short five-minute walk away. Those other spirits are

not just a way of generating cash flow, they are also a way of telling a story that will help sell the whiskies when they reach maturity.

The distillery's first ever whisky, distilled at a temporary location in 2014, was sold at auction in 2017. Production at Milk & Honey proper began in earnest midway through 2015, with its first commercially available whisky, Milk & Honey Classic – a 3-Year – first released in 2019. Other expressions will be rolled out in the months and years ahead. The distillery has recently launched the M&H Elements Range consisting of Sherry Cask, Peated, and Red Wine Cask whiskies.

The company's whiskies were expected to be available in more than 20 countries by the end of 2020. The Milk & Honey Classic, Gin and Liqueur are currently available in Alberta, and parts of the United States. Wider distribution is expected over the course of the next few years.

Milk & Honey's products are certified kosher – in fact, it is Israel's largest kosher distillery. But the owners do not want to be thought of only as an Israeli or a kosher distillery, their vision is much bigger than that. The aim of Milk & Honey is to produce some of the finest whisky in the world. The fact that it's from the land of milk and honey is just part of the story.

www.mh-distillery.com

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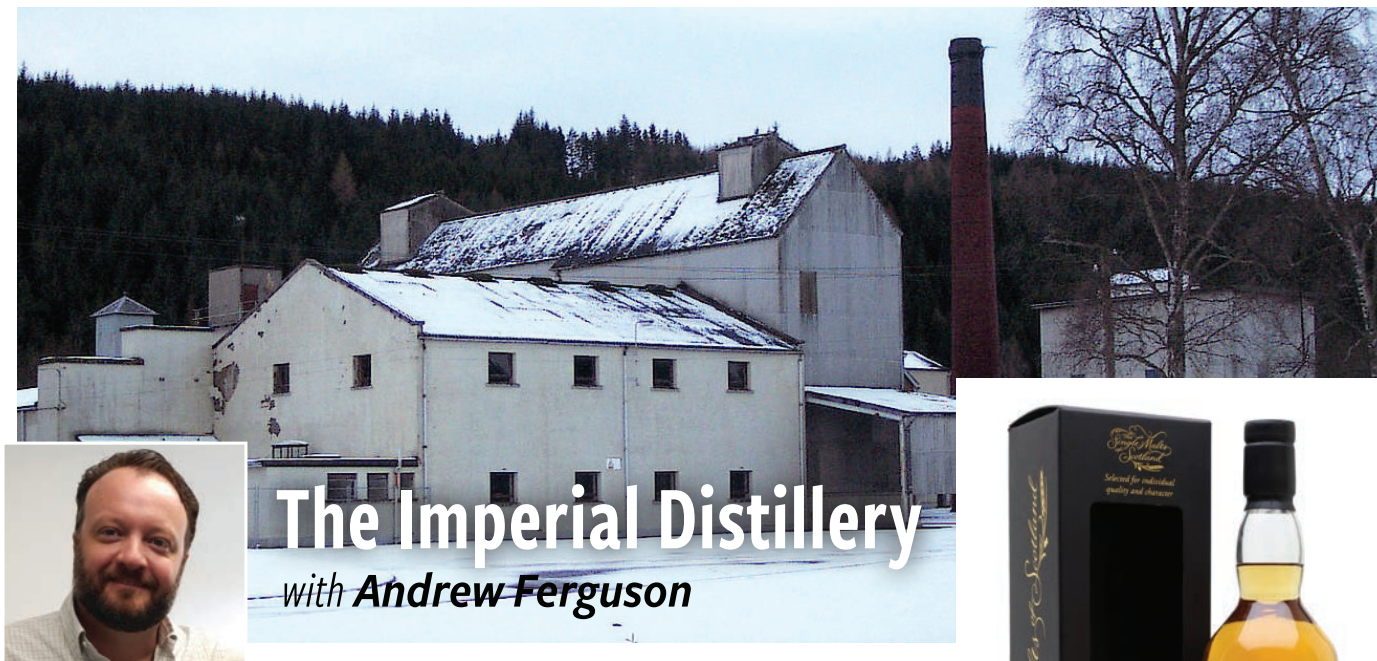
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The Imperial Distillery

with **Andrew Ferguson**



The Imperial Distillery was founded in Speyside, Scotland in 1897 by Thomas Mackenzie, who also owned the nearby Dalhaine Distillery. It was named in honour of Queen Victoria, who marked her Diamond Jubilee that year. This was at the height of a major whisky boom, which today we would call a bubble. The distillery was enormous for its day, and its maltings were topped with a giant crown made of cast iron. The following year, Thomas Mackenzie merged his two distilleries with another, Talisker, on the Isle of Skye.

The whisky boom of the late 19th century, once fueled by the global growth of Blended Scotch whisky, turned to bust in 1899. In the fallout, the Imperial Distillery was mothballed along with many dozens of other Scottish distilleries. A significant number of these would never reopen, but Imperial was one of the fortunate ones. By 1919 it was again in production as part of a new consortium of blending firms known as The Distillers Company Ltd., or DCL. In 1925, under continued industry consolidation, Imperial was placed under DCL's distilling arm, Scottish Malt Distillers or SMD. This would prove perilous for Imperial, as it closed again for another 30 years.

In 1955, in the early days of a new boom for Scotch Whisky, Imperial was once more reopened. A decade later it added another pair of stills, doubling production.

Unfortunately, this boom, much like the one in the late 1800s, would also turn to bust.

In 1985 the distillery was once again mothballed. It was sold to Allied Distillers in 1989 who, after some refurbishment, operated the distillery intermittently from 1990 through 1998.

In 2005, Pernod Ricard bought the distillery property and put it under the control of a subsidiary, Chivas Brothers. The timing might have been fortuitous, as the start of yet another boom for Scotch whisky was soon to begin. But this boom would not revive the fortunes of Imperial. Despite years of persistent rumours of its imminent reopening, the distillery was put on the market in 2008 to be sold as residential flats. A few months later it was withdrawn, and this is where the story gets interesting. With demand for malt surging, Chivas Bros. finally took a serious look at reopening the distillery, but it seems they had left the site rather poorly guarded since the last closure, and some entrepreneurial locals had stripped the buildings of every conceivable material they could sell for scrap.

When Pernod/Chivas realized this, it was determined that it would cost more to rebuild and re-kit the old distillery than it would be to build an entirely new one. So, they demolished it and - in its place - built a brand new hyper-efficient distillery - Dalmunach - named for a pool in the River Spey on whose bank the distillery was built.

Many closed distilleries have developed a mythical following over the years, including Port Ellen (1983), Brora (1983), and Rosebank (1993). When I started in the industry 17 years ago, bottles of these whiskies could still be acquired for under \$200. Today you'd be hard pressed to find a bottle of Port Ellen

or Brora, especially a new release, for less than \$5k. Imperial has yet to earn this sort of cult following, but I expect it soon will. Only a handful of independent bottlers seem to still have casks of its whisky, mainly from the 1990s, and the prices are rising. This is a shame because the whisky is really starting to hit its stride.

We have been fortunate to bottle three casks of Imperial over the last year, at very reasonable prices. The whisky is light, elegant and packed with bright tropical fruit notes. The first two casks, a 24 Year (\$180) and 29 Year (\$400) sold out in two weeks and four days, respectively. The third cask, when it arrives, is not expected to last much longer. Those in the know have caught the Imperial bug. Sadly, by the time the rest of the whisky world catches on, the prices will be in the thousands of dollars per bottle. That is the rub about something which has not been made for more than two decades. With every passing year it is older, rarer, and more expensive. \$400 may not seem like a reasonable price for a 29-year-old whisky, but for those with a love of Imperial, it was a bargain!

www.kensingtonwinemarket.com



Savouring Shelter Point

with *Andrew Ferguson*

Shelter Point Distillery is located near the hamlet of Oyster River, about 20km north of the towns of Comox and Courtenay on the east coast of Vancouver Island. The region has one of the mildest climates in Canada, making it a popular year-round destination for those from colder climes. The distillery was built in 2011 by Patrick Evans, a third-generation dairy farmer, on a 380-acre farm. With stunning views across the Salish Sea, Shelter Point is one of the last seaside farms on Vancouver Island.

I last visited Shelter Point in October of 2018 with a couple of employees from my whisky team, with an eye towards purchasing an exclusive cask for the store. In the end, we purchased two. Upon arrival, we were met by Jacob Wiebe, Patrick's son-in-law and distillery manager, and Leon Webb, the head distiller. The dynamic duo - who could easily be confused for a comedy act - showed us around the distillery, the visitor center and the maturation warehouse. Shelter Point's casks mature in part of a converted dairy barn, the rest of which is used as a grain store.

It was slightly overcast, with a faint drizzle, but otherwise warm for autumn. We were told the plan was to have lunch on the beach, and they kept hinting that I might want a jacket. I am rather warm-blooded, and assured them that I would be fine, but in retrospect I should have taken the hint. Unbeknownst to us, the plan was not to have lunch on the

beach, but rather atop a mountain. While sitting around a beachside fire pit we were surprised by the arrival of a helicopter. We were even more stunned when we learned that it was picking us up!

What followed was one of the most memorable whisky experiences that I have ever had.

Patrick Evans had arranged to helicopter us high up into the Vancouver Island Mountains, where we would have lunch and a very special tasting on the shoulder of a mountain. I had been to the distillery previously, but it was here, amongst the clouds, that I met Patrick for the first time. We sampled a range of whiskies while snacking on cheese and smoked/candied salmon, just steps from the sheer drop-off of a cliff face. While not unbearably cold, I could have done with a light jacket. Nevertheless, the whisky and adrenaline kept me warm.

Shelter Point predominantly makes single malt whisky in the Scottish style, but also produces vodka, gin and rye whisky.

One of the most interesting releases to come from the distillery is their "Montfort Series" - made from estate-grown barley. Lacking the facilities to malt their own barley, the Montfort releases are made from a mash

of un-malted barley, in the style of single pot still Irish whiskey (think Redbreast) - a nod to Patrick's Irish heritage.

My favourite recent release from Shelter Point is the "Smoke Point" - a second batch of which is due this fall. The whisky used to create Smoke Point begins its life in ex-bourbon barrels before finishing in quarter-casks from Laphroaig. The whisky is kissed by smoke, salt and mildly medicinal tones, while retaining the fruity DNA of Shelter Point's spirit.

Another interesting recent release from the facility is "The Forbidden" - with a lovely round, oily and fruity profile, and a crisp minerality - a touch of terroir, if you will. Produced from a mash of 100 percent malted wheat, The Forbidden is yet another Canadian first. Shelter Point has racked up more than a few of those in recent years and is without question one of the leaders in the Canadian craft whisky industry.

Shelter Point whisky and gin can be found all over Western Canada, though the limited releases are often harder to come by. The distillery is open to the public seven days a week and offers both tours and tastings. Don't expect them to fly you up onto a mountain for a tasting, but if they suggest you bring a jacket you might want to take the hint!

www.shelterpoint.ca

www.kensingtonwinemarket.com



Terrific Two Brewers

with Andrew Ferguson

On the surface, Two Brewers seems like a strange name for a whisky brand. One of my pet peeves (which, in “the customer is always right” world of retail I am usually loathe to correct) is hearing someone talk about brewing whisky, or a whisky brewery. You brew beer in a brewery and distill whisky (technically spirit) in a distillery. But - and there are a couple of buts here - on peeling back the layers there are two very appropriate explanations for the whisky’s name.

First, there is that awkward little fact that before you can distill barley (or any other grain for that matter) into spirit, you must first make a beer. Just as when making brandy, you have to start by first fermenting grape juice into wine. The fermented grain liquid produced by distillers is called wort and is not the sort of brew most would willingly ingest in copious, let alone modest, quantities. However, for all intents and purposes, it is a type of beer.

Secondly, and most importantly, Two Brewers Whisky is made by Alan Hansen and Bob Baxter, the pair who founded Yukon Brewing in 1997. Twelve years after starting out as brewers in Whitehorse, Yukon, Bob and Allan decided to try their hand at whisky making. The Ontario natives were well ahead of the craft brewing curve in Canada, and they would soon prove to be at the head of the craft whisky making curve as well. In recent years, dozens of new Canadian distilleries have launched craft whiskies, mainly Scottish-style single malts, and there are many more still to come. While Two Brewers were not the first to do so, they were certainly among the leaders of the pack, and they have also been one of the most successful.

Most distilleries strive for consistency and efficiency, selecting yeast strains for speed as well as to maximize the conversion of sugar into alcohol (yield). Breweries, on the other hand - especially smaller ones - are more willing to experiment with different yeast strains and different mash bills (types of grains and ratios thereof) to create different flavours and distinct styles. Yield is still important, but flavour is key. While brewers have to rely on the flavours created in fermentation, most large commercial distilleries believe fermentation plays a much less significant role than distillation and maturation in oak. I think they are wrong on that count, but that argument would be a whole other article.

I have been in the drinks business for more than 16 years: I have had the opportunity to sample tens of thousands of different whiskies and I have made hundreds of visits to distilleries all over the world. Over time, I have concluded that fermentation is just as important, if not more so, than distillation and maturation. The quality of the alcohol and flavour congeners created during fermentation set the stage for what the stills and barrels do thereafter.

*Whether intentionally or not,
the chaps at Two Brewers are
on the right path.*

Hansen and Baxter have only been making whisky for a little over a decade, taking a brewer’s approach to producing primarily single malt whisky. The whiskies have been released in very small batches, rarely over 1,000 bottles, and usually much less. Each

release corresponds to one of four different styles: classic (unpeated single malt), peated (made with peated barley), special finishes (finishing maturation in different cask types) and innovative (a catch all for different grain types and unusual production methods).

