



PRESS RELEASE

St Columba's Hospice auctions rare Single Malt Scotch whisky in unique bottle designed by Maeve Gillies

19 September 2012

St Columba's Hospice of Edinburgh, Scotland, is delighted to announce the upcoming auction of 'AOIBHINN', an exquisite hand-crafted silver bottle containing rare Single Malt Scotch whisky. The whisky is a single bottling from a single cask, at natural (i.e. cask) strength, distilled at Ardbeg in 1974. The 70cl bottle will be accompanied by a 5cl miniature.

'AOIBHINN', pronounced "ee-vin" and meaning *joyful* in Scottish Gaelic, is the result of a unique collaboration between New York-based award-winning Scottish jewellery designer Maeve Gillies and Ardbeg Distillery on the island of Islay.

This one-of-a-kind bottle has been created specifically for St Columba's Hospice 'Live Life Ball' auction in October, which hopes to raise funds for an essential rebuild of St Columba's Hospice in Edinburgh.

The 'AOIBHINN' bottle is created from hand-blown glass with genuine sterling silver that has been raised, chased, pierced and engraved by expert craftsmen using ancient silversmithing techniques. The edging is traditional silver gilt and stone-set with hand-carved, polished beach pebbles collected from St Columba's Bay on the island of Iona. The single green teardrop-shaped stone on the front of the bottle, suspended by the blue enamel doves of the Hospice, will be cut from a rare green Iona 'marble'.

Ardbeg was the choice of *Master of the Quaich* and well-known whisky writer Charles MacLean - a star of Ken Loach's Cannes 2012 Jury Prize winning film '*The Angel's Share*' - as the perfect malt to fill such a unique Celtic-inspired bottle. The whisky - distilled in 1974, bottled from a single cask in 2012 - was selected by Dr. Bill Lumsden, Director of Distilling & Whisky Creation at The Glenmorangie Company.

The auction will take place at the St Columba's Hospice 'Live Life Ball' at The Assembly Rooms in Edinburgh on Saturday 6 October 2012. **Sealed bids will be accepted in advance and anyone wishing to bid for this lot should contact Lesley Christie, the Fundraising Director at St Columba's Hospice on +44 (0)131 551 1381.**

Charles Maclean commented, "Maeve's designs are just exquisite. This will be a bottle of the utmost beauty and craftsmanship, and when filled with a very rare 1974 Ardbeg makes this truly a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for single malt whisky aficionados and collectors. Magnificent!"

Designer Maeve Gillies explains; "I was honoured to be asked to design this very important bottle. St Columba is one of Scotland's most important saints, which truly befits a unique Celtic-inspired creation. The outstanding craftsmanship and materials, unique story and content of this bottle will ensure it becomes a highly-prized possession of one lucky bidder!"

Lesley Christie, Fundraising Director, St Columba's Hospice, said: "This beautifully designed bottle, filled with rare single malt whisky, will be auctioned to raise funds for an essential rebuild of St Columba's Hospice in Edinburgh. This is without doubt one of the most exciting fundraising opportunities we have ever had. The combination of support from Maeve Gillies, a world class and award winning designer, *Master of the Quaich* Charles MacLean, and Ardbeg, one of Islay's best loved single malts, is absolutely unique and we are very grateful for their support".

ENDS

Notes To Editors:

St Columba's 'AOIBHINN' – The Story, by Maeve Gillies

St Columba is the most important saint in Scottish history. His well-documented monastic life, spent mostly on the island of Iona during the 6th Century, marked the beginning of a new era. He travelled widely and fearlessly, promoting unity and peace at a time of great unrest, and the miracles he is said to have performed became legendary. His legacy was so revered that more Scottish Kings are buried on Iona than any other place.

Following St Columba's death, there came many centuries of war and invasion. Treasured monastic objects were hidden and lost, stolen or destroyed by invaders. Few relics survived. One such object discovered intact is the Ardagh chalice, made over 1000 years ago, buried and lost, then discovered by a boy digging for potatoes in 1868.