At the time of writing, Two Brewers have just bottled Releases 19 and 20. Release 19 is a peated single malt, made with barley, and malted and peated in Scotland. When barley is dried over a peat fire or smoked by peat in a modern malting plant, the smoke leaves behind phenols on the grain. These phenols can give the whisky a smoky, earthy and sometimes medicinal profile. Two Brewers Release 19 does not have the maritime profile associated with most Islay distilleries, but it does have a backbone of crisp but elegant smoke.

Two Brewers Release 20 is perhaps the most unusual to have come out of the distillery yet. It was matured in maple syrup barrels. This is not something that would ever be allowed under Scottish whisky regulations, but the rules in Canada are more relaxed. It is a sweet and very spicy whisky, perfect for those with a sweet tooth.

The production of Two Brewers Single Malt by Yukon Brewing & Distilling is limited, as is its availability. The brand is currently available in the Yukon, Alberta, BC and occasionally in Quebec. If you were looking for a good excuse to visit the Yukon, this might just be it. They are currently closed due to Covid-19, but they will reopen in due time. Their beer is nothing to sniff at either... their Midnight Sun Espresso Stout has been a staple on the Canadian Craft Beer scene for decades!

www.twobrewerswhisky.com
www.kensingtonwinemarket.com



Daftmill Distillery

with **Andrew Ferguson**



Until the closing decades of the 19th century, most Scottish distilleries had started out as farms. Some were blessed with fertile fields, perfect for growing barley, while others got their start with cattle farming. Many did both. Either way, some discovered in due course that it was much more profitable to use malted barley to make whisky than it was to be a simple farmer. By the 1700s, there were literally tens of thousands of illicit stills across the highlands of Scotland, most of them belonging to farms and small crofts. By 1820, as many as 14,000 illicit stills were being confiscated each and every year.

There is an interesting synergy between the two - farming and malt whisky-making - that goes well beyond the obvious. Barley has been Scotland's most important cereal crop for centuries. The grain is not only well suited to grow in the nation's cool, damp northern climate, but it is also very stable. Scotland's barley production continues to be the bedrock of its whisky and livestock industries, but the grain has a catch; it stores its energy in the form of starch, and before you can feed it to cattle and sheep, the grain needs to be modified. The best way to do this is to first use the barley to make beer or whisky.

The first step of the brewing and malt whisky-making process is malting. By steeping it in water, and then leaving it to breathe, the grain is tricked into thinking it is spring, starting the process of germination which converts the starches to sugars. When the sugar yield is at its maximum, the process is stopped by drying the now-malted barley out. The grain is then milled, and the sugar extracted by sparging hot water through it. The sugary water, or wort, is then fermented to become beer or whisky. The leftover spent

grains are now rich in protein and slightly sweet, making them perfect animal feed.

In 1823, the Excise Act was passed in Scotland, reducing the size of legal stills and, more importantly, the duties levied on small distillers. Nicknamed the "Small Stills Act," it encouraged small scale distillers - mostly farmers - to go legit. Almost all the malt whisky distilleries founded before the last two decades of the 19th century began as farms. This only started to change in the 1880s, with the explosion in demand for malt whisky brought on by the collapse of Europe's wine industry.

Flash forward more than 100 years, and the Scotch whisky industry is a very different animal.

Many new distilleries have opened in the last decade. As with the modern industry as a whole, few of them retain a direct link to farming, other than the need for barely as a base ingredient. One curious exception is Daftmill Distillery, established by Francis Cuthbert in Fife, in 2003. The distillery was built in a two-hundred-year-old farm buildings, in the fertile Eden Valley. The land has been farmed for more than a thousand years, by just 3 families, and specializes in growing malting barley for the whisky industry. For the last 15 years, they have held back about 10 per cent of their annual barley harvest so that it may be used in the production of their own whisky. Oh, and they also raise cattle!

Daftmill's production is small, just 20,000 litres per year - less than 1/1000th of what Glenfiddich or Glenlivet produce over the same period. As with the farm distilleries of the 18th and 19th centuries, whisky produc-

tion has to be scheduled around the farm's main enterprise, and it is restricted to two three-month windows following the Spring and Fall harvests. Unlike most of the other new Scottish distilleries to open in the last decade, Daftmill was not in a rush to get its product to market. Both the distillery and its annual whisky production are financed from the farm's profits. Francis Cuthbert was determined not to release his first whisky until it was well and truly ready. This came to pass in 2018 when the first bottling, a 12-year-old, was released and sold by ballot.

One of the best descriptions that I have seen of Daftmill Distillery is that it is Scotland's oldest new distillery, at the forefront of the modern Scottish distilling boom along with Kilchoman Distillery on Islay. The two started production just a few months apart in 2005, and both are situated on barley farms. But the similarities end there. Kilchoman started releasing its whisky in 2008, to finance ongoing production, and it also happens to operate a farm to supply some of its production. Daftmill is a farm distillery, in the model of those of the 19th century - it is a farm that just happens to make whisky.

Daftmill Distillery is located about 30 minutes from St. Andrews in the bucolic countryside of the Howe of Fife. A working farm, there is no visitor center, and the distillery is not open to the public except by appointment. Nor is the whisky particularly easy to come by; only a handful of bottlings have been released in the last two years, most of them single casks. But there will be more, when Francis feels the whisky is ready!

www.kensingtonwinemarket.com
www.daftmill.com

The Ben Nevis Distillery



with **Andrew Ferguson**



Ben Nevis Distillery was established in Fort William in 1825 along the banks of the River Lochy at the foot of Scotland's tallest mountain, Ben Nevis. Though the distillery was founded by Angus McDonnell, it would be his kinsman - the literally larger-than-life "Long John" McDonald - who would make the distillery famous. As you might have guessed from his name, "Long John" was a giant; six-foot-four and built like a brick house.

At that time, the British Empire was obsessed with Queen Victoria, and Queen Victoria was equally smitten with Scotland. Her subjects often travelled north on the newly built railroads deep into the Highlands to see what all the fuss was about. The town of Fort William, as well as Ben Nevis, became a popular attraction. Many of the visitors were not prepared for the conditions of the high mountains in the Highlands, where weather can turn very quickly. When things went awry Macdonald, a well-known sportsman, was often sent off to find them.

Long John's fame spread across the United Kingdom, when in 1841, the Duchess of Buccleuch failed to return from a trek up the misty mountain. Having set off in the dark with a large bell, he returned later that evening with the young Lady and her party. Newspapers across the United Kingdom carried word of his heroics.

McDonald became a partner in the distillery in 1830, taking full control the following year. He was a savvy businessman with a flair for publicity. In 1841, stories in the press reported that the Duke of Sussex and King of

Holland were among his customers. He sent a cask of Ben Nevis to Buckingham Palace to be opened on the 21st birthday of the newly born Prince of Wales, the future Edward VII. The press ate the story up and his legend grew. In 1848, Queen Victoria visited the distillery. Ben Nevis whisky was a hit, selling all over the U.K., but the ailing man had massive debts. With a downturn in the market for Scotch whisky, and the banks unwilling to extend his loans, Macdonald died bankrupt in 1856.

His son Donald then stepped in, purchased the distillery and revived its fortunes. He rebranded the whisky Long John's Dew of Ben Nevis, put an age statement on the bottle and sales soared. In 1878, with demand for whisky surging again, Donald expanded the distillery. By 1886, when the Victorian whisky writer Alfred Barnard called on the facility, it was distilling over 1 million liters a year, employing more than 230 men, and exporting Long John's Dew of Ben Nevis all over the English-speaking world.

The McDonald family retained control of the distillery until 1941. There would be a number of owners over the following fifty years, including Canadian booze baron Joseph Hobbs. But by 1986, surplus to demand, Ben Nevis Distillery was closed as a market correction wrought devastation on the Scotch whisky industry as a whole. The closure was short-lived, however, and the distillery's prospects revived when, in 1989, it was purchased by the Nikka Whisky Co. of Japan. Nikka's interest in Ben Nevis was primarily to support their own Japanese Blended Whisky. It may come as a shock to some, but Japanese

whisky producers are not prohibited from using foreign whisky in their bottlings, and most do, although the rules governing that are set to change. Currently up to 75 per cent of Ben Nevis' production is sent to Japan every year.

Dire though this may sound, the takeover by the Japanese was not all bad. In 1991, the new owners opened a visitor center, and in 1996 they started bottling and selling Ben Nevis as a single malt. Distribution of official bottlings of the whisky is fairly limited, but independent bottlings can be found with a little effort. Ben Nevis distilled in the mid-1990s has developed a bit of a cult following. Count yourself lucky if you are able to track down a bottle of Ben Nevis 10 Year, or better yet the newly released first batch of cask strength whisky. The advert on the facing page features a stunning exclusive cask bottling of Ben Nevis that I was fortunate to source for my store. And this is to say nothing of the lovely and award-winning Nikka From the Barrel Blended Japanese whisky, in which there is almost certainly a healthy dollop of Long John's Dew of Ben Nevis too!

If you visit, there is plenty to do in the Fort William area, including mountain biking, hiking, water sports and, of course, climbing the famous Ben Nevis. A trek up the mountain takes 4-8 hours depending on your level of fitness. Don't get lost though, the mists hide dangerous cliffs, and Long John McDonald and his bell aren't around to rescue folk any longer!

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The Glory of Glenlassaugh



with **Andrew Ferguson**



When most people think of Scotland, I would expect that surfing is not among the first things that come to mind. However, on a recent visit to the Glenlassaugh Distillery that is exactly what we witnessed. Before us, on the beach, a trio of surfers was catching North Sea swells on Sandend Bay.

Geographically this area is roughly parallel with the southern tip of Norway and Churchill, Manitoba. And, although it was well into autumn, the temperatures are still in the low double digits, and the waters are warm.

Glenlassaugh Distillery was built during the Victorian Whisky Boom of the late 1800s to supply the explosion in demand for Blended Scotch Whisky. The facility was established at the eastern end of Sandend Bay, where the barley fields of the coastal belt meet the sea. As with many of the distilleries founded in this era, Glenlassaugh has been closed far more often than it has been open. Co-founded in 1875 by businessman Col. James Moir, and a local coppersmith, Thomas Wilson, Glenlassaugh operated for 18 years before a collapse in the industry forced them to sell. The new owners, Highland Distillers, kept the stills running until 1907, but owing to a collapse in demand and a glut of maturing stocks, the business closed, and would remain so for the next 53 years. Though there were a few years of intermittent production in the 1930s, it would take another whisky boom to revive Glenlassaugh's fortunes.

That boom started to percolate in the late 1950s, and by the 1960s the industry was humming along again. Many of the distilleries

that had managed to eke out a meagre existence in the intervening years were upgraded. Several other, long-closed distilleries - like Glenlassaugh and BenRiach - were brought back to life and modernized. In the case of Glenlassaugh, almost everything, save for a few cottages and the warehouses, had to be rebuilt. The distillery quickly earned a reputation for the quality of its spirit, becoming an important component in a number of blends. The post-war whisky boom continued until the late 1970s when it too, as in the Victorian era, turned to bust.

There were fewer distilleries at the end of the 1970s than at the end of the 19th century, but nevertheless the knife fell on many.

In all, 17 distilleries closed between 1983 and 1986, and Glenlassaugh was one of the last to be shuttered. In 2008, many whisky lovers - myself included - were taken aback when the Russian-backed Scaent Group purchased the Glenlassaugh Distillery, with plans to reopen it. Of all the distilleries that had closed, this was one of the least likely to reopen. Heading the group was a former William Grant & Sons distillery manager, Stuart Nickerson. The distillery was purchased for a not-insignificant sum, including about 400 casks of whisky, all pre-dating its closure in 1986. When they launched their first core range in 2008, it consisted of 21, 30, and 40-year-old whiskies.

Glenlassaugh was acquired in 2013 by the BenRiach Distillery Co., headed by Billy Walker, which was itself acquired by Brown Forman in 2017. Billy put his own twist on the new make, lengthening fermentations and slowing distillations to enhance the fruit notes in the spirit - much as he had done at BenRiach, GlenDronach and now GlenAlachie. Still, most of the credit for the post-2008 whiskies being bottled must still go to Stuart Nickerson.

While the distillery still offers some excellent older whiskies - 30, 40 and 51-year-olds - they also have some lovely younger bottlings too - distilled after the reopening in 2008 - including Revival, Evolution and the peated Torfa. Significantly, as it has now been more than 11 years since Revival came to market, some of the post-2008 stocks are now more than a decade old. There is a lot of excitement around future bottlings from this distillery. All the whiskies, both young and old, are still in very capable hands. In 2017, 28-year industry veteran, Master Blender Rachel Barrie, took the reins. She is sure to put her mark on the whiskies also.

Glenlassaugh Distillery is located on the scenic coastal route A98, about 40 minutes from Elgin and an hour and a half from Aberdeen. The distillery is open for tours Monday to Friday from 10am to 4pm. Tours and spacing are limited, so it is best to book ahead. I also recommend pairing a tour with a stop in the picturesque nearby town of Cullen, home of the namesake Cullen Skink soup!

www.glenlassaugh.com

www.kensingtonwinemarket.com



I recall the first time I toured Glen Scotia Distillery; I was shocked - the place was ramshackle and seemed on the verge of tumbling down. Paint was peeling from the walls and the copper pot still had the look and texture of a rusty nail. Most concerning were the cast iron wash-backs (where the fermentation takes place); never before, in the more than 50 distilleries I had previously visited, had I ever seen anything other than wood (Oregon pine) or stainless-steel wash-backs employed.

Fermentation can be a vigorous, violent process and, as the wash churned, huge chunks of rust peeled off the sides of the vessel - dragged into the boiling mass.

Glen Scotia Distillery is crammed into an old stone, Dickensque building in the historic whisky town of Campbeltown. Campbeltown is built around a picturesque harbour that, at one time, sheltered as many as 600 fishing boats and 35 distilleries, including the surrounding areas of the Kintyre Peninsula. It was, at the height of the British Empire, one of the wealthiest and most prominent places in the U.K. per capita. While its heyday as a major fishing port and "Whisky Capital of the World" has come and gone, vestiges of this prosperous past can still be seen in the repurposed distillery building and whisky baron mansions which dot the town.

Glen Scotia was built in 1832 by Stuart Galbraith & Co. on the north shore of Campbeltown Loch. The firm operated the business until 1895, though it remained in the Galbraith family until 1919 when it was sold to West Highland Malt Distillers. The latter

went bankrupt in 1924, but the distillery carried on from owner to owner until the waning years of the 20th century. By 1934 there were but two distilleries left in Campbeltown; Glen Scotia and Springbank. Glen Scotia survived as a workhorse, distilling malt destined for blends. It closed several times over the following 65 years, but somehow managed to dodge death each time. In 1994, Loch Lomond Distillers took over and the road to recovery and revival began.

When I visited the facility for the first time in 2005, Glen Scotia was in a sorry state.

I was curious, however, having had more than a few lovely, old independent bottlings of its spirit. For the entirety of my time in the industry, Glen Scotia has always taken a back seat to the better-known Springbank. Yet, it has always had its fans, especially of its older bottlings. I have long marvelled at how such a neglected and dilapidated facility could produce such beautiful and elegant spirits, almost despite itself.

Over the years I have learned that beautiful things can come from some unexpected places.

In 2012, with the single malt boom at full stride, Glen Scotia was given a paint job and a bit of refurbishment. They also released a range of single malts, shifting some of the distillery's focus away from blends. Although the whiskies were good, esthetically the range was a flop. Under new ownership, a more successful range was rebranded and relaunched

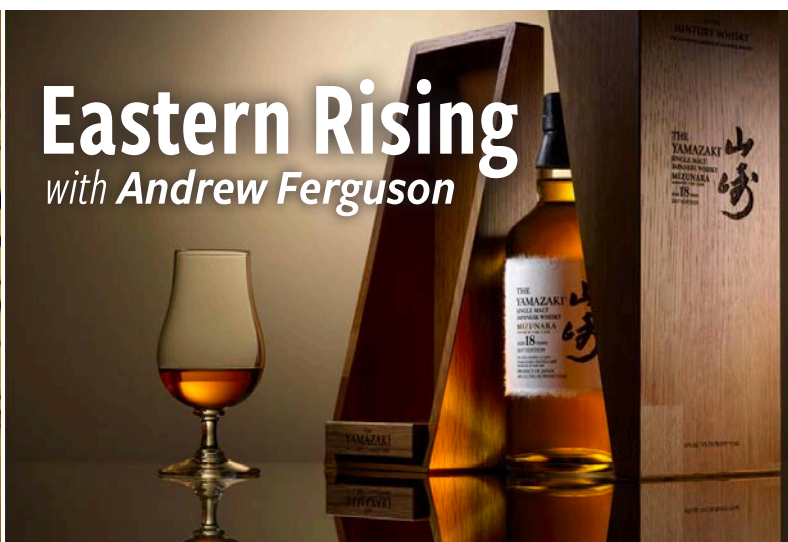
in 2015. The new owners also opened a small, but beautiful new visitor center in response to the dramatic rise in whisky tourism.

While Glen Scotia has long lived in the shadow of its more popular neighbour, it has a lot of potential. As the distillery was a workhorse for blends, they produce a number of distinct spirit styles, with many flavourful options. On a recent visit to the distillery I was more than impressed with several whiskies in the warehouse - and not just the older vintages, but some of the peaty young ones also. Although Glen Scotia distills spirit with three distinct peating levels, the result is usually quite fruity and nutty with engine oil notes.

The Glen Scotia 15 Year is creamy and fruity with muddy peat and soft smoke. New this year are the Glen Scotia 18 and 25 Year olds. I haven't tried the 25 yet, but the 18 is very elegant. We have also just bottled a cask for our shop, the Glen Scotia 1999 KWM Cask No. 359. It is sherried and fruity with rich smoke and dirty engine oil...classic Glen Scotia!

Campbeltown is a beautiful 4-hour drive from Glasgow, but can also be reached by ferry from Ayr. A visit to the town is not complete without visiting its three distilleries, Springbank, Glengyle and Glen Scotia. Glen Scotia is open for tours Monday to Saturday.

www.glenscotia.com
www.kensingtonwinemarket.com



If you are one of the many whisky drinkers who have just discovered Japanese whisky, I have both good and bad news for you. The bad news is that you are at least 5, if not 10 years late to the party. The golden age of Japanese whisky was a decade ago when you could get single malts like Yamazaki 18 and Yoichi 15, as well as pure malts (blended malt in the U.K.) - including Taketsuru 21 and blends like Hibiki 21 - with relative ease and at a fair price. You could even get bottlings of closed distilleries like Karuizawa and Hanyu for as little as \$100.

Oh, though, how times have changed!

In the last decade, the interest in - and demand for - Japanese whisky has soared, leaving an industry which had all-but-shuttered production in the 1990s and 2000s caught flat-footed. Yoichi 15 will set you back close to a grand these days, and good luck finding a 20+ year-old Karuizawa for anything less than \$10k.

There are Japanese whiskies on the market today, to be sure. However, caveat emptor - not all is what it seems. When the Japanese whisky industry was born in the 1920s, it modeled itself on that of Scotland. The rules governing Japanese whisky are almost the same as those of Scotland circa 100 years ago, with a couple of exceptions. Like Scotland, the Japanese market is driven by Blended Whisky, with Single Malts providing most of the flavour, aroma and texture, and grain whisky typically serving as a benign (and most often bland) form of filler. In both countries, single malts must be produced at the distillery they are named after. The difference occurs with Blends and Blended Malts; whereas with Scotch, the whiskies must all have been made and matured in Scotland, there is no such restriction for Japanese Blended Whisky. Even

in the glory days of Japanese whisky, most of the best blends were made with some foreign whisky, usually from Scotland, Canada or the U.S. There just simply was not enough domestic production to meet demand. However, at that time, Japanese components were front and center, merely backed by imported elements. That is increasingly not the case today.

Classic economics suggests that when demand exceeds supply prices will rise, encouraging supply up towards equilibrium with demand. That said, there is a major issue with this idea pertaining to whisky - time. If a Japanese Single Malt calls for 10 or 15-year-old whisky, then supply is problematic unless enough stock was set aside years ago. Hence, age-statement Japanese whiskies are almost impossible to find, having since been replaced by younger No-Age-Statement bottlings. For Japanese Blend or Blended Malt, however, stock can be imported from anywhere in the world and, so long as it is blended and bottled in Japan, it can be called Japanese Whisky.

There are an exponential number of "Japanese Whisky" bottlings hitting the marketplace these days.

Most of these bottlings have prominent Kanji script, samurai or other stereotypically Japanese symbols on the label. Many of these whiskies are made without even a drop of domestically-produced Japanese whisky. Suntory, Japan's biggest whisky producer - and to their credit - released a whisky called

AO earlier this year, acknowledging it to be a "World Blend" with components from Japan, Scotland, Canada, Ireland and the U.S. It was not the most memorable whisky I tried on a recent trip to Japan, but I applaud their transparency.

Although available, you will be hard-pressed to find Japanese single malts like Chichibu, Hakushu and Miyagikyo at anything near a reasonable price. But there are some Blends and Blended Malts to be had that are worthy of the Japanese Whisky moniker. One of my favourites, and the 2018 World Whisky of the Year (Whisky Advocate) is Nikka From the Barrel, produced by Japan's second largest whisky firm, Nikka. The price has risen in recent years, but it is still very good value. Hibiki Harmony is likely the best-known, on account of the sheer size and clout of its owner, Beam Suntory. This one also ticks all the boxes if you want something that looks Japanese. In terms of value, there is the White Oak Akashi, which is made with its own single malt and imported grain. My favourite whiskies are from Ichiro's Malt, owned by Ichiro Akuto of Chichibu Distillery fame. They are hard to find, even in Japan, though there are several well-stocked liquor stores which have them at very reasonable prices in Chichibu. All these whiskies are made with some foreign elements, but Japanese components are front and center.

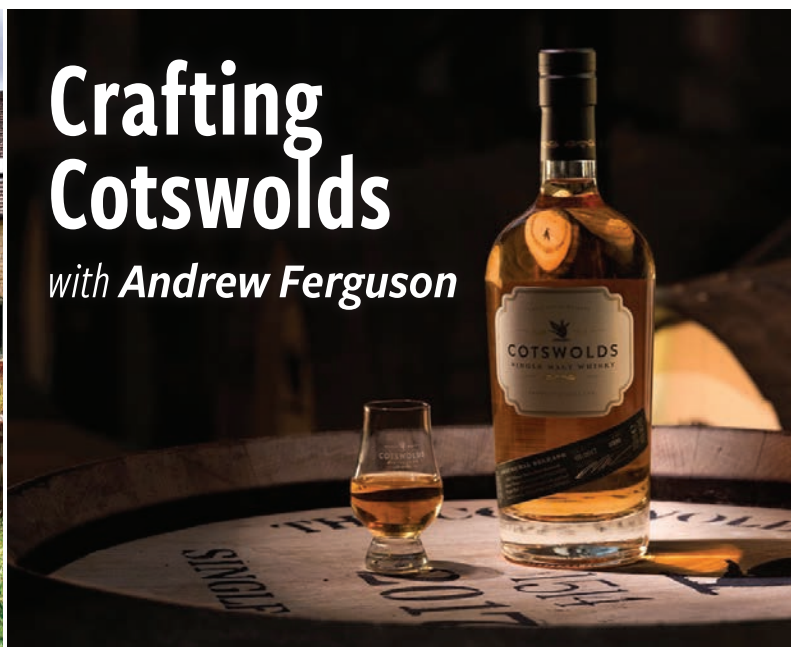
The good news about Japanese whisky, if you have just discovered it, is that you are 5-10 years early for the next party. Japan's distilleries have increased production over the last decade and new distilleries are opening. Soon enough, the sun will be rising again on Japanese whisky!

www.kensingtonwinemarket.com



Crafting Cotswolds

with Andrew Ferguson



The Cotswolds Distillery is the passion project of Dan Szor, a native of New York living in London, who forfeited a career in high finance to follow his dreams. During his time in London, Dan fell in love with both Scotch Whisky and the bucolic countryside of the Cotswolds, an idyllic rural region about two hours northwest of the English capital, where he kept a home.

Like many, Szor was enamoured by the story of Bruichladdich's revival in the 2000s. In that distillery's frontman, Jim McEwan, he found a kindred spirit. On several occasions, Szor mentioned to McEwan that he had a dream of opening a whisky distillery in the Cotswolds. During one of these meetings, McEwan simply asked his friend, "So, what's stopping you?"

Soon after, Szor acquired an estate with two derelict stone buildings in Shipston-on-Stour in the northwest of the Cotswolds. The buildings were little more than empty shells, and it took great effort to convert them into a functional distillery. Szor worked with the late, great distillery consultant Jim Swan on the project. Swan was a 40-year veteran of the Scotch Whisky industry, who had lent his name to a number of other notable upstart distilleries, including Kilchoman on Islay, Penderyn in Wales, Kavalan in Taiwan, Lindores Abbey, Milk & Honey in Israel, and Victoria Caledonian on Vancouver Island.

One of the biggest holdups for upstart distilleries is the sourcing of proper equipment, which can often take years. Luck was on Szor's side, however; a cancelled order at Forsyth's - a maker of copper pot stills in

Scotland - gave him an opportunity to quickly slide into the middle of the queue.

Both the distillery, and its visitor center, were up and running in September of 2014 and have welcomed visitors each day since.

Working with Dr. Swan, the facility fine-tuned its processes to create a soft, fruity spirit. Cotswolds employs a prolonged fermentation - at least 4 days - which is much longer than most distilleries. As Szor says, "The fruitiest esters come from rotting fruit" - think of an over-ripe banana.

Cotswolds makes its whisky gin from locally-sourced barley, traditionally floor-malted at Britain's oldest commercial maltsters, Warminster. The first limited whisky was released late in 2017, with a more widely distributed bottling released in 2018. Each item notes the farm that the barley was sourced from. The newly-made spirit is matured in a mix of ex-Bourbon, ex-Sherry and Jim Swan proprietary STR casks. The whiskies are bottled at 46 per cent, without colouring or chill-filtering.