The St Columba's whisky bottle design was inspired by this exquisite chalice and its chance discovery. It is finished to feel as precious as if made by a King's silversmith many centuries ago - buried to survive a Viking raid, and discovered centuries later.

This unique bottle is indeed fit for a King. Made from hallmarked sterling silver, it is hand-raised, chased, pierced and engraved, using ancient silversmithing techniques. The edging is traditional silver gilt and stone set. All the stones are hand-carved and polished from beach pebbles collected from St Columba's Bay on Iona. The geology of Iona is amongst the oldest in the world, so these stones may have been present as Columba himself landed in that Bay for the first time. The single teardrop stone on the front of the bottle, suspended by the blue enamel doves of the Hospice, has been cut from rare green Iona 'marble'. Pebbles of this green stone, unique to Iona, are treasured to this day by sailors and pilgrims as a 'tear of St Columba', which legend tells will keep them safe when travelling over water.

The Celtic bordering detail is hand-chased and oxidised, to convey the sense of age and treasure. Inside is a rare 1974 Islay single malt whisky from Ardbeg, itself considered the 'jewel of Islay'.

The 'AOIBHINN' name is pierced straight through the silver to reveal the whisky inside. On the back, a pattern inspired by St Martin's Cross on Iona is also pierced through. When held up to the sunlight, the Celtic cross allows light to flood through the logo and name on the front - as if rays of sunshine piercing through clouds.

**For further information please contact Jen Wood at St Columba's Hospice on
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**For more information or to register interest in the auction please contact Lesley
Christie, Fundraising Director, St Columba's Hospice on
christie@stcolumbashospice.org.uk / +44 (0) 131 551 1381.**

Notes on Contributors

ST COLUMBA'S HOSPICE has been caring for patients in Edinburgh and the Lothians with cancer and other terminal illnesses since 1977. The Day Hospice, In-Patient Unit and Community Nursing Team are all vital resources, providing specialist care to over 1,000 people and their families each year. The Hospice aims to help people live as actively as possible, from diagnosis, right up to the end of their lives. As well as the highest quality of clinical care, the Hospice also offers emotional, spiritual and practical support to patients, their families and carers. St Columba's Hospice aims to help people face the most difficult experience they will ever go through, with confidence and dignity. All services are given completely free of charge. St Columba's Hospice is currently being completely rebuilt to create a state-of-the-art specialist palliative care facility. The Hospice has temporarily decanted all clinical services to Kirklands House, Gogarbank for the duration of the rebuild project. St Columba's Hospice will return to Trinity, North Edinburgh in 2014. St Columba's is a charity, not part of the NHS. It costs over £6m per annum to keep our Hospice running and the Hospice is dependent on donations to find 67% of that money. The rebuild project will cost £26 million, £3 million of which still needs to be raised.

MAEVE GILLIES is a multi-award-winning artist and designer who grew up in Edinburgh, Scotland, in a family of nationally-acclaimed writers, musicians, academics and politicians.

Maeve's passion for jewellery began by chance at age 15, when trying out goldsmithing with a jeweller friend. She completed two degrees in jewellery and silversmithing - firstly from the Edinburgh College of Art, then a Masters' Degree from the Royal College of Art in London.

Maeve has received numerous awards for her jewellery, including three from the Royal Society for the Arts in London, four from the American JCK Jewellers Choice Awards, plus the prestigious Town & Country COUTURE Award in Las Vegas, USA. Maeve's unique Celtic-inspired jewellery designs for her US-based company *MaeVona* are sold in the finest independent retail stores across North America and beyond.