Both the whisky and gin from Cotswolds Distillery have racked up their share of awards. The gin is made with 10x the botanical load of most gins, packing it with oils and flavour, and was ranked the World's Best London Dry Gin at the 2016 World Gin Awards. The Cotswolds Founder's Choice Whisky was

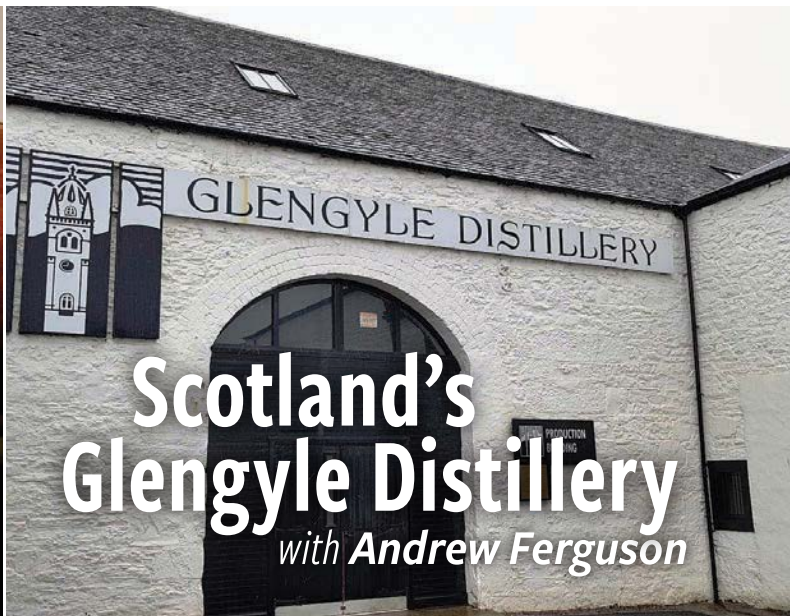
named the Best English Single Malt at the World Whiskies Awards 2019. The flagship Cotswolds Single Malt also showed well at the same ceremonies, earning a Gold Medal.

Recently, with operations having outgrown its facilities, the distillery opened a new visitor center, with an expanded shopping space and café for visitors, and dedicated spaces for tastings. After just four years in business, the site now receives over 150,000 visitors annually. Its product offerings have also grown to include a cream liqueur, absinthe, bitters, along with other spirits and liqueurs. The company also operates a small network of shops throughout the Cotswolds region.

Although Szor's passion project may still be a work in progress, its early successes are a testament to his work ethic, business acumen, and vision. Cotswolds is one in a new wave of English distilleries trying to make their name in the fiercely competitive world of spirits. And though it may not have been the first, Cotswolds is certainly leading the pack.

The distillery is close enough to London to make it a viable day trip. It is a bit of a trek from the nearest train station, so I recommend renting a car. Consumers in Alberta, British Columbia, and Chicago should be able to find Cotswolds' gin and whisky at area retailers. The cream liqueur is also available in Alberta. Wider North American distribution is expected in the years ahead.

www.cotswoldsdistillery.com
www.kensingtonwinemarket.com



To the best of my knowledge (and when it comes to whisk(e)y I like to think I am reasonably informed), Scotland's Glengyle Distillery is the only distillery opened solely to settle an argument.

The dispute in question is related to Campbeltown's place in the Scotch whisky industry. In the late 1800s, the area was a major center of production, with 34 distilleries operating in or near a town with less than 5,000 inhabitants. By 2000 there were but 2 operating distilleries remaining, Springbank and Glen Scotia. In the late 1990s, the Scotch Whisky Association, an industry lobby group, was codifying the Whisky Regions of Scotland into EU Law. The Speyside, Highlands, Islay, and Lowlands would be the only four recognized regions.

This didn't sit well with Hedley Wright, whose family had been in the whisky business at least since the opening of the Springbank Distillery in 1828. Hedley was incensed that the Scotch Whisky Association would not grant Campbeltown a similar designation, given its significance in the 19th century. The SWA noted that, in their opinion, two distilleries did not warrant the granting of regional status. However, as Hedley argued, the Lowlands only had three distilleries, and if Campbeltown were to also have three active distilleries, the SWA would have to acknowledge it as a whisky region in its own right. The Scotch Whisky Association conceded the point and likely assumed that was the end of the matter. It was not.

The Mitchell's Glengyle Distillery was opened in Campbeltown in 1872 by William Mitchell. William was the son of Springbank Distillery founder Archibald Mitchell. After

Archibald's passing, William and his brother John ran the Springbank Distillery in partnership. The family was from a farming background, which was quite common for distillers at the time, and many facilities turned their surplus production into whisky.

The spent grains from making beer and/or whisky were then - and still are - a popular animal feed. Over time, it became apparent that making whisky was far more profitable than farming or rearing cattle. William and John's other siblings ran another Campbeltown Distillery, Reichlachs.

When William and his brother John had a falling out - allegedly over sheep - William left Springbank and opened Glengyle. Less than 100 meters separated the two distilleries!

In the last decades of the 20th century the Scotch whisky industry was booming, nowhere more so than Campbeltown; the fastest place from which to ship whisky to the burgeoning markets in the Americas. At the end of the 18th century there were no fewer than 31 illicit stills operating in the area. When the great Victorian whisky writer Alfred Barnard came calling in 1885 the town had 21 operating distilleries. At the height of the boom Campbeltown was said to have more than 32 distilleries, only eclipsed by the number of churches. The vestiges of this history can still be seen today whilst walking the town's streets; the lochside and hills are lined with the mansions built by whisky barons.

But boom turned to bust in the first years of the 20th century, and many of Campbeltown's distilleries closed. Glengyle was sold to West Highland Distillers in 1919, and then again in 1924 for just £300. The distillery closed altogether in 1925, and the remain-

ing stocks of casks were put up for auction in April of that year. The buildings remained rather miraculously intact for the following 79 years, used as a shooting range, a depot, offices for an agricultural firm, and eventually a cooperative. Several attempts were made to revive the distillery both before and after World War II, but none of them came to fruition until 2000 when Hedley Wright, chairman of J&A Mitchell and Co Ltd (Springbank), reopened Glengyle and settled his score with the Scotch Whisky Association.

Glengyle Distillery started producing in 2004, and Campbeltown was again recognized as a whisky region. Campbeltown is often overlooked by whisky pilgrims on their way to Islay. Just 45 minutes past Kennacraig - the gateway to Islay - Campbeltown is worth a visit. All three distilleries - Glengyle, Springbank and Glen Scotia - offer great tours. The town is also home to independent bottler WM Cadenhead, and their Warehouse Tour is one of the best whisky experiences in the world.

Glengyle Distillery bottles its whisky under the name Kilkerran, the name of the original settlement around Campbeltown Loch. The anglicized Kilkerran is derived from 'Ceann Loch Cille Chiarain' - Scots Gaelic for the Loch of St. Kerran's Church. The Kilkerran 12 Year and 8 Year Cask Strength are each very limited in production and not always easy to come by - all the more reason to visit Campbeltown, Scotland's smallest whisky region.

www.kilkerran.scot
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Discovering Dingle

with **Andrew Ferguson**

By the mid-1970s, the Irish whiskey industry had hit rock bottom. In the 1700s there were hundreds of small distilleries operating in Ireland. By the late 1800s, there were but a couple of dozen left, but their whiskeys were regarded as the finest in the world. Ireland's War of Independence, the Civil War, and the Great Depression brought the industry to its knees.

In 1966, John Power & Son, John Jameson & Son and the Cork Distilleries Company merged to form the Irish Distiller's Group. The industry was in crisis, and amalgamation was seen as its only hope. They agreed to close down their respective distilleries and consolidate production on the Cork site. When the new Midleton Distillery opened in Cork in 1975, it was the only operating distillery left in the Republic of Ireland. Including Bushmills in Northern Ireland, there were just two distilleries on the Emerald Isle.

The benefit of hitting rock bottom, however, is that it leaves nowhere to go but up.

It may come as a surprise to most, but for the longest time almost all of the Irish whiskeys came primarily from just one distillery. In 1989, the Cooley Distillery opened in a converted potato ethanol plant. It fought off a hostile takeover bid by Irish Distillers, who by this time also owned the Bushmills Distillery across the border. In 2007, Cooley reopened Kilbeggan - Ireland's oldest distillery - and it was then that things started to get

interesting. With global demand for whiskey surging, and craft distilleries opening all over the world, Irish entrepreneurs started looking for opportunities at home. Today there are 16 distilleries operating in the two Irelands, and another 15 in the planning stages.

One of the first Irish craft distilleries to emerge was Dingle in 2012. Located just to the southwest of Limerick, Dingle was opened in the old Fitzgerald Sawmill on the outskirts of the town it is named for. The distillery sits at the end of Dingle harbour, by the mountains. The facility was the brainchild of the late Oliver Hughes, as well as Liam LaHart and Peter Mosley - founders of the Portershouse Brewing Group - who are the present owners, and operate Ireland's largest independent brewer. The vision was to create an artisanal, craft distillery. They installed three pot stills for whiskey, along with a combined gin/vodka still for white spirits. They laid their first casks down on December 18, 2012, and bottled their first whiskey barely three years later on December 19, 2015.

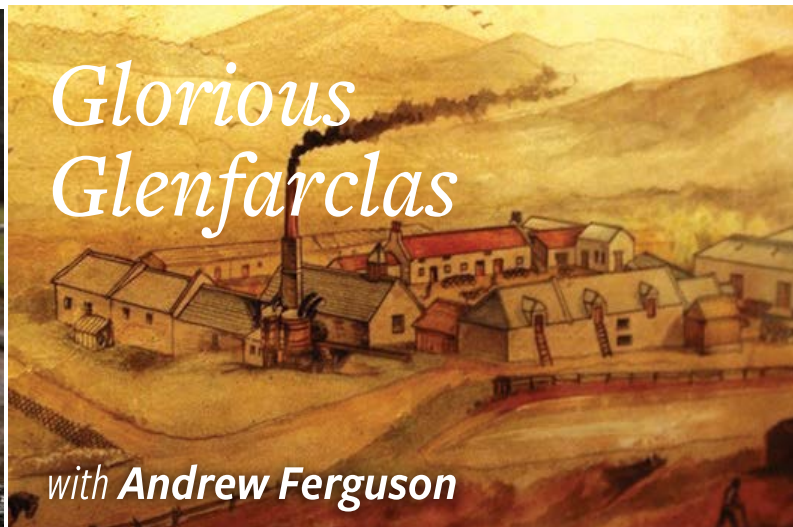
The distillery's gin and vodka were originally produced to help the distillery with its cash flow. Whiskey making is a slow game, and involves years of investment before a firm will start seeing any returns. Fortunately, the white spirits took off almost immediately, aided by early positioning in the firm's own network of bars and pubs. The white spirits are quadruple distilled, and produced from

wheat and barley grown on 50 nearby farms. The gin is built around 13 botanicals that can be found in the surrounding area. Dingle Gin has been a massive success for the company and accounts for 25% of all the gin sold in Ireland.

Dingle Vodka, Gin and Single Malt whiskey are all available in select markets around the world. The Dingle Vodka (\$55) is clean with a nice body. The Dingle Gin (\$55) is faintly sweet, with layers of soft floral tones. And though young, the Dingle Single Malt Whiskey Batch 2 (\$115) is lovely. Matured in both ex-bourbon and ex-sherry casks the whiskey is round, fruity and smooth with layers and complexity beyond its years. Dingle Single Malt Whiskey Batch 3 is due out shortly. Matured in ex-bourbon and ex-port casks, it retains the round, fruity tones of Batch 2 but with more prominent malt, chocolate and spice.

More than a few of my friends have been by the distillery and have raved about the experience. The surrounding area is also said to be very beautiful. But if you are not ready to make your own trip, might I suggest you give yourself a generous pour of Dingle, curl up on the couch, and binge watch Jack Taylor on Netflix. The gritty drama is set in nearby Galway, and the spirit of Dingle will transport you to the Emerald Isle.

www.kensingtonwinemarket.com



Like most of the Scottish distilleries to open in the 18th and 19th centuries, Glenfarclas was a farm before becoming a distillery. Whisky-making requires both barley and a good supply of clean water, so it is not surprising that most of Scotland's distilleries are found in rolling barley fields at the foot of the country's wild mountains.

The connection between whisky and agriculture is vital; barley was an important feed stock for cattle, but it is very hard for them to digest it in its raw form. However, when it is malted, milled and mashed (to remove the sugars for fermentation into beer), what results is a slightly sweet, protein-rich cattle food. What farmers discovered over time, though, was that whisky making was far more profitable than farming or cattle rearing.

Although owner Robert Hay took out a license to distill at Glenfarclas in 1836, no one knows exactly when his farm started producing whisky. As with many distilleries at that time, the founding date does not always indicate when the facilities first started producing whisky, but rather when they were caught distilling illicitly and forced to apply for a license. One clue to the distillery's origins is a watercolour painting from 1791, which still hangs in the location today. In the painting, the farm has a smokestack, vessels that look a lot like wormtubs (for condensation), and barrels strewn all over the yard. It also sits clearly at the foot of Ben Rinnes, the tallest mountain in the area. Most tellingly the words "Glenfarclas Disty" are scrawled in the bottom right hand corner.

The story of Glenfarclas starts to get interesting in 1865, when the distillery was acquired by the Grant family following the death of Robert Hay, for the sum of £511.90. For the next 152 years, six generations of the Grant family have run and managed the dis-

tillery. Curiously, since the purchase, all five of the chairmen have been named either John or George. The current chairman is John L.S. Grant, and his son - and successor - is named George. This unbroken chain of Johns and Georges may have run its course though, as George has two daughters, and to the best of my knowledge neither is named John or George.

Glenfarclas is a stubbornly independent firm, and not without reason.

They were early partners with Pattison Elder & Co., a firm run by a pair of "reckless" and flashy brothers from Leith. Pattison Elder & Co. was the whisky industry's 'Enron' of their day, building an empire on promises, lies, cheap credit, and IOUs. When they spectacularly collapsed in 1898 they took most of the industry with them, including - very nearly - the Glenfarclas Distillery. The Grants barely held on to their distillery, and it would take 15 years of hard work to recover their position. Thus, a "Spirit of Independence" was born.

The second half of the 20th century saw the distillery transition from producing whisky for blends to focusing on single malts. Glenfarclas pioneered the concept of Cask Strength whisky in 1968, with the release of their 105° Cask Strength which is bottled at 60 per cent (105° British proof). The whisky is still available today, and is created by marrying casks until they hit the magic number of 60 per cent abv. Most distilleries lose 1 to 2.5 per cent of their maturing whisky to evaporation each year - what we call "the angels' share." Glenfarclas loses less, only 0.5 per cent, owing to both a local microclimate and

a focus on the use of larger Sherry Butts for maturation. The distillery also fills its barrels at a higher proof than their peers, as it is not reliant on trading casks for blends at a standardized strength. As the fourth Grant to own Glenfarclas, the late George S. Grant was allegedly fond of saying, "we are not in the business of maturing water."

Glenfarclas has a depth of maturing whisky stocks which is the envy of the entire Scotch whisky industry. They have released single casks under their "Family Cask" range for every year up to, and including, 1952. The company's business plan has always been to lay down as much whisky as they can, even when times are tight. Business will eventually pick up again, and if there is no stock then there won't be anything to sell.

Glenfarclas has survived 22 recessions, the Great Depression, and the Pattison Whisky Crash. They will also likely survive the day when someone other than a John or George takes the helm as chairman.

The distillery is located just off the A95, about 5 minutes drive from the town of Aberlour, in Scotland's stunning Speyside region. The facility offers tours daily, including a 'Five Decades' tour for £100, which includes the tasting of a whisky from every decade between 1960 and the 2000s. If you can't make it to Glenfarclas you should be able to find their whisky. The 105° Cask Strength is excellent value at \$84. Try it neat before you add any water to it, as it is rich, fruity and spicy, though not rough. The 15 Year, \$90, is their benchmark sherried whisky and flagship single malt. If you really want to treat yourself, find a bottle of the 40 Year - at \$1,100 it might seem dear, but it is lovely, layered, very fruity, and great value for its vintage.

www.kensingtonwinemarket.com



Like many an Anorach - an extreme subspecies of whisky nerd - I was gutted when I heard the news that Billy Walker and his team had sold the BenRiach Distillery Co. to Brown Forman two years ago. For the previous 12 years, BenRiach, and its sister distillery Glendronach, were two of the most dynamic and innovative of Scotland's distilleries.

They catered their brands not just to the general public but also to whisky aficionados and collectors, with interesting limited releases and lots of single casks. What I didn't know at the time was that Walker didn't want to sell. His partners, however, wanted out, and the Brown Forman offer was just too good to turn down.

I recently bumped into Walker during my first ever visit to the GlenAllachie Distillery. In the 12 years that I had worked closely with his other brands, our paths had come close to crossing, but we had never actually met. Walker and a new consortium were still digesting their purchase of the GlenAllachie Distillery in late 2017. After selling The BenRiach Distillery Co. the year prior, Walker told me that he was eager to find a new project. He approached Pernod Ricard, from whom he had bought BenRiach (2004) and Glendronach (2008), with a proposition to help them bring their Scapa single malt from the Orkneys more to the fore. The offer was politely rebuffed, but they came up with a tantalizing counter; would he be interested in

buying GlenAllachie Distillery? The answer to that question should now be self-evident.

GlenAllachie Distillery was built in 1967 at the height of a major whisky boom, opening a year later just outside the Speyside village of Aberlour. The distillery was commissioned by Mackinlay McPherson, the company which had provisioned Sir Ernest Shackleton's expedition with whisky in 1907. Blended scotch whisky skyrocketed in demand through the 1960s and early 1970s, prompting producers to increase capacity and lay down ever-increasing stocks of malt whisky. The industry, however, was over-shot the mark.

Distilleries that had either just gone through major upgrades, or which - like GlenAllachie - had only opened a couple of decades earlier, were permanently closed, mothballed or sold. GlenAllachie shut its doors in 1985 but would reopen just 4 years later under new ownership. The distillery was relatively new and modern by Scottish standards, and an attractive acquisition for a company looking for a workhorse to serve their blends.

Under the ownership of Pernod Ricard, the whisky became an important component of the Chivas Regal blends. Only a handful of official single malt bottlings were ever released, primarily under the Chivas Cask Strength label. These whiskies were not readily available, however, and independent bottlings have been surprisingly rare.

As part of the acquisition, GlenAllachie's new owners assumed nearly 50,000 casks of maturing spirit. True to fashion, Walker was quick to sort out which casks were maturing nicely, and which needed to be re-racked into better quality wood. As with Glendronach and BenRiach, different cask types were acquired for finishing and maturation. He has also tinkered with GlenAllachie's new make of spirit, telling me "The spirit is good, but I can make it even better!" GlenAllachie has always been known as a big, though soft and fruity malt. Under the new stewardship, GlenAllachie has slowed its fermentation and distillation to encourage an even fruitier, though more muscular spirit. The facility is also now laying down casks of peated spirit - about 20 per cent of total current production.

The distillery is not yet set up to receive visitors, though they have made some exceptions for friends in the trade. A visitor center is planned, but its construction is still some time off as well. Consumers won't need to wait too long to start seeing expressions of the whisky however; a core range of 10, 12, 18 and 25-year-old whiskies is being rolled out in Canada this fall. I had a chance to sample both the 12 and 25-year-olds with Walker at the distillery, and they did not disappoint!

www.theglenallachie.com
www.kensingtonwinemarket.com

The Craft of Caol Ila

with **Andrew Ferguson**



Scotland's Caol Ila distillery is named for the body of water it gazes across, the majestic 'Sound of Islay' - a narrow but turbulent ribbon of water separating the islands of Islay and Jura.

The distillery is built almost precariously into the rocks of a steep embankment on a tiny bay. As with all of Islay's distilleries, Caol Ila had to be supplied exclusively by sea until the middle of the 20th century. Ships full of barley and oak barrels from the mainland sought a safe anchor from the tempestuous North Atlantic Sea. They would return to the mainland with casks of the peaty, smoky, single malt whisky which Islay is still famous for. Then, as today, the vast majority of these casks were destined for blending.

Caol Ila - pronounced 'cul-ee-lah' - is a facility full of contradictions. It is, by some margin, the largest of Islay's eight active distilleries, but it also produces one of Scotland's most dependable whiskies. Whisky Advocate Magazine refers to the distillery as 'Mr. Consistent' - a reflection on how few poor bottlings and casks of the whisky are in the marketplace. Is the size of the distillery and its efficiencies counterintuitively an asset? Perhaps, but these factors also make it one of the least interesting distilleries to visit on Islay, with one crucial footnote; the view from the Still Room at Caol Ila is unrivalled by any other distillery in Scotland, and possibly the world.

The Still Room's floor-to-ceiling windows offer a panoramic view across the Sound of Islay to the dramatic Isle of Jura beyond. Whales, dolphins and sea otters all frolic in

the waters out front, while the sun and clouds take turns revealing and obscuring the wilds of Jura.

In addition to the distilleries, there is much to see on Islay. One would be hard pressed, in fact, to see all eight of the island's active distilleries in three or four days. I am torn when asked to recommend which distilleries visitors should see; in a perfect world the answer would be all of them. Islay is, after all, Mecca for disciples of malt whisky gospel. But when a distillery needs to be cut, Caol Ila is often the first on the chopping block. Other than the view, the distillery isn't all that interesting compared with its neighbours.

Although its output is two and three times that of the next largest distilleries, almost none of Caol Ila's production is matured on the island. More than 99 per cent of its whisky matures in warehouses on the mainland.

The vast majority of Caol Ila's production is earmarked for blends - most importantly the world's second bestselling blended scotch whisky, Johnny Walker Black Label. While less than 5 per cent of the distillery's production is set aside for bottling as single malt by the owners, Diageo, a quirk of the Scotch whisky industry's supply chains has made Caol Ila the most widely available Islay single malt from independent bottlers. Whisky companies trade casks with one another to add complexity to their blends. Some of these casks find their way into the hands of independent bottlers; Gordon MacPhail, the Scotch Malt Whisky Society, Port Askaig, and others regularly bottle excellent single cask and small-batch bottlings of Caol Ila.

If you make the trek to Islay (and you should), and have the time, be sure to pop by Caol Ila to admire the view. Whether on tour from the Still Room or from the pier in front of the distillery, the views of the Sound of Islay and Jura - regardless of the weather - will take your breath away. More importantly, try every bottling of the whisky you can find; few, if any, of 'Mr. Consistent' are likely to disappoint!

Johnny Walker Black Label: This, like Guinness, is often the best of a lot of bad choices in most venues. The whisky is dry, smoky and malty; not mind-blowing, but very drinkable.

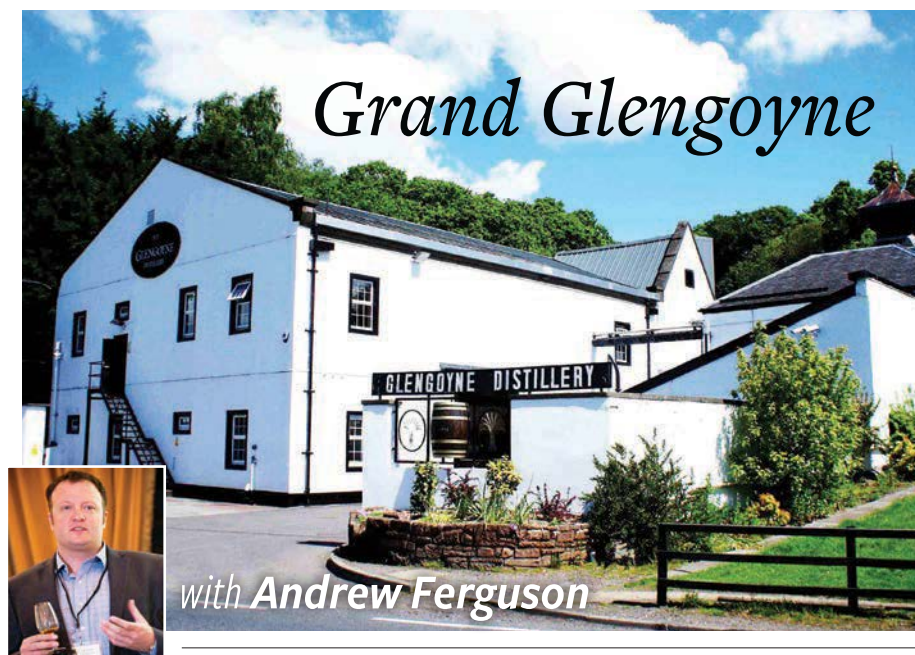
Finlaggan Eilean Mor Islay Single Malt: Named for the seat of the Lords of the Isles on Islay, this mystery malt is big, malty and classic Caol Ila...even if they don't explicitly call it that!

Caol Ila 12 Year: A stalwart single malt expression, white fruits and citrus with malt and salty sea smoke. Consistently good!

Port Askaig 19 Year: A stunning older Caol Ila, delicate and tropical with the profile of a much older whisky. A bargain at any price!

Caol Ila 30 Year: Big, but rounded nicely with loads of fruit and a delicate peaty profile reminiscent of Port Ellen.

www.kensingtonwinemarket.com



The line dividing Scotland's Highlands and Lowlands is both physical as well as emotional. The Antonine Wall was built near this boundary between 142 and 144 CE on the orders of the Roman Emperor Antoninus Pius. It drew a rough line across what is now the Central Belt, from the Firth of Clyde to the Firth of Forth. The wall was built to protect the areas north of its more famous predecessor, Hadrian's Wall, which was built twenty years earlier. Hadrian's Wall was erected to protect the Roman province of Britannia from the savage Caledonians. Pressure from these Pictish people is believed to have compelled the Romans to seize the Scottish Lowlands and build another wall to provide them with a buffer zone. A classic case of Imperial overreach, the Antonine Wall was effectively abandoned within twenty years of its construction, and was only briefly reoccupied in 208CE. The wall crumbled with time, but the Highland Lowland boundary continued to play a pivotal role in shaping Scotland for the following two Millennia.

Located just north of Glasgow, the GlenGoyne Distillery sits on the line which divides the Highland and Lowland whisky regions. While the still house is in the Highlands, the whisky matures in warehouses on the other side of the A81 in the Lowlands. It is nestled up against Dumgoyne Hill, a 427-meter volcanic plug, nestled in a tiny glen with an abundant supply of water. Although officially established in 1833 when George Connell acquired a license to distill at Glenguin of Burnfoot, he had been making whisky on the site since 1820. George is said

to have learned the art from his grandfather. Legend has it that the site had a long history of illicit distillation, to which it was well suited. Just up the hill from barley fields at Burnfoot Farm was a hidden waterfall in a miniature glen, conveniently out of sight of prying eyes. The treeless top of Dumgoyne Hill also provided an excellent vantage point from whence to spot a coming Exciseman.