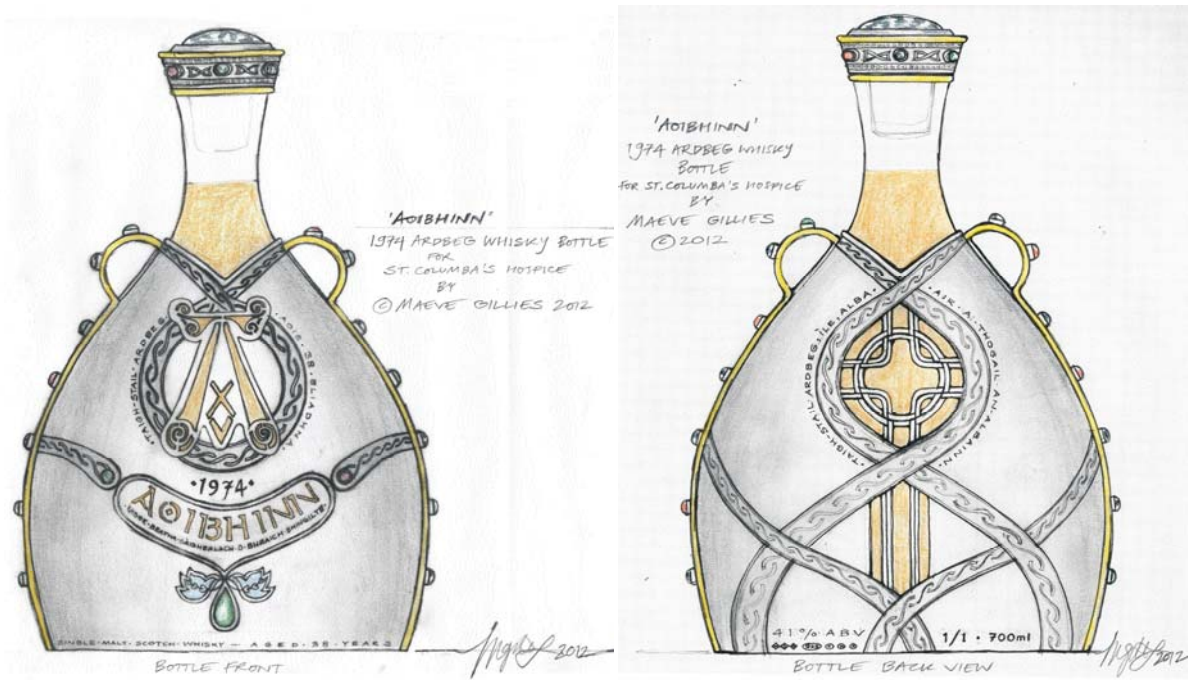
In 2010, Maeve was invited to collaborate with Highland Park to create 275 Limited Edition bottles for their 50 year old whisky. Maeve's unique bottle won the prestigious double title of WORLD'S TOP DESIGN and BEST LIMITED EDITION at the 2012 World Whiskies Design Awards in London.

CHARLES MACLEAN has been researching and writing about Scotch whisky for over 30 years, and has published 13 books on the subject. *The Times* describes him as "Scotland's leading whisky expert" (March 2010). He was elected a Keeper of the Quaich in 1992 for 'his services to Scotch over many years' and granted the rare honour of being elected *Master of the Quaich*, the industry's highest accolade, in October 2009.

ARDBEG prides itself on being the 'Ultimate Islay Malt Whisky'. Established in 1815, Ardbeg is revered by connoisseurs around the world as the peatiest, smokiest and most complex of all the Islay malts. Despite its smokiness, Ardbeg is renowned for its delicious sweetness, a phenomenon that has affectionately become known as 'the peaty paradox'.

During the 1980s and 1990s, Ardbeg suffered from an uncertain future and it was not until the brand was purchased by The Glenmorangie Company in 1997 that the Distillery was saved from extinction. Since then, the Distillery has risen like a phoenix and today Ardbeg is well established as a niche, cult malt, with a passionate following.

Ardbeg was voted *Scotch Whisky of the Year* three years in a row by Jim Murray's Whisky Bible.



Front and back view of AOIBHINN whisky bottle



Testing the pour



Checking seams