The 1870s were a pivotal moment for the distillery, because it was then that Glenguin began maturing whisky in sherry casks. At the time it was a change made solely to save money on oak, but it would come to define the distillery's style for the next 100 years. Ever since the whisky's first bottling as a single malt in the 1990s, it has been renowned for its rich, sherried flavour. The distillery produces a spirit with a gentle, sweet and fruity character, but with enough weight to stand up to full term sherry maturation.

The name Glenguin translates to the Valley of the Wild Geese. In 1876 the distillery name was shortened to Glen Guinafter after a change of ownership, though it seems this was a clerical error. It was supposed to have been anglicized to GlenGoyne, a change that would not occur until 1907. GlenGoyne was acquired by Ian Macleod Distillers in 2003, from the Edrington Group (owners of Macallan) who have turned the distillery's focus to single malts. This is to the benefit of single malt whisky aficionados, as the distillery's production capacity of 1.1 million liters, puts it in the bottom third of Scottish distillers by size.

Independent bottlings of GlenGoyne are few, but the official bottlings are excellent value and well put together.

GlenGoyne is a classic example of 'you get what you pay for', but especially so with respect to their older expressions. Notable highlights from their large core range are the Cask Strength (\$81), 15 Year (\$90) and 21 Year (\$215). The GlenGoyne 25 Year old is currently my favourite distillery bottled 25 year old whisky. Priced at \$410 and bottled at 48%, it is a rich and flavourful malt, and ¼ the price of the world's most iconic 25 year old Scotch!

GlenGoyne can easily be visited from Glasgow on a day trip, or as a first stop on your way deeper into the Highlands. There is even a modest nearby section of the Antonine Wall you can visit if, like me, you are into such things. The distillery is also mere miles from the iconic Loch Lomonds and the Trossachs National Park. If you are in the area you owe it to yourself to pop into this charming little distillery. While there pick up a bottle of the Teapot Dram, a whisky you can only buy at the distillery. Like the distillery itself, the whisky has a compelling story to tell!

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Albannach

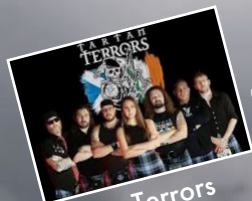


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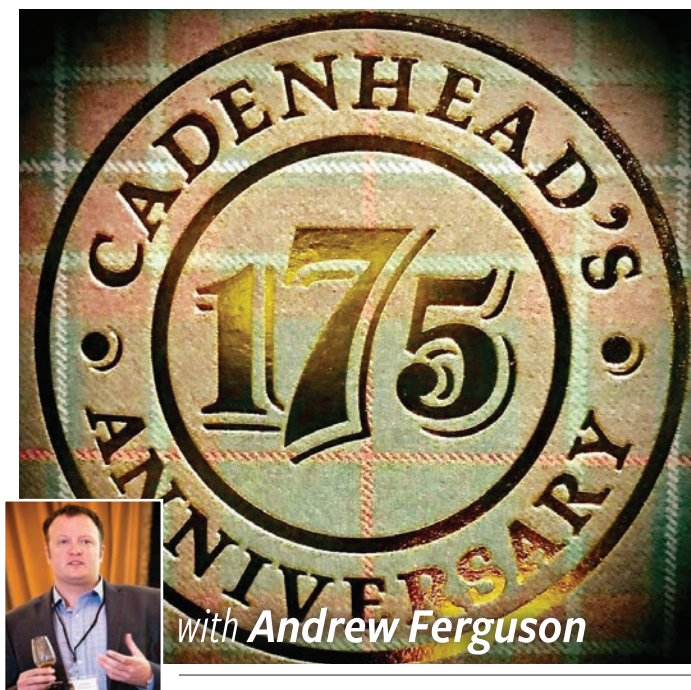


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Cool Cadenhead

As strange as it may sound, it is only in the last three to five decades that most distilleries have seen fit to bottle their own whiskies as single malts. Prior to that, the vast majority of whiskies distilled in Scotland were produced almost exclusively for blends. With few exceptions, most of the available single malts before the 1970s were bottled by independent bottlers like Gordon Macphail and WM Cadenhead. Distilleries like Glenfiddich, Macallan, Glenmorangie, Bowmore and Glenlivet began bottling their whiskies as single malts, and exporting them globally, in the 1960s. Other distilleries would follow in the 1970s, 80s and 90s. Some products - like John Dewar & Sons' "The Last Great Malts" series - have only been launched in the last few years.

Independent bottlings are whiskies bottled by a third party, and not the distillery which produced them. Not all distilleries actually bottle their whiskies as single malts, and many that do have limited ranges. Independent bottlings fill this niche in the market, generally releasing single casks and small batch single malts that can vary enormously from the distillery's core offering. If you are a devoted single malt aficionado, chances are you've come across more than a few independent bottlings in your day. If you haven't yet dipped your toes into the world of independent bottlings, then you may be missing out on some of the world's finest whisky, and it is high time you took a look at what they have to offer.

The oldest - and one of the finest - of all the independents is WM Cadenhead's. Established in 1842, Cadenhead's, as they are affectionately known, is a stubbornly traditional firm, with an exceptional range of whiskies. Along with Gordon Macphail, Cadenhead's is one of Scotland's best independent bottlers, with a range of old whiskies that is envied by the rest of the industry. Until the last few years, Cadenhead whiskies were only available from their network of shops in the U.K. and Europe. The Small Batch line was created four years ago to satiate selected whisky specialists around the world, and to distribute the company's aging overstock.

WM Cadenhead was acquired by J.A. Mitchell & Co. in 1972, the family-owned firm which also owns the Springbank and Glengyle distilleries. After acquiring Cadenhead's, and its stocks of maturing whisky, Hedley Wright - J.A. Mitchell's colourful chairman and owner

- is said to have spent the next few decades wandering Scotland with his check book. Wright made frequent visits to "his friends" at various distilleries across Scotland, purchasing casks as he went. Hedley kept track of his acquisitions on a series of ledgers, releasing casks bit by bit to the team at Cadenhead's for bottling. To this day, the firm doesn't even know the full extent of the casks they are sitting on. However, so long as Hedley keeps the flow of rare and old whiskies coming, Cadenhead's will continue to be one of Scotland's most interesting independent bottlers.

Today, Cadenhead's is headquartered in the scenic coastal town of Campbeltown on the Kintyre Peninsula, within walking distance from its sister businesses, the Springbank and Glengyle (Kilkerran) distilleries. The Cadenhead's Shop and Whisky Tasting Room serves as a visitor centre and retailer for the three brands. They offer daily tours and tastings from Monday to Saturday. While Springbank Distillery may be the main draw, the Cadenhead Warehouse tour is not to be missed. Mark and or Cameron will take you into the bowels of a dark, dingy old dunnage warehouse to sample some stunning whiskies, right out of the cask.

Campbeltown is a bit of a trek, 4 hours by car from Glasgow, near the end of the Kintyre Peninsula. The town is charming, with much to see in the surrounding area, justifying at least a two-day visit. The world-famous Machrihanish Dunes Golf Course is just ten minutes away. In my opinion, Campbeltown is best seen in conjunction with the islands and Arran, Islay (and Jura) over a week-long tour. Caledonian Macbrayne, Scotland's west coast ferry service, has a special pass for just such a route, called a Hop Scotch. But if Campbeltown is just too far to go, keep your eye open for one of the many other Cadenhead shops in Edinburgh, London and across Europe. In Canada, Cadenhead Small Batch whiskies can be purchased from Kensington Wine Market in Calgary.

Cadenhead is celebrating its 175th Anniversary this year, so let's raise a glass for their continued good spirits!

www.kensingtonwinemarket.com

Recognizing Royal Brackla



with **Andrew Ferguson**



Obscured by trees and hedgerows, almost hidden in the verdant farmland to the east of Inverness, Royal Brackla is a distillery that even the most veteran of whisky connoisseurs are likely not to be familiar with.

Curious, as the vast majority of whisky produced there goes into Dewars and other mainstream blends. The distiller's owners, Bacardi, have had a ten-year-old single malt on the market since 2004, but I don't recall ever seeing it. Even independent bottlings of the whisky were rare. It was only in 2015 that the Royal Brackla was finally given its due by Bacardi: Brackla was rolled out alongside Craigellachie, Aberfeldy, Aultmore and Macduff (The Deveron), as part of the "Last Great Malts of Scotland" promotion.

Brackla is among the oldest distilleries in Scotland, founded in 1812 by Captain William Fraser of Brackla House on the Cawdor Castle Estate. King William IV of Britain selected the whisky for his court and bestowed the facility with the honour "The Royal" in 1833. It was the first of only three distilleries to ever be given such an honour.

The distillery operated under a number of owners until it fell beneath the umbrella of Scottish Malt Distillers in 1943. An airstrip, portions of which survive in the neighbouring field to this day, was built next to the distillery in 1940 to "provide a landing ground for operational training and aerial gunnery." Between 1943 and 1945, the distillery was closed due to the rationing of grain for the war effort.

Between 1964 and 1966, Royal Brackla was closed again to undergo major refurbishments. The open still-house is similar to that of many that were built or rebuilt in the 1960s, at the beginning of the second major Scotch whisky boom. The floor maltings were closed, and the distillery switched from direct firing of the stills with coal to steam-generated internal heating. The capacity was also doubled with the addition of two new stills. Royal Brackla carried on until 1985 when the boom faded.

Brackla slowly came back to life in 1991 as demand for whisky began to pick up again. It underwent further refurbishment in 1997, modernizing the distillery's production. That same year, Grand Metropolitan and Guinness merged to form Diageo, the world's largest drinks company. Diageo soon controlled nearly half of all whisky production in Scotland, and the anti-trust authorities were not impressed. Diageo was forced to put John Dewar & Sons - which consisted of four of the five aforementioned distilleries - up for sale. More than twenty firms bid on the purchase, and Bacardi came out on top in 1998 with a bid of £1.15 billion!

I visited Royal Brackla for the first time in 2016: though I was aware of it, the distillery really wasn't on my radar until the "Last Great Malts of Scotland" promotion. From a vantage on the cooling pond in front of the still house on a sunny day, I discovered Brackla to be one of the most beautiful distilleries in Scotland. Framed by bucolic fields on the left, and the last remaining old-stone buildings on its right, it left an impression on me, and the new whiskies have not disappointed.

Royal Brackla 12 Year Finished in Oloroso sherry casks, the whisky is creamy and oily with chocolate orange and vanilla cream.

Royal Brackla 16 Year Finished in Oloroso sherry casks, the whisky is spicy, herbaceous and sweet with loads of honey and a faint touch of smoke.

Royal Brackla 21 Year It has not yet arrived in North America, but it is worth seeking out. The whisky was matured predominantly in sherry casks, and is oily with notes of cold tea, berry fruits and chocolate.

If you go...

The fertile farmland to the east of Inverness is full of attractions - perhaps none finer than the visitor center at Culloden Battle Field. On April 16, 1746, the final Jacobite rebellion came to an abrupt and brutal end on Culloden Moor, six miles outside of Inverness. The famed Highland charge had won the Jacobites a string of upsets against the Red Coats during the preceding two years. But, on the open moorland of Culloden against the superior firepower of the English forces, the Highlanders were cut to pieces. An estimated 2,000 Scots fell dead or wounded on that day, to the government's loss of around 300. It would be the last pitched battle fought on British soil.

Eight miles further east of the Culloden Battle Field is Cawdor Castle, another popular area attraction. Though linked by Shakespeare to Macbeth, the tower house around which the castle was built dates from the 15th century, three hundred years after the rule of the historic King. The rest of the castle was built in stages over the following centuries. Today it is mainly famed for its gardens.

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all about Aberfeldy



with **Andrew Ferguson**



In 2014, Bacardi finally decided to get on the single malt bandwagon. Of the five single malts it produced, only Aberfeldy was well known to single malt drinkers. The famous rum company - which owns five distilleries in Scotland - then re-launched and re-branded Aberfeldy, alongside Aultmore, Craigellachie, Macduff (The Deveron) and Royal Brackla, as The Last Great Malts of Scotland.

Aberfeldy Distillery was founded in 1896 in the Perthshire town of the same name. The distillery was built by brothers John Alexander and Tommy Dewar, whose family had been in the blended whisky business since 1846. The distillery was constructed near the ruins of an earlier site, Pitilie (1825-1867), in an effort to produce single malt whisky for the Dewars White Label blend. The first production took place in November of 1898 at the height of a major boom in Scotch whisky production. The distillery survived the Pattison Whisky Crash, which devastated the industry just two years later, and operated through most of the Great War.

In 1925, the distillery - and the Dewars blends - was acquired by Distillers Company Ltd. (DCL), a forerunner of Diageo, which is today the largest drinks and whisky company in the world.

Aberfeldy underwent a major upgrade and modernization in 1972,

at the beginning of a new boom cycle in the Scotch whisky industry. While modern facilities were created for production, including a new still house and tun room, the beautiful old stone maltings were preserved. More recently these have been converted into an informative visitor center, a lovely gift shop and a good cafe.

In 1998, Diageo - who at the time owned nearly half of the active distilling capacity in Scotland - was compelled by competition authorities to divest itself of some of its distilleries and brands. As part of its downsizing, it spun off John Dewar & Sons to Bacardi. Thus, Aberfeldy, along with its four sister distilleries and the Dewar's brands, were sold to Bacardi.

Only an hour's drive north of Glasgow and Edinburgh, Aberfeldy Distillery is very accessible. Just 10 minutes off the A9 highway, down a scenic mountain road, it is also near scenic Loch Tay and the tourist town of Pitlochry. The distillery's visitor center has a terrific exhibit detailing the history of the Dewar's brand, and a lab where you can practice your own blending skills. Whisky pilgrims could make a day of it, combining a visit to Aberfeldy with one of a number of other nearby distilleries, including Edrour, Glenturret and Tullibardine.

Aberfeldy 12 Year

— Young but balanced, the malty tones are complemented by soft vanilla, cracked nuts and dried apricots.

Aberfeldy 16 Year

— Darker and fruitier than the 12 year, with a creamy base and prominent sherry notes: dried fruits, fennel, coffee grounds, juicy orange and chocolate.

Aberfeldy 18 Year

— This Duty Free release is similar to the 16-year-old, with both American and European oak notes, but with a few more years on it.

Aberfeldy 21 Year

— Possibly the best value 21-year-old whisky on the market right now, and the highlight of the range. It is creamy, rich and very smooth with layers of tropical fruit and decadent spices.

Aberfeldy 28 Year

— Another Duty Free exclusive release, it is creamy with white fruits, ginger snaps, crisp orange and tingling spice.

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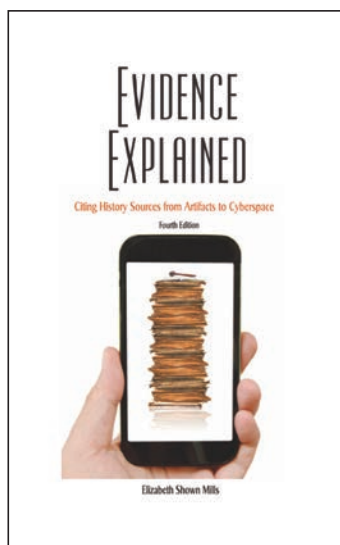
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*Long the preserve of an inner circle of connoisseurs,
Scotland's Old Pulteney now whets the world's whistle*

Located several hours north of Inverness, the Northern Highland distillery of Old Pulteney is one of Scotland's most remote. Pulteney was once Scotland's northernmost mainland distillery, but lost that title in recent years to the newly built Wolfburn in Thurso. That may be liberating, however, as the claim of "northernmost distillery" is a shallow one, with no effect whatsoever on the quality of the Old Pulteney's world-class spirit.

While aficionados and critics have long praised Old Pulteney's whisky, it has dwelt in the second tier of brands for years. For those in the know, the spirit has been a carefully guarded secret of sorts.

A string of awards over the last five years have pushed Old Pulteney into the international spotlight, however, where it rightly belongs. Most recently, the distillery was awarded Single Malt of the Year at the 2016 World Whiskies Awards for its superb 1989 vintage. The spirit in question, a curiosity of sorts, was made in the distillery's unpeated style, but matured in whisky barrels that had previously been used to mature peated whisky.

Old Pulteney is one of only two distilleries in Scotland that is named after a true-to-life historical figure; in this case, Sir William Pulteney (1729-1805). Reputedly the wealthiest person in the United Kingdom in his day, William Pulteney was a patron to the famous architect Sir Thomas Telford, and the owner of vast lands in both the UK and North America.

He was also responsible for the British fisheries at the time of a herring boom in

the North Sea. Pulteneytown - a purpose-built herring port to the south of the Royal Burgh of Wick - was named in his honour. The town was well known for absorbing migrants from the Highland Clearances seeking work in the growing fisheries industry.

Inaccessible by road or rail, Pulteneytown had to be supplied by sea. Residents had difficult lives and a deep thirst. The Old Pulteney Distillery opened in 1826 and made sense, both financially and otherwise, for the area. Every man, woman and child in the town was said to consume upwards of 500ml of whisky a day. Drink was still a scourge in the town a century later when James Watson purchased the distillery in 1920. By this time Pulteneytown had merged with the Royal Burgh of Wick. Two years later, by majority vote, the local ward declared prohibition in the area, which lasted for 25 years and a day. The distillery survived a few years of prohibition, but closed in 1930.

Its fortunes, however, would soon rebound, and Old Pulteney reopened in 1951 as post-war demand for whisky in Europe began to recover. Major refurbishments took place to modernize the distillery in 1958, and the traditional floor maltings ceased. In 1997 the current owners - Inver House Distillers - launched their 12-year-old single malt in a bespoke bottle, inspired by the distillery's unusual stills. While the whisky would traditionally have been peated, today there is virtually no trace of it. The core range consists of 12, 17 and 21-year-olds, with some older expres-

sions and one-offs in the mix.

Old Pulteney may not be the northernmost distillery on Scotland's mainland anymore, but it has built a solid reputation over the last two decades with its world-class single malt. The coming years look very bright for the company, as it arcs towards its 200th Anniversary.

Old Pulteney 12 Year Matured exclusively in American oak, the whisky is creamy with vanilla, caramel and citrus notes highlighting Pulteney's maritime style.

Old Pulteney 17 Year Matured in American and European oak, the 17 Year is woodier with sea salt, honeycomb, dried fruits and a touch of leather.

Old Pulteney 21 Year This award-winning combination of 2nd Fill Bourbon and 1st Fill Oloroso Sherry casks is spicy with white chocolate, caramel spices and layers of fruits.

Old Pulteney 1989 Vintage Whisky Magazine's Single Malt of the Year, this vintage expression was matured in 2nd Fill American oak casks which had previously matured a peated Scotch whisky. The result is a very complex, creamy whisky with a touch of salt and smoke, and loads of tropical fruits.

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Dram with Andrew Ferguson



Unmistakably Irish!

Whiskey is one of the fastest growing global drink categories, and is currently enjoying a new golden age. New distilleries are popping up all across North America, Europe and elsewhere. Nowhere, however, is whiskey's renaissance more evident than in Ireland.

Whiskey was most likely born on the Emerald Isle, and by the late 1800s its spirits were the most prized in the world. But history would not be kind to the Irish whiskey industry, and a series of misfortunes that befell the Irish people in the early 20th century nearly wiped out a 400-year-old industry.

By the mid-1960s there were only three remaining distillers in Eire: John Powers & Son, John Jameson & Son, and the Cork Distillery Co. The trio of companies merged in 1966 in an attempt to stem the industry's ongoing contraction. In 1975, Irish Distillers opened the New Midleton Distillery in Cork, closing its older facilities, and leaving Ireland with only one other remaining distillery - Bushmills in Northern Ireland.

A new Irish distillery, Cooley, began production in 1988. In 2007, Ireland's oldest distillery, Kilbeggan - originally founded in 1757 - re-opened, kick-starting a new wave of whiskey production. Today there are a dozen distilleries operating in Ireland, and a further seven are currently under construction or have been granted planning permits.

The first whiskeys in Ireland and Scotland were made from malted barley - essentially distilled beer. Unlike corn or wheat, barley has enzymes which convert insoluble starches in the grain into fermentable sugars. Barley is also a hardy

grain, so it is ideal for storing in cool, wet climates like Scotland and Ireland.

Scottish and Irish whiskey production in the 1700s did not escape the eyes of the government in London. Westminster sought to curb excessive drinking and tax its production. One way of doing this was by taxing malted barley by the ton. Although the alcohol yield per ton of barley can vary by strain and by harvest, taxmen could estimate the amount of whiskey that would result from a given ton of barley. They could also estimate a distillery's production for the purposes of taxation.

During the 18th Century, the British imposed a series of "punishing malt taxes." In response, Irish distillers began using a blend of malted and unmalted barley in their mashes as a way of avoiding or reducing their exposure to the "hated malt tax." Only a small quantity of malted barley in the mash bill, 10-15 percent, is needed for an efficient fermentation. With so many Irish distillers making whiskey from a small amount of malted barley - and a greater amount of unmalted barley - a uniquely Irish style of whiskey, Pure Pot Still, was born. In 2010, the term was legally re-categorized as Single Pot Still Whiskey.

The only Single Pot Still Irish Whiskey currently available comes from the New Midleton Distillery in Cork. Some Single Pot Still Whiskey is bottled pure, under labels like Redbreast, Powers, Green Spot, Writers Tears and Midleton Barry Crockett Legacy. But, as with the bulk of single malt whisky production in Scotland, most pot still whiskey is produced for blended whiskey. Cooley and Kilbeggan distilleries have both distilled a single pot still spirit,

which is not yet old enough to legally be called whiskey. It is estimated that over the next decade, a dozen or more new Single Pot Still Whiskies will be released. Until then, these four widely available Single Pot Still Whiskies will whet your whistle.



Red Breast 12 Year: This pot still whiskey is partially matured in Oloroso sherry, giving it a spicy, dark fruit character.

Green Spot: Is composed of 7 to 10-year-old Pot Still whiskies matured in Ex-Bourbon and Ex-Sherry casks; it was originally produced for Mitchell & Son of Dublin.

Midleton Barry Crockett Legacy: Matured in Ex-Bourbon and new American oak casks; only 2,500 bottles are released each year. It is creamier and more delicate in style with soft fruits and spices.

Writers Tears Pot Still: A private label, no age statement, pot still whiskey.



Dram with Andrew Ferguson



People of Jura

In the 1960s, Scotland's wild and remote west coast island of Jura was in a desperate state, as the islet's population had fallen from over 1,000 people to barely 100 in less than a century. Unlike other parts of Scotland, however, where forced clearances left the land barren of residents, Jura's exodus would be attributed to poverty, hunger and the draw of urbanization. It was a self-perpetuating problem; as more people left, fewer wanted to remain. Diurachs (people of Jura) were moving from isolated crofts on the island to Scotland's cities, and further afield to North America.

At that time, two of the area's large estate owners - Robin Fletcher and Tony Riley-Smith - hatched a plan to revive the island's fortunes by rebuilding the Jura Distillery.

Originally founded in 1810 in the town of Craighouse by Archibald Campbell, the Jura Distillery was first named the Small Isles Distillery. Illegal distillation was likely taking place on the island well before the founding of the distillery, and probably while it operated through the 1800s. Jura is a rugged, mountainous island with no shortage of places to hide a still or two. In 1876, the distillery came into the possession of James Ferguson & Sons. They operated it until 1901 when it was closed after a dispute with the landowner. In Scotland, you can own a building, but not necessarily the land it sits on - thus, you are required to pay rent and tax so long as the building has a roof. James Ferguson and the landowner couldn't agree on who was to be responsible for the costs to rebuild the town pier in Craighouse, so Ferguson did what only seemed natural to

him. He stripped the distillery of its equipment, removed the roof and left Jura to set up shop elsewhere.

There is a great legend surrounding the Isle of Jura and the Campbell Clan who once owned it. In the 1700s, the Campbells of Jura evicted a wise old woman who prophesized that the last Campbell on Jura would leave the island blind in one eye, with all his possessions on a cart drawn by a single white horse. Oddly, in 1938 - whether you believe in such tales or not - Charles Campbell, blind in one eye from the Great War, and having fallen on hard times, left the island for the last time from the old pier. He made the journey with all of his possessions loaded in a cart pulled by a single white horse.

Almost three decades later, the rebuilding of the distillery was tasked to the architect William Delme-Evans, who designed many of the region's distilleries that were built or rebuilt in the latter half of the 20th Century.

The thinking was that with good employment opportunities, islanders would no longer have a reason to leave! The distillery, a large commercial operation, was rebuilt from scratch and was up and running by 1963. It had the desired effect; the island's population rebounded to almost 200, and it has been stable ever since. Today Jura is widely available as a single malt, one of the two principal brands in the Whyte & MacKay portfolio. It is very unlikely the island's population will ever rebound to 1,000, but every year it draws more and more tourists, lured from all over the world by its wild untamed beauty, the 4,000 deer that call it home, and the whisky which bears its name.



Jura 10 Year Origin – The distillery's flagship bottling is excellent value and a very pleasant, easy drinking whisky with notes of honey, white fruits and chewy malt.

Jura Superstition – A lightly peated offering that marries the distillery's principal unpeated style with its heavily peated version. Clean smoke and maritime notes complement honey, chocolate and spices.

Jura Prophecy – Named for the prophetic legend, this heavily peated whisky has a soft finesse. Rich with peat smoke and maritime notes, but also layers of fruit, juicy malt, spices and chocolate. My favourite expression of Jura.



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Dram with Andrew Ferguson



The Quality of Kilchoman

On a cold, windy, rainy evening a few months ago, I made my way to a new maturation warehouse built on a low hill overlooking Loch Indaal. I was on the island of Islay for Feis Ile, the Islay Whisky Festival, considered by most to be the holiest of events in the whisky pilgrim's calendar. This year's event was extra special, as two of Scotland's most iconic distilleries, Lagavulin and Laphroaig, celebrated their 200th anniversaries. While these two industry giants were the focus of this year's gathering, they weren't the only distillery marking a significant milestone. 2015 is also the 10th anniversary of the founding of Kilchoman - Islay's first new distilleries in 124 years. So with the wind howling outside, and sheets of rain violently rolling across building rooftops, I made my way into a dunnage warehouse with 60 other whisky lovers for a very special tasting.

The tasting was a retrospective of Kilchoman's first decade, and what a ten years it has been for the fledgling firm. We sampled a cask from 2006, its first full year of production, along with other barrel samples from 2007, 2009 and a number from 2010. It was a rare opportunity to witness a whisky's evolution. The tasting was hosted by the distillery's founder and managing director, Anthony Wills, whose vision it was to build a small farm distillery, effectively taking Scotch whisky back to its roots. Many forget that most of Scotland's distilleries - even giants like Glenfiddich, Glenlivet and Macallan - all started out as farm distilleries.

In just a decade, the distillery has nurtured a cult-like following for its commitment to world-class quality. Found-



ing a distillery, even a small-scale farm distillery like Kilchoman, is no easy feat. Kilchoman's advisors knew the distillery couldn't wait 10 years to bottle their spirit, so it had to be as flawless as possible right from the start. As such, they would need top quality casks for maturation. To survive, Kilchoman would have to start selling its whisky at a young age, and it would have to be good. There was a lot of anticipation surrounding the release of the "Kilchoman Inaugural Release" in 2009. Interest in Scotch whisky was at a fever pitch, and Islay whiskies were hotter still. That first release did not disappoint, and neither have the subsequent editions.

Kilchoman is now entering its second decade with confidence, momentum, and a loyal following. The distillery is still turning heads with its young, very peaty Islay whiskies. Its success has encouraged other small-scale and farm distilleries to pop up all over Scotland - so many at this point, in fact, that it is easy to lose track.

For a time after its initial launch, Kil-

choman mostly released periodic vintage expressions, but in 2012 the brand coalesced around a core of three whiskies. Kilchoman's production is small, and so is its footprint; you won't find these bottles in every liquor store, but no self-respecting whisky specialist would be caught dead without them. Do yourself the favour; grab one, and raise a glass to Kilchoman's first 10 years - and the next 190!

Kilchoman Machir Bay; The distillery's main expression is heavily peated, with intense smoky notes. Matured in a mix of ex-bourbon and Ex-Sherry casks, the expression is a good balance between fruity, malty and earthy notes. The whisky takes its name from the beautiful white sand beaches of Machir Bay.

Kilchoman Loch Gorm; Named for the peaty loch (lake) located a short distance from the distillery. This expression is matured in ex-sherry casks, which balance the whisky's big medicinal smoke with rich sherry notes of spices, dark fruits, leather, and chocolate.

Kilchoman 100% Islay 5th Edition; From barley to bottle, the 100% Islay is the only whisky in the range produced from estate grown barley, and then malted, distilled, matured and bottled on site. A more moderately peated expression of Kilchoman, 100% Islay is fresher with bright citrus and creamy oak!

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YEARS OF ARDBEG

The Appeal of Ardbeg

Scotland's west coast Hebridean Island of Islay is a place where Scottish-Celtic traditions, language and culture remain strong. The island has a long and rich history, but today is best-known for its eight active distilleries – nine, if you count the distillery on the nearby island of Jura. Interest in, and demand for, the area's whiskies is so strong that two more distilleries are planned.

Every spring the island celebrates Feis Isle, or the Islay Festival, a ten-day long celebration of island life, music and, of course, whisky. Feis Isle attracts whisky pilgrims from all over the world, and this year's draw was the strongest yet. Two of the island's distilleries, Ardbeg and Laphroaigh, both marked their 200th anniversaries. I had the great pleasure of attending Feis Isle this year, and it was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Each distillery had its own festival day, and their efforts did not disappoint attendees. As good as each of these individual festival days were, however, it was the Ardbeg night-before party that left the strongest impression on me.

The distillery invited its most ardent admirers from around the world to bring along their favourite bottle of Ardbeg. For the whiskies, it was a literal homecoming. The Ardbegians obliged, bringing with them some of the most sought after bottles of Ardbeg on the planet to share. I had the pleasure of sampling several; Lord of the Isles, the original Kildalton, rare independent bottling, and multiple different vintages from the 1970s, including a handful from the distillery's most celebrated vintage 1974.

The Ardbeg Distillery is located on Islay's southern coast, and is the eastern-most of the three distilleries which produce the smokiest and peatiest whiskies

in Scotland. In Scots-Gaelic the name Ardbeg translates to "small headland." Whisky production has happened here since as far back as 1798, with commercial production beginning in 1815. By the 1860s, it was a very large operation with more than sixty employees and its own town.

Today, the distillery's whisky is beloved for its big, earthy, peaty and maritime elements. Ardbeg's malt is peated to 55 parts-per-million (phenols), making it one of the smokiest whiskies in Scotland. Though it is highly phenolic, the distillery's stills lighten what would otherwise be a very heavy spirit, softening it by adding fruity characteristics. Years of maturing in the oak add further layers to the spirit, imparting flavours and, over time, rounding its sharp edges. When young, like the 10 Year, Ardbeg is big, heavy and medicinal. Over time the spirit becomes more delicate, fruity and tropical. Older expressions – like the 17 Years, the Airigh Nam Beist, and some of the legendary 1970s vintages – have almost magical flavour profiles.

Finding older Ardbeg isn't easy. The distillery was closed from 1981 to 1989, and production continued on only a limited level until 1997. Over the last 15 years, it has had to bottle both young and old whisky to meet demand and keep the brand alive. As a result, there isn't much older stock available. That is why the homecoming tasting at Ardbeg was so special. Within a generation, there will be older expressions of Ardbeg available again. But will they be as special? The faithful believe they will. For now, here are four currently available expressions with which to toast 200 years!

Ardbeg 10 Year; The distillery's flagship expression has won accolades the world over, it is also becoming popular in cocktails like the Ardbeg Ceaser.

Ardbeg Corryvreckan; Named for the famous nearby whirlpool is big, bold and spicy having been partly matured in French oak. This is Ardbeg almost untamed.

Ardbeg Uigeadail; Named for the loch of the same name which is the distillery's water source the Uigeadail has a heavy sherry influence adding raisins, chocolate and dark fruits.

Ardbeg Perpetuum; The distillery's 2015 special release is a tribute to its past, a testament to the present and a toast to its future. Lighter, creamier and more delicate than the other expressions.

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Let's Go Laphroaig!

2015 is a big year for the Inner Hebridean Scottish island of Islay; two of its iconic distilleries, Ardbeg and Laphroaig, are celebrating their 200th anniversaries. Both of these distilleries, or at least their proprietors, were almost certainly making whisky well before going legit in 1815 - a common practice at the time, with farmers and cattlemen turning their surplus barley into whisky. This was especially true on the islands off Scotland's west coast.

Islay's whiskies are considered to be the most heavily peated and smoky in Scotland. Because of the island's remoteness from the rest of the country, the tradition of burning peat to dry the barley lasted longer than it did in the Highlands. By the time residents had access to other forms of fuel it was no longer in the distilleries' interest to change, as producers of blended scotch required the peaty-smoky whiskies to add character to their product.

Historically, there would have been hundreds of small stills on Islay, most of them illicit. At the height of illegal distilling in the early 1800s, the island's population was surging. Within a few decades, commercial distilling took root there, and by the end of the 19th century, there were 23 licensed producers on the isle.

Laphroaig Distillery was born during Islay's 19th century boom, established on the southern coast of the island in 1815. The distillery was built by Donald and Alexander Johnston, members of the MacDonald Clan which once ruled Islay and the Western Isles as an independent kingdom. The brothers leased 1,000 acres

from the Laird of Islay for the raising of cattle, also growing barley for feed and whisky.

Word of the high-quality spirits being produced at Laphroaig spread quickly across the island, and the brothers soon realized that whisky was far more profitable than raising cattle. Alexander moved to Australia, but Donald continued at the distillery until 1847, when he died - allegedly after falling into a vat of whisky. The distillery would stay in his family's hands for another century, until his last descendant, Ian Hunter, passed in 1954, leaving the distillery to his trusted manager Bessie Williamson. The distillery was then sold to commercial interests in the 1960s, and is now an anchor brand of Beam Suntory. Today it is the best-selling Islay whisky in the world.

Laphroaig has, without doubt, the most divisive flavour profile of any single malt whisky, sourcing its peats from relatively low elevation moors on the island. These peats are one of the reasons for the distillery's very distinct flavour profile. Many have tried to reproduce Laphroaig's style - most notably Lagavulin in the mid-1800s - but all have failed. The combination of Laphroaig's peat, its water, and the shape of its stills, create a truly unique expression. Antiseptic, military dressings, band aids, iodine, seaweed, smoke and tar are all terms regularly used to describe Laphroaig whiskies. This proved an asset during prohibition in the United States, when Ian Hunter was able to convince authorities that Laphroaig had medicinal properties. Laphroaig was one of the few

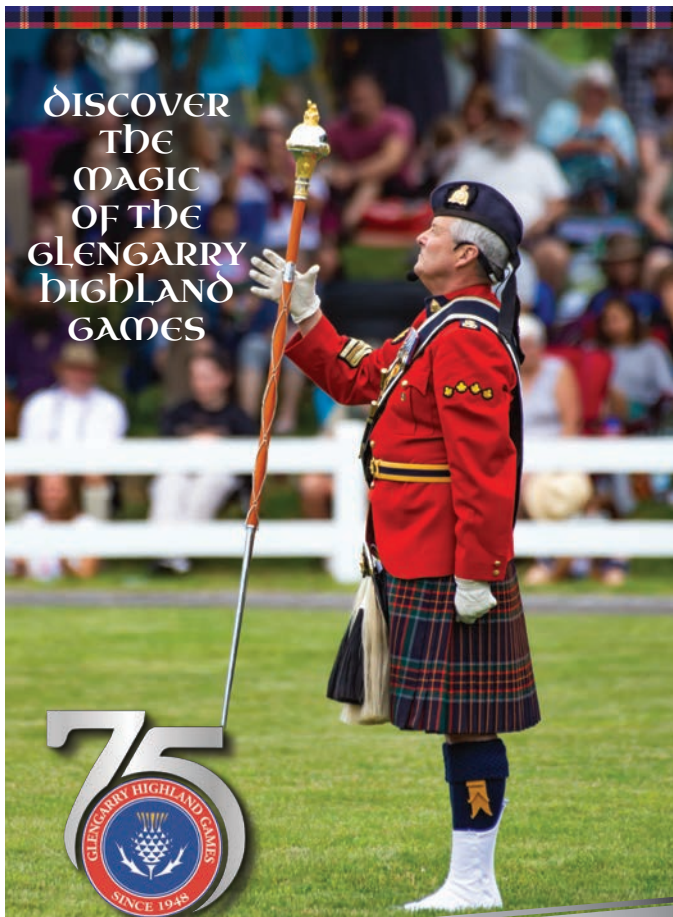
legally available whiskies in the US during prohibition, albeit by prescription.

The distillery's core range consists of five whiskies. The most innovative is the *Laphroaig Quarter Cask* which is finished in 120L barrels, increasing the spirit's exposure to wood and speeding up maturation. Next are the *Laphroaig 10 Year*, and *Laphroaig Triple Wood*, the latter matured in Bourbon, Quarter Casks and Oloroso Sherry Butts. Atop the range are the *Laphroaig 18 Year*, and the *Laphroaig 25 Year*, each available in limited quantities in selected markets. The distillery also releases whiskies under the Laphroaig Cairdeas label - Cairdeas meaning "friendship" in Scots Gaelic. The 2015 expression of Cairdeas is the best in recent years, made with more heavily peated malt than Laphroaig typically uses (80ppm), and crafted only with the distillery's three small stills, giving it a fruitier character. The Laphroaig Cairdeas 2015 will be making its way around the world this year, available to the Friends of Laphroaig.

The distillery has long been a favourite of Charles, Prince of Wales. He was apparently especially keen on the old 15 Year, which was discontinued about a decade ago. He'll be happy to know there is a new 15 Year set for release this year. Charles gave the distillery his Royal Warrant in 1994 - a rare honour. Whether it will become The Royal Laphroaig Distillery when he ascends the throne remains to be seen.

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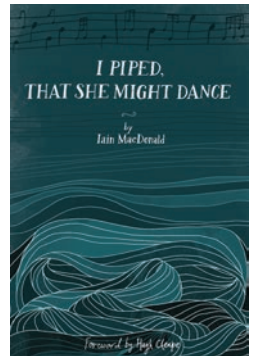
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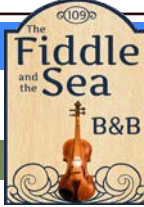
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Uisga Beatha

by Fran Baillie

Gies a gless o yon amber swahly, ice-chinklin,
skinklin at the rim, reekin o an Islay boanfire;
a bouquet o burnt tehr an a ticky sugarellly watter
peat-steepit in tar an iodine.
Pass owre a tummlerfuhr o the cauld, wild west,
mahltit barley, slow-distilt, pure poetrie;
thon lang eftertist, heather colloquin wi dulse,
a douce toffee-aipple, a smoky baccy guff;
tert an sweet, smooth an smartin, mallayin the tongue,
sic a brah Manichaeen dichotomie!
Gies a wee nip o the gowden meld, huggit lang-time in sherried oak.
Poor oot a dram ti weet wir thrapple, prickie wir palate,
gie thae tistbuds a helluva fleg, birl them, mak them dirl.
Shove yir cognac wi its pinkie in the air, kiddin-on it's pedigree.
Stuff yir peely-wally reamin swats o barley bree,
awa wi yir Ruski voddie's stringent ming o fermentin tattie.
Ruby rum's wahrm an reekin-rich bit
thir's nae dusky musk ... nae je ne sais quoi.
Dinna feel guilt fir a meenit, dinna think yir wrang.
Angels aa share it wi'oot a secint thocht.
Dinna skimp noo, nae grippit huddin-back; dinna be ticht-fistit.
Heelstergowdie in luv wi feisty Laphroaig,
wi'll sip, syne swig an drap doon inti yon mella dwam.
Poor yirsel an uisge beatha, wrap roond it, real slow,
drink in its mony colours, droon in its pungent glow.



